8 TIPS ON HOW (AND HOW NOT) TO SHOW UP

1. Showing up can be done in person, or via calls or texts (Though don’t expect a response. Parents are tired and stretched thin). You don’t have to have the “right” words: sometimes simply listening, and “holding the space,” is just right.

2. Send a message with a specific day and time when you can show up in person and help, so the parent or caregiver need only reply “Yes” or “No.” Be prepared to help with what is needed at that moment (e.g., washing dishes, holding the baby, buying milk, or doing laundry).

3. If you can’t be there in person, send a photo of how you’re thinking of the family – like the child’s name in the sand.

4. Parents experience no communication at all – ‘ghosting’ – to be very painful.

5. It’s important to be sensitive and not make assumptions about what parents can tolerate. Don’t assume a visit with your child or a trip to the park will make them feel good. When in doubt, Ask.

6. You can assume that parents and caregivers have little energy or time, so don’t send items or propose activities that will create more work or cause guilt if they are refused or don’t get used.

7. Check to see if there is someone coordinating meals or errands, or if this is being done through an online service. When you participate (or organize) you are helping to keep the family from being overwhelmed while also ensuring that they have assistance when they need it.

8. Be sensitive to siblings. If you’ve got a gift for the child who is sick, have one for the sibling(s) too.