

SUPPORT TEAM BEST PRACTICES

Best practices are methods or techniques that consistently have shown results that are better than those achieved with other means and that are used as benchmarks. Please follow these 10 best practices for support teams:

1. Do what you can (what you love).

What do you enjoy doing when helping someone? It's different for everyone. Focus on doing what you love. Support teams last longer and are more effective when you are doing what you love to do. And it is more joy-filled.

2. Do it when you can (time-flexible).

Not everyone has the same amount of time to give monthly on a support team. Just do what you can, when you can, and be thankful that you have a team who has your back.

3. Do it in a coordinated way (the 59-minute meeting).

Support team meetings are efficient and life-giving. They start and end on time and have a clear agenda to communicate, educate, and coordinate. The team leader(s), team members, patient, and family know who is doing what, and when, so that everyone's gifts are maximized.

4. Use the built-in support system (sharing the care).

A team approach allows you to share the care with others, so that it does not all depend on one person.

5. Set clear team boundaries/expectations.

- Money: Support teams are healthier when we do not loan, give money, or pay for things for the support team friend (patient). If financial needs arise, we discuss them with the team, to identify strategies and resources in the community that may be of assistance.
- Medication management: Managing another person's medications can be dangerous, so we avoid doing this, to help prevent harm.
- Medical advice: We do not offer medical advice. Instead, we encourage communication with the patient's doctor or nurse when he/she has medical questions.

6. Adopt an open-door philosophy.

If you need or want to drop off of your team at anytime, simply tell your team leader. Your team leader should respond with these words: "Thanks for what you have done, and if you ever want to come back, just let us know." We are all adults, and we trust you to know what is best for you.

New team members are welcome to join a team at any time. Make sure each person undergoes orientation using the Best Practices of Support Teams and understands how the team approach works. Connect them to uabpastoralcare.org/supportteams.

7. Learn the "green bean casserole rule".

Ask what your support team friend loves to eat, and discuss what you enjoy cooking. This principle of respect also applies to all of the tasks we do for our support team friend by asking what is needed and if he or she would like what we have to offer.

8. Listen without fixing.

When offering emotional support, resist the temptation to try to fix it. Instead, ask an extra question to understand more what this is like from his or her perspective. Listening without fixing is more healing than your most brilliant solution.

9. Team leaders should delegate and coordinate.

Effective team leaders love to organize, and they understand that delegating tasks to team members creates healthy teams that can be sustained over time.

10. Spiritual support may be different than what you think.

Spiritual support is not about getting you to believe like me. For support team members, it is about putting your faith into action. Spiritual support is listening to what gives your friend purpose or meaning in life, so that you can understand better what gives him or her hope.