

How to Be a Support Superstar

By

Emily Somers

[Bravery.Co](https://bravery.co)



TIPS ON WHAT TO SAY/DO TO

During all my rides on the Cancer Train I had an exceptional crew of family and friends who kept me alive — emotionally and physically.

I would not have survived without them.

So, I thought I'd share a few things some very clever people did and said — just in case *you* are ever called upon to be a Support Superstar.

1. Say Something (Even If You Don't Know What)

Cancer is a *daunting* conversation.

You never know what the right thing to say is — because honestly, there *isn't* a right thing.

I had good friends completely fall off the radar because I later found out, they didn't know what to say. And that hurt.

You can say (or text) something simple like:

- "I'm thinking of you."
- "We're sending all our love."
- Or (my personal favourite): "Heard you're going through a **shitshow**. **We f*cking** love you."

Pro tip:

Keep checking in —even if it's just an emoji, a funny meme, a pretty picture from Pinterest, or that song you both loved in high school.

They're still your same friend. They still love the same stuff they did before cancer.

And keep checking in well past treatment, because the part after treatment, is surprisingly exceptionally hard. All the support falls away, everyone assumes you're 'all better' and you're left to deal with the emotional mess which needs just as much love and support to get through.

2. Admit this is shit.

Swear, send angry emojis, stamp your foot, even scream a little. DO NOT sugar coat the situation and talk about journey's, silver linings, positivity, everything happens for a reason – blah blah. At least not at the start. There is a time to be positive, but

please acknowledge the heaviness of the situation and give your friend the space to chuck a tantrum, breakdown, be shocked or just be sad if needed.

3. Forced Help Is the Best Help

If your friend is anything like me — independent, stubborn, allergic to asking for help — you're going to need to get a little *bossy*.

Instead of saying:

"Let me know if you need anything!"

(which they won't, because they're too proud/exhausted/emotional),

Try:

- "I'm making a lasagna. It'll be on your doorstep tonight. No need to even open the door."
- "I'll pick up your kids Saturday for a playdate so you can sleep."
- "I've organised a roster of people to get you to and from chemo for the next month."

Be specific. Be slightly pushy.

4. Make It Clear: No Need to Reply

I have a very clever friend that would end all text messages with the words

"No need to reply."

When you're in the thick of illness or grief, even replying to a text can feel like climbing Everest. And I can remember times when my phone was filled with messages waiting for replies.

So make it easy for them to just *receive* the love without the pressure to respond.

5. Cancer Doesn't End When Treatment Does

Life after cancer is TOUGH!!!

The appointments end. The medical support slows down. The check-ins stop. Everyone assumes you're "better now."

But that's when it hits you. Your brain finally catches up and registers that you nearly lost your life, and the emotional fallout begins.

I remember feeling selfish because I knew I'd had so much love, attention and care, but I was feeling so low and completely lost about who I was and what I was doing in life after treatment. Let alone the fear I felt about relapsing again.

It can feel lonely, overwhelming, and invisible. So be a pal, set a reminder on your phone, and do a regular check-in on your mates that have survived something tough.

What *Not* to Do

- **Don't** tell them about your second cousin's boss's goldfish that also had cancer and died.
- **Don't** compare their cancer to your back pain, broken toe, or dental surgery. (It happened to me – and I know they were trying to relate. It's not the same.)
- **Don't** slap a silver lining on it straight away.
(*"Everything happens for a reason!" "Cancer only happens to the strongest people!"*)
— No. Just sit with them in the heaviness of the situation. Acknowledge it. Say this really sucks and I'm here for you.
I always feel this is a good time to swear a little bit as this makes it feel like you understand the seriousness of the whole thing.
- **Don't** overstay your welcome.
Visits to a sick friend should be — short, punchy, and leaving them wanting more. Especially when they're in hospital.

HAIR STORY

The first time I lost my hair, it was slow and cruel. My hair didn't fall out in dramatic clumps over night — it happened gradually and turned out to be daily torture. Every morning I'd wake up and the first thing I'd do was inspect my pillow, obsess over the collection of fallen strands covering the pillow slip. I began to avoid washing and brushing my hair and would wear hats on windy days.

I clung to it, desperate to hold on to something that felt like control.

