

Sympathy for the masses

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I was wandering down the aisle of my local drugstore, looking for a wrist brace for my terribly clumsy 15-year-old, when I happened upon something that stopped me in my tracks. There, in a bargain bin in the middle of the aisle, was an assortment of boxed greeting cards. Mixed among the "happy birthday" and "thinking of you" cards were a stack of boxed "sympathy" cards for \$1.99. That's right, for only \$1.99, you can be prepared for the death of a friend or loved one by having an assortment of cards at the ready for just such an occasion. But wait! Why not throw in a box of "get well soon" cards so you're covered just in case your friend pulls through? A set of two costs only \$3.00!

I picked up the box of cards, examining the back to see the various sentiments contained therein, but there was no description. But hey, when shopping for bargain sympathy cards maybe the sentiment isn't that important. I opened the box with a card that carried a message stating, "I'm here if you need me." I think it should have said, "I'm here if it doesn't take too long or inconveniences me in any way."

Doesn't someone's death warrant just a little personal attention? Unless you're a pastor or have lots of relatives in Haiti, the boxed sympathy card idea just shouldn't be condoned. I've lost too many friends and loved ones to this disease since my diagnosis in 1997. Each loss was painful and personal. None warranted a generic card. We can't be this busy and overwhelmed as a society... can we?