Facing the end of life with a terminal illness, as Courtney does, is often a frightening and lonely challenge.

Will I be alone as I die? Will I suffer more than I can bear?

BJC Hospice and Supportive Care not only can soften the fear and lighten the pain, but help to provide experiences in the last days and months of profound intimacy, discovery and even surprising play. These gifts, in the midst of sorrow and the mysteries of life’s ending, are offered to patients’ families and communities, as well as to the patients themselves: meaningful conversations, renewed relationships, forgiving reminiscences, exchanges of care.

As Courtney reminds all of us, the dying are still living, with a special perspective that can slow us down to cherish each moment; they can still touch, share, teach. Make contributions.

BJC Hospice and Supportive Care help create good times, leaving rich memories, and sometimes, as with Courtney, insightful messages emerge that will make a difference for years to come. Legacies of love.

For more information on BJC Hospice and Supportive Care, call 314-872-5050.
What you can do when a friend (like me) faces the end of life

Hallmark doesn’t fix it all.

Don’t just sign your name to an overpriced card. Make a card. Write a letter to me or send an e-mail. Have internet conversations with me on my good days or nights - those times when I’m strong enough to sit and laugh or cry with you online.

Don’t pretend that everything is going to be OK.

We need to be able to tell each other the truth – about how sick I am, how scary the future can seem, how helpless we feel.

Don’t abandon me at my most vulnerable time.

I already feel like an outcast. I’m lonely. Visit me. Call. Sit and pray with me. Don’t just pray for me. It’s incredibly scary how quickly these four walls become a prison, there are too many hours to think and worry.

Don’t treat me like a child – even a well-loved child.

Yes, sometimes I’m weaker or more tired than I used to be, but I am an adult. Include me in decisions that affect our family or social group, or that impact me individually. Remember, too, that I still have talents and skills to make a real contribution. Let me.

Instead of asking “What can I do for you?”

offer some concrete suggestions – like bringing a meal or treat, running errands, helping in the house with the laundry or dishes, taking me out for a drive. My thinking can be fuzzy sometimes, but I can still enjoy making choices from the options you offer.

Respect my decisions about my healthcare-

my doctors, my medications and my treatments- and about my end-of-life plans, like whether I will be buried or cremated and how I want to be memorialized. Share your ideas if I ask for them; otherwise, please just listen. I need to believe that you will support me in taking responsibility for these last critical choices – even if you would choose some other way for yourself.

Just because I’m dying, doesn’t mean I’m any less capable of being your friend.

Dying isn’t my whole identity. Let me be a real person in your life. I can talk about other things besides death and sickness. I can have fun and be fun.

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