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Reported May 8, 2006

Diagnosis Death: Advice for Caregivers (Part 3 of 3)

ORLANDO, Fla. (Ivanhoe Broadcast News) -- More than 50 million people in the United States are caring for sick family and loved ones. What can you do to be a part of the solution and not part of the problem? Here are a few ideas, from a couple who knows both sides.

Jana Carrington's breast cancer is in remission. So is her husband, Brendan's, lymphoma. They both survived cancer ... One right after the other.

"It's been an incredible experience in our marriage," Jana says, but it wasn't easy. "It was so incredibly stressful that I don't know how I got through it."

Jana admits they needed more than just each other to survive. "It took the support of hundreds of other people. Family, friends, loved ones, who helped support me through that process."

Food was always appreciated, but Jana says, "They would bring it to us on grandma's china. I loved the sentiment, but the reality was that I would end up with six or seven or eight dishes in my kitchen that I couldn't remember who they belonged to."

Instead, when bringing food to sick loved ones bring food in disposable cookware -- dishes you

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don't expect back. Other tips for caregivers:

Set up a list of activities friends or family can sign up to do on a regular basis

Bring a notebook to your loved one's doctors appointments -- take notes and stay organized

Take time for yourself every day.

As a licensed massage therapist, Jana knows the importance of stress relief, especially for caregivers. "The basics of sleeping, eating, getting enough water, going to the bathroom when you need to go to the bathroom, and not ignoring yourself," she says. "You need to put more self-care into that bank account than stress takes out."

Ultimately, friends and family help by remaining calm and not spreading rumors.

"It was not helpful for me to answer 15 phone calls a day that were not true, that were all fear-based," Jana says. She found the best way to keep everyone informed was through an e-mail newsletter to the people whose love and support got them through.

Jana wrote a book for caregivers based on their experiences. It's called "A Touch of Hope: A Caregiver's Survival Guide".

This article was reported by Ivanhoe.com, who offers Medical Alerts by e-mail every day of the week. To subscribe, go to: <http://www.ivanhoe.com/newsalert/>.

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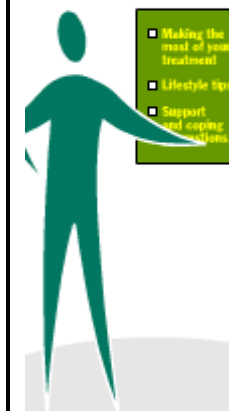
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