

100 *acts of* LOVE

How to support your employee with cancer. Video #2 - What to say

NOTE: This is a direct transcription of the video.

Hi, I'm so glad you made it to video number two; what to say. Before we start, I have some bad news. And the bad news is there isn't one perfect thing to say. But the good news is there is one perfect way to, how should I say, feel when you do say something. And that is feel in a place of love and support and caring.

And the reason I bring this up is because many times when we go to say something to someone who's dealing with a crisis or has cancer, we come from a place of wanting to fix it. We want to help them by telling me what to do, or asking a question that we think it's very helpful, or we just kind of want to move, we wanna, we wanna ...Because we don't want to feel. Because we don't want to settle in and deal with how scary it is that this person has cancer, we don't want to settle into that, so we will say and do lots of things from a place of not wanting to touch that. And when we come from that place, when we come from that place of being fearful and not wanting to touch into the sadness, what we say often falls flat.

Here's a senior I want you to think about. You just got her hair done, and you look good! You look really, really good. And you walk down the street, and you run into a co-worker. And you and that co-worker have a great conversation, but you walk away and your kind of mad. Because that co-worker didn't say anything about how good your hair looked! When your employee has cancer, and you don't say anything about what they're going through, it's sort of the same feeling. It doesn't feel good, it feels like you weren't acknowledged, it feels like they don't care. So that's why saying something is so so so important. And let's remember, we have human in our title for a reason, we have human, we have people, those names are in our tidal because that's who we are, that's what we do. We manage, we help humans be better humans in the workspace.

So when you say something, you need to check in to what space you're in when you speak. If you're in a place of a feeling uncomfortable, of a feeling like you want to fix it, take a few moments to step back and not say anything at all. Give yourself an opportunity to feel. And it's hard, it's really really uncomfortable but if you can stay in that discomfort, then you can come from a place of great support and love and caring when you speak to your employee with cancer.

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So here's the phrase that you can say, "I'm so sorry this is part of your life journey. You are not alone. We are here for you." The nice thing about that phrase is it's three sentences, you can say one of the sentences, you can say all of those sentences. What you want I want you to notice is that in none of that does it say, what we're going to do, how we're going to behave. We're not fixing anything because right now, that employee knows that there's nothing to fix. That employee has probably already heard from other people who have gotten in there trying to fix it. And they're actually prepared for you to say the wrong thing. They're waiting for you to say the wrong thing. They're waiting to feel even more separated than they feel already. And when you say this beautiful sentence, on or all three of them, you're saying to the employee, we're not like everybody else. We get it that this is not a fun journey, and we're going to help you through it. And, auck, what a great thing to say!

So the nice thing about those phrases is you can say one or all of them together. So you can say, "I'm so sorry this is part of your journey." You can say, "We are here for you." (That's really important to say.) Now the other piece that's sometimes hard to do is to check-in with yourself. This is affecting you as a person. Yes, you are representing an organization and how that organization is going to support that employee, but it affects you as a person. When your employee comes to you and tells you they have cancer, or is dealing with any other life crisis, that's the moment you actually want to pull out the human in human resources and just connect with them on that level. Because honestly, that's what that employee needs and craves the most at that moment. And when you're able to do it on that level, you open up the door to be able to offer the kind of support that the employee needs.

And when you open up that door to offer that kind of support, you get buy-in from that employee and a great amount of respect for the company and for HR as a whole. You are literally setting the tone of how the employer is going to think about the organization and human resources, and you all by speaking the right words. That's a lot of pressure. But now that you have the right words, you can go and do that.

So you now know what not to say, you know what to say, and now we are going to move forward to the next video where there are some really great simple, easy things that you can offer your employee to support them through this difficult time in their life. I will see you in the next video.