I didn't want to be *the bald chick*. I didn't want my disease to be on show for all to see. Our hair is so connected to our sense of femininity, beauty and identity – especially as women. I was horrified that I was in the process of losing this all.

But eventually, it got to a super thin point and I had no choice. So we planned a "Shave Day." My friends came over to my little share house, we opened champagne, played music, and shaved my head. One of them even joined me and shaved their head too.

And you know what? Once it was done, I felt *relief*. Like I could finally breathe. This was the thing I was dreading for months and in the end, I was happy it was gone.

I hadn't realised just how much pain I'd been causing myself by clinging to something I couldn't control.

It was the beginning of learning to let go. To stop resisting.

The second time, my hair came out fast and in clumps.

But this time, I was ready. I had been the bald chick before, and so I knew when to let it go.

This time round, the thought of putting on the same tight, itchy and somewhat sensible brown wig made me feel like I was taking a step backwards. I needed something new.

So I went bold! I wore wild wigs and big, colourful scarves. I embraced it and I had fun with it. And in doing so – I found styles that made me feel like myself – like Emily, and not a cancer patient.

Plus, I got more compliments than I ever got on my actual hair!

And it is this feeling of confidence through colour at a time when I felt super vulnerable that planted the seed for a business idea that I will talk about a little later.

★ Hair-Related Tips for Cancer Warriors

Hair loss can be one of the most confronting parts of a cancer diagnosis—especially because it's so visual. You can hide nausea or fatigue, but losing your hair makes it public. Here are some practical and emotional tips I wish I'd had the first time around.

1. Set the Tone for Shave Day

The first time I lost my hair, it was slow, gradual, and honestly, pretty torturous. Every day felt like a countdown. I'd wake up inspecting my pillow, count the hairs in the shower, and basically spiral every time a gust of wind blew a few more away.

Eventually, when it got too thin, my best mate Gin—who happens to be a hairdresser—stepped in like the legend she is. She brought clippers and champagne and basically turned my little share house into a hair party.

She shaved her own head first, as casually as if she was making toast. That moment shifted everything. We put on music, popped bubbles, and went through a lineup of ridiculous hairstyles—mullet, mohawk, Friar Tuck (never again), and full bald beauty.

If you're a hairdresser or a support crew member, ask what kind of vibe they want:

- Quiet and calm with tea and soft music?
- Loud and proud with Beyoncé and bubbles?
- Or fast and low-key—just get it done?

Let them set the tone – and follow their lead.

2. Wig Shopping: It's Okay to Want Options

Yes, I now own a scarf biz, but I'll say it anyway - **go wig shopping** if it helps. I tried on billions before the big shave and it gave me this weird sense of comfort knowing I had a Plan B for days when I didn't want to wear a scarf or explain my baldness to strangers in the supermarket. So many are super realistic and honestly look better than my real hair-do the majority of the time.

It was empowering to know I could keep my secret if I wanted to.

3. Scarf Styling: Trial, Error, and Turban Power

If you're new to the scarf game, don't panic. Grab a mirror, a scarf (mine, your mum's, or the couch throw if you must), and pull up one of my Bravery Co. tutorials. (On the [website](#) or on the [@BraveryCo Instagram](#)) It's like learning to do eyeliner—it takes patience, but eventually, you'll nail it.

Not every style will suit you, and that's okay. But trust me: *there's something empowering about wearing a bold turban into a chemo ward like the boss you are.*

4. Check the Vibe: Ask Before You Talk

If you're not in their inner circle, talking to someone about their cancer can feel awkward. Here's the trick: **just ask.**

Try:

"Do you want to talk about cancer land today, or should we dive into Met Gala outfits and "what weird, unidentified fruit I found rotting in my kid's school bag last week?"

Let them choose the tone. And ask *every time*—because what feels okay to talk about one day might be completely off the table the next.

ABOUT EMILY SOMERS



Emily Somers is a dreamer and a traveller, a collector and a designer, she spent her days as an Art Director in a bubble of colour and happiness before her diagnosis. Then she got sick. Real sick. She got cancer. Not once, not twice but three times. And do you know what, she beat it. Not once, not twice but three times.

Inspired by her own experience of chemo, cancer, naps, and turbans, she's on a mission to create some cool cancer headwear in the hope to give bravery to others going through something she knows only too well. Her Melbourne based business full of beautiful things is called Bravery Co.