

Department of Kansas VFW Auxiliary Hospital Program

Kelle Brewer-Brown, Chairman – December 2023 - #2

I got really sick after
drinking milk with cream.
My stomach was churning
for a while, but now I'm
finally feeling butter.



What To Say When Someone Is Sick or Struggling

If there's something positive about post-pandemic life, perhaps it's the increased capacity for empathy and recognizing that it's OK not to always be OK...or not having all the answers when someone we know is struggling.

Whether someone is battling a major illness, recovering from surgery, dealing with a tough episode of a chronic condition or trying to push through the worst part of the flu.... or major life event, feeling bad mentally when you're feeling bad physically is a common part of the experience of being under the weather.

Especially when the symptoms of an illness overlap with symptoms of anxiety or depression—think fatigue, malaise, brain fog and insomnia—if a someone is struggling with an ailment, it can be tricky to know what to say.

One remedy for the physical and mental symptoms is feeling cared about and supported by others. YOU can be a bright spot in the day for a hospitalized veteran. Showing your care and support can go a long way in helping them feel better.

So you want to help—great! But what exactly do you say to someone who is sick or just not themselves?

1. "Hugs, drugs or hot chocolate mugs: What do you need most right now?"

When you hear someone is sick, it's natural to want to help. Offering them a few options—with a dash of humor—will make it easier for them to ask for help, not to mention give them a much-needed smile. If they're not feeling up to a visit, you can offer virtual hugs or leave a little care package on their bedside tray.

2. "I'm so sorry to hear about your diagnosis, if you want to talk about it, I want to listen."

From cancer to lupus to chronic fatigue syndrome, when someone gets a life changing diagnosis the top thing they need is support. People who feel like they can't talk about their illness are at a higher risk for mental and physical health problems, so it becomes a compounding problem. Offering a listening ear—when they're ready—is one of the greatest gifts you can give someone who is ill.

3. "Heard you are feeling sick! I want you to know I'm thinking about you."

Sometimes there is nothing you can do for the person who is suffering but they will still appreciate your caring attitude and words of support. Plus, this opens the conversation if they do want to vent or ask for help.

4. "Just want to check in, how are you feeling today?"

Sickness severity can change by the day (or sometimes by the hour). Checking in regularly about how they are doing and if they are better or worse, can provide a lot of comfort to someone who is sick or struggling mentally. This is especially true if they do not have family close by / they live alone—being sick solo can be especially disheartening.

5. "Can I call or drop by tomorrow to check on you?"

If someone is really ill, planning check-ins ahead of time may be best. It might give the individual something to look forward to and makes sure they're receiving regular support. Hearing someone's voice or seeing them in person can also give you a better idea of how they're really doing—something that's hard to get from a text. This could also help you gauge whether it's a good time for a visit, or a better moment to give them space.

6. "I hear you say that you're feeling pretty down about your illness, and that makes total sense."

Being sick, especially if it's a chronic diagnosis or a serious illness, can bring up a lot of confusing and painful feelings. An individual who's coping with illness may cycle through anger, sadness, frustration, hopelessness, and even joy or relief. Listening and then validating their feelings helps them feel heard and lets them know they aren't bad or wrong to feel the way they do.

7. "I know this is tough...but you're tougher! You're not alone in this fight: I've got your back."

You want to avoid mindless cliches but reminding the patient of their strength and that they are not fighting alone can be powerful. Add a happy picture—or, if it feels appropriate, a funny meme for extra smiles.

8. "Rest up and get better soon—it's not the same without you!"

It's still kind to reach out to someone who is sick even if you're not super close to the person. For instance, a casual acquaintance may appreciate that you're thinking of them and knowing that they are missed.

9. "I can't understand exactly what you're going through, but I'm here for you and you have all my sympathy."

Going through a prolonged illness or diagnostic process can feel incredibly isolating and lonely. Avoid telling someone that you "know what they're going through," because that isn't true. With that said, everyone has had experience being sick—and you may have experience with an illness similar to theirs—and it's fine to relate on that level. The key is to make sure you're actively listening to what they're saying and not turning it into a discussion about you.

10. "You can be honest: Did you really need surgery, or did you just want that delish hospital food?"

Humor really can be the best medicine and nothing feels better when you're hurting than a good belly laugh. Just make sure the jokes are appropriate to that person and your relationship with them. If you're not sure how your humor will land, it's best to skip the jokes and offer a sincere sentiment.

OPERATION: Cinder(f)ella

Your meal is *Onus*.

Your meal has been paid in full.

THANK YOU
for your service and everything that you have done for others over the years.

Know that we remember and care.

Celebrating Veterans and working to make their dreams come true.

Onus - something that is one's duty

This gift was given by:

If blank, the giver wishes to remain anonymous.

KS VFW Auxiliary Hospital Program



Says THANKS to a veteran, their caregiver, or both !!!!

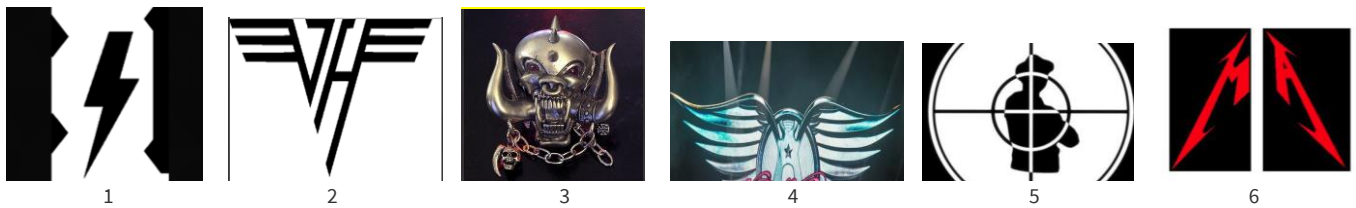
Whether in the Hospital Cafeteria, Gift Shop or the drive-thru across the street from a CBOC or nursing home !

The *Onus* card was designed to directly involve members in reaching out and thanking deserving veterans for their service by treating them to a meal.

How it works: print out an *Onus* card. When you see a veteran you would like to treat, you pay their bill and hand the *Onus* card to the cashier/waitperson. In turn, the cashier/waitperson presents the card to the recipient of your goodwill.

It is up to you whether you want to list your name on the card or remain anonymous. The end result is that you are helping bring joy and comfort to our veterans by thanking them in a very special and direct way.

BOLOGO #2 - Be on the Look Out for the Logo/Can you match the band to its iconic logo? - Dec 2023 -#2 (5.2)



VFW Auxiliary Teams- Banding Together - Working for Veterans Dreams - - - - - Deadline December 31, 2023

District # _____ Name: _____

Auxiliary# _____ Address: _____

HAPPY HOLIDAYS !!