



Namibian Oncology Centre

The Caregiver's Courage Guide

Supporting someone through cancer treatment

Your wellbeing matters too

What to Expect

Cancer treatment is a journey with ups and downs. Your loved one may have good days and hard days. They may feel hopeful one moment and frightened the next.

This is normal.

Treatment schedules can change. Side effects vary. Flexibility and patience help.

Being a caregiver takes courage.

You're walking alongside someone through one of life's most difficult experiences. This guide is for you.

Practical Ways to Help

- **Attend appointments:** take notes, ask questions, remember information
- **Manage logistics:** medication schedules, appointment reminders, transport
- **Handle household tasks:** cooking, cleaning, shopping, childcare
- **Be present:** sometimes sitting quietly together is enough
- **Coordinate support:** manage offers of help from friends and family
- **Track symptoms:** note changes to share with the care team

What to Say (and What to Avoid)

Words matter, but presence matters more.

Things that help:

- ✓ "I'm here for you"
- ✓ "What do you need right now?"
- ✓ "You don't have to be brave with me"
- ✓ "I don't know what to say, but I love you"
- ✓ "Tell me what today was like"

Things to avoid:

- ✗ "Stay positive!" or "Think positive thoughts"
- ✗ "Everything happens for a reason"
- ✗ "I know how you feel" (unless you truly do)
- ✗ "My friend had cancer and..." (comparison stories)
- ✗ Unsolicited advice about diets, supplements, or treatments



Looking After Yourself

Caregiver burnout is real. You cannot pour from an empty cup.

Your health and wellbeing are not luxuries. They are essential.

- **Accept help:** when people offer, say yes and be specific about needs
- **Rest:** sleep when you can, even short naps help
- **Eat properly:** your body needs fuel too
- **Move:** even a short walk can help clear your head
- **Stay connected:** don't isolate yourself from friends
- **Feel your feelings:** you're allowed to be scared, angry, or sad
- **Talk to someone:** a friend, counsellor, or support group

Signs You Need a Break

- Constant exhaustion that doesn't improve with rest
- Feeling hopeless, irritable, or emotionally numb
- Withdrawing from activities you used to enjoy
- Neglecting your own health needs
- Difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much
- Using alcohol or other substances to cope

If you recognise these signs, please reach out. Our social worker can connect you with support resources.



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When to Advocate Urgently

Trust your instincts.

If something seems seriously wrong with your loved one, don't wait.
Call the ward or take them to emergency.

After-hours emergencies: +264 83 330 5031 (Ward)



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Your Courage to Care is Remarkable

Thank you for walking this road with someone you love.

Remember:

You matter too. Taking care of yourself isn't selfish, it's essential to being able to care for the person you love.