

**Helping The Seriously Ill and For Those Who Care For Them**  
**By Earl A Grollman**

**THOU SHALT NOT...**

**Be Afraid To Touch:** Touching is one of the most comforting modes of communication. A squeeze of the hand or a warm embrace testifies to how much you truly care.

**Hesitate To Smile And Laugh:** Not with forced frivolity but with the sheer enjoyment of humorous incidents and stories. Serious illness does not put a ban on laughter.

**Be Uncomfortable With Silence:** Love understands love; it needs no words. Silence can be as supportive as shared conversation. Be comfortable just sitting with someone.

**Offer Untrue Statements:** When a patient may be doing poorly, don't say: "Oh, you're going to get better." OR "There's nothing seriously wrong." OR "You'll soon be as good as new." Everyone should be treated with dignity, whether they are sick or healthy.

**Believe You Need To Have All the Answers and Solve All the Problems:** Just listen and hear what is said. There are times when there are no complete solutions. Accept your own limited self and commit yourself only to what you are able to do.

**THOU SHALT...**

**Accept The Feelings Of The Sick Person:** Don't pretend that everything is OK. A seriously ill person needs to express his/her emotions. You can encourage that individual by saying: "What are you feeling?" OR "Tell me what is happening to you." OR "This must be very difficult?" Be sensitive to shifting feelings, whether they are sadness, rage, panic, frustration, or acceptance.

**Share Time Together:** Talking, listening to music, watching movies, or playing cards can help fill lonely and frightening hours with shared companionship.

**Offer To Help:** "I'm going to the grocery store. Can I pick up something for you?" "May I help with the dishes?" "Can I come over and read you the newspaper?"

**Locate Other Supports:** There may be other people/organizations who can offer assistance, in the community, that they are unaware of.

**Respect the Privacy and Integrity of the Sick Person/Family:** If possible call before you visit. Never assume you know what the person may need. Always keep information confidential.