

- Encourage them, but do it the right way. Platitudes don't go very far. Be genuine, and help us keep perspective.
- Give them the space to struggle and sometimes not be "okay". Let them vent. Sit and cry with them, and then, help them stand again.
- Ask how they are. Don't just let it be a casual question, but let them know you really want to have the conversation.
- Don't just ask about them, ask about their family. Draw them out of the shadows and let them feel your love, care, and support.
- Don't take reactions personally. At times I hurt those closest to me. I do not mean it, but I am just frustrated and unfortunately, it is spilling out on others.
- Be careful when comparing their struggle to something else.
- Help them laugh and help them see the good. We need to laugh and we need to see the good because sometimes this battle can overwhelm all that we see.

***Your love and care
may just help us take
one more step.***

Your support, encouragement, and love are crucial in this battle, and often is the difference between fighting or giving up. There are days when it is overwhelming, when we are just tired of fighting, and days when the pain and loneliness is just too much, but your encouragement may just be what we need to stay in the fight for one more day, and just take one more step.

Your help does not have to be some great act. Many times, it will be the small things, the quiet ways you show love and care, and remind us that we are valuable and needed. Your love and support mean more than you will ever know.

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CHARLES MICKLES



BY THE AGE OF 20...

...I had already had many more major operations than most people have in a lifetime. I was by no means a jock or a hunk, but even without that, I was blessed to find a young lady who loved me wanted to spend her life with me.

Having a husband that had more in common with a geriatric patient, definitely presented challenges. Struggles most couples do not face for 20 years, we were facing our first year together. As a young couple, our struggles were so different from other newlyweds.

Many times, we were left out of activities or could not participate in events because my body would not allow it. "We would have invited you but...", was how the conversation usually went, and once again, we were on the outside looking in.

AND THEN WE WERE 4...

We had children, who faced the struggle of a dad whose health was failing. Many times, "surrogate" dads would step in and do activities I could not. Each time, it was like a gut punch as I watched my son go do something with another man I could not do. Don't get me wrong, I was thankful someone could go with him, but it hurt, because it was not me.

Each time I could not do something with them, I could see the disappointment on their face, but there was nothing I could do, and my heart broke for their loss.

My kids would always say, "It's okay dad, we understand," but the hurt visible in their eyes mirrored the pain I was feeling for them.

YOUR HELP IS IMPORTANT:

Walking through chronic illness is hard and isolating, not just for the patient, but the family, and especially for a young family. People do not always know what to do, how to react, or how to help. Many times, it is the simple things that make the biggest difference:

- Show understanding, grace, and compassion. Sit and listen to them, and don't dismiss or minimize their struggle.
- Consider their needs when planning an activity, and look for ways to include them, but do not "spotlight" this accommodation. Just make it part of your planning – it will mean so much and help them feel less alone.

