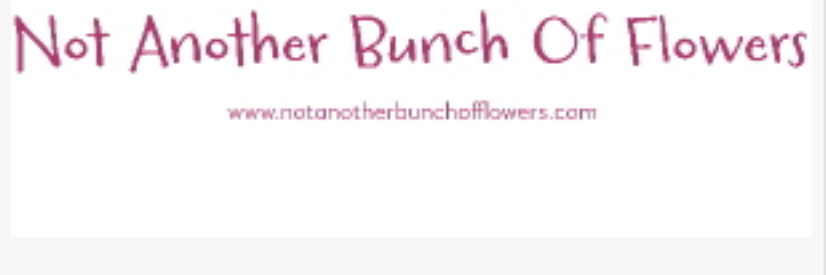


# Christmas Isn't Always Ho Ho Ho | How To Support Someone Struggling This Christmas

HAYWARDS HEATH, UNITED KINGDOM,  
November 29, 2019 /  
EINPresswire.com/ --

[Christmas](#) is an incredibly difficult time for some. Images of the 'perfect Christmas' are everywhere – adverts, magazines and all over social media – and can be a painful reminder of the restrictions either physically or emotionally that this time of year brings for some.



This is something Anikka, founder of Not Another Bunch Of Flowers knows only too well, having been treated for [cancer](#) over the Christmas period.

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'Living with cancer is hard,' says Anikka. 'It's relentless, exhausting and emotional and people forget that treatment drags on and on and takes its toll'"

*Anikka Burton*

'Living with cancer is hard,' says Anikka. 'It's relentless, exhausting and emotional and people forget that treatment drags on and on and takes its toll. And when you are unwell during the Christmas festivities these feelings can be amplified. The days are shorter and the nights longer, colder and darker. Suddenly everyone is out and about having fun, going shopping and having parties. Social media is flooded with images of everything you are missing out on and you can end up feeling even more isolated. There is also that unspeakable question, could this be my last Christmas?'

But knowing that you are loved and supported can really help.

Anikka's cancer diagnosis inspired her to set up Not Another Bunch Of Flowers – a gift site that specialises in thoughtful [gifts](#) and cards for people going through difficult times.

Anikka has provided some tips to help you buy a suitable and meaningful gift for someone struggling this Christmas, whether it is simply a difficult time of year having lost someone dear to them, if they are suffering from a serious illness, are going through a nasty divorce or are simply under the weather

## Flowers

Flowers are lovely, but tend to be the first thing that people think of when someone is sick, so the result can often be an overwhelming number. Why not send a thoughtful gift that will stand out from all of the flowers and last longer?

Practical gifts are greatly appreciated...

A care package full of useful items is always a hit!

...as are little treats

Treats to lift the spirits will also go down well. We may spend more time cozied up at home as we recover from surgery, our latest treatment session or are feeling sad or depressed, so comforting, cosy or pampering gifts are much appreciated. Think pretty lounge-wear, cosy hot water bottles, a natural bath oil, magazines, blankets, comfy bed socks and candles.

Avoid anything too clinical

Some gifts might appear to be really useful such as a thermometer, or a giant size tub of E45, but gifts that are too clinical only act to reaffirm that we are unwell. Something to take our minds off this and make us feel more 'normal' is much more appreciated.

Be aware of ingredients

Some cancer patients, for example, are advised to or opt to avoid certain ingredients. They may choose to cut sugar and/or dairy out of their diet, meaning edible treats such as cakes, chocolates and candy may go to waste. Similarly with pampering treats, many cancer patients prefer more natural toiletries that don't contain nasties such as parabens and SLS. They may also find strong fragrances nauseating and there are some essential oils that are best avoided during treatment. So if you are selecting some body and bath treats, natural and organic is probably best.

It is probably safer to avoid comedy gifts

OK, if you're very close to your friend, and you know for sure that they will find the gift funny, then go for it - anything to cheer us up is very welcome. However, if you're not sure, I would avoid it. You don't want to belittle their feelings with a gift that ends up upsetting them rather than making them laugh.

Be very careful with self-help books

There are thousands of self-help books out there and many offer conflicting advice and opinions, leading to feelings of confusion and fear. Others unfortunately do not have a happy ending. So, if you want to send your friend some helpful books, ensure the message is encouraging and positive and that they don't scaremonger. Most people are likely to have researched their own information including alternative and holistic therapies so respect their decisions and try not to interfere or comment on them.

Speak from the heart

When choosing the words to accompany your gift, speak from heart. Try to avoid meaningless



Thoughtful Cards



Anikka Burton - Founder of Not Another Bunch Of Flowers

clichés and platitudes such as 'you'll be fine' as it belittles our very real fears. We have some specific Christmas cards that recognise this year might be a struggle for some. Christmas may not be the most wonderful time of the year for your loved one, so make sure you acknowledge that.

Practical and emotional support is maybe the greatest gift of all  
Living with a serious illness or depression is hard, it is relentless, exhausting and emotional. Giving a gift does not have to cost the earth, it could be a matter of giving your time. Anything from helping with the school run, walking the dog, offering a lift to hospital to simply offering a sympathetic ear and a shoulder to cry on may be the greatest gift you could give someone this Christmas.

For more information and images please contact: [Maya@notanotherbunchofflowers.com](mailto:Maya@notanotherbunchofflowers.com)

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Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/notanotherbunchofflowers/>

-Ends-

#### Notes to Editor

Not Another Bunch Of Flowers was set up in 2013 following my cancer diagnosis. Friends and family wanted to send me a little something along with messages of support, but just didn't know what to send - apart from flowers. Not many people know that flowers are banned in most hospitals. This inspired me to set up a site selling gift alternatives to flowers, including cancer care packages, hospital hampers and get well gifts.

We are proud to have raised and donated over £25,000 to the following charities in recognition of the support we received during our diagnoses

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