Dear Friends and Family,

I am always learning to ask for what I need, and getting better at it all the time. Neither my needs nor my problems have changed one iota really during this experience. They are only magnified by it. Everything seems harder (laundry, errands, groceries, work etc.) or more pronounced (loneliness, fear, anxiety) or takes longer (writing thank you notes, walking, returning phone calls). You can help if you are next door or 7,000 miles away. Here's how: Sign up to receive my updates online. Repeating the same story multiple times is just not an option. I don't have the energy. If you see friends or family who should be on the list, and aren't, please share the information with them.

What I Need:

1. Invite me to do stuff with you – picnics, concerts, movies, parties, meals, walks, happy hour, etc. It is sometimes tough to plan things because I never know how I will feel, so feel free to also just call spur of the moment and say, "Let's go now." Keep asking me even if I am not feeling up to it the first time.

2. Call to check on me periodically or drop an email to just let me know you are thinking of me. I love getting cards, but don't want flowers or gifts unless it's something I specifically asked for or a book or movie. There is no room in my tiny condo. If you really want to buy me something, here are some things I could use: -New hammock chair for my deck. My old one disintegrated and I miss relaxing out there with a book. -A juicer. Every book I read talks about the benefits of juicing, and I have many veggies from the garden I could use. -Airline miles or ticket vouchers. (Thanks Darryl & Kay for your generosity of this front already.) -itunes gift cards (Abby sent me one this week and I realized this is perfect. Because I don't have a TV, I buy episodes online and music too.)

3. Bring me dinner or take me out for brunch or ice cream or coffee!

4. Easy stuff for me to make or eat are helpful because often nothing sounds good and I don't have the energy to cook. Cut up fruit, instant oatmeal packets, yogurt, soup or other stuff I can freeze (in individual servings is even better), small servings of salads (quinoa, tuna, broccoli or other healthy stuff) and single serving beverages.

5. Offer your expertise deciphering medical bills or insurance paperwork.

6. Invite me to scrapbook with you (I am so behind).

7. Call and ask, "Do you need anything this week, today, right now?"

8. Send me funny stuff (laughter helps a lot) by mail, email, carrier pigeon.

9. Ask me to take a walk (I am slower these days). It is so hard to get motivated to exercise, but I need to walk since I can't do much other stuff.

10. Loan/Give me a good book/movie/CD

11. Offer your volunteer time, expertise, retreat location or just a donation to support the work I'm doing for singles with cancer. This is important to me as I realize how hard this is without a built in support system.

12. Pay for a Reiki session, a massage or a cleaning service.

13. Invite me on a road-trip, to stay with you for a few days or spend the weekend at your cabin. I have been staring at my own four walls for a while now.

14. Give me a hug (even a virtual one is not bad). Hold it longer than usual. ;)

15. Drop by with a DVD and some Cherry Garcia.

16. Help me figure out a good, relaxing 3-5 day get-away for the end of treatment so I have something to look forward to. Cancer is expensive, so it should be somewhat easy on the budget too.

17. Tell me you love me (or like me a lot). So many have already done this - Thanks so much!

18. Offer to go with me to chemo or Dr. appointments.

19. Just offer to hang out – it gets lonely not being able to plan fun stuff as usual.

20. Offer to unload my dishwasher, mop my floor, vacuum, wipe down my microwave or do a quick tub cleansing. This can even be on the way out to a movie!

21. Keep being the great friend, parent, sister, aunt, cousin, co-worker you have always been, and don't be afraid to ask me anything or tell me you don't know what to say. Just saying something is enough.

Thanks for being here for me, and for asking what you can do. I hope this helps.

Tracy Max