

Caring for a dying relative or friend

People are never completely ready for the final goodbye, and it is difficult to help people face death, but it can provide us with many rich and rewarding experiences.



Illness challenges the deepest resources of any family or friend. One of the most difficult things in life is acknowledging reality - the urge to avoid the hard and unpleasant is a part of our human nature, particularly the certainty of death. It is difficult to struggle with, reflect upon and cope with one of life's most painful situations - the illness of someone very close to us. However, sharing this time with the one you love can ease the pain.

Assisting the dying person - some practical help

- People who are sick are sometimes treated as already being dead. They are alive and can feel very lonely and rejected if treated otherwise.
- Be yourself. Don't be afraid to be and share yourself as you are.
- Encourage the sick person to enjoy their choices as far as it is possible, allowing them personal freedoms. Allow them to stay in control as much as possible and to feel the loving support which gives a sense of worth so that death can be faced with courageous dignity.
- Be a good listener. Hear what the dying person is telling you. Let them express their needs.
- Be honest with them. Dying people don't like to be lied to.

This information has been kindly supplied by **HARRISON FUNERALS**.

Harrison Funerals publishes a range of brochures about grief. These brochures and other help is available through contacting them on 8447 1255 or 8265 6060, website www.harrisonfunerals.com.au or email info@harrisonfunerals.com.au

- Do respect confidences! Remember you are in another person's private world and are privileged to be allowed to be so close. Move sensitively and without making judgements. Lay aside your own views, values, ideals and enter into their world without prejudice.
- Be comfortable with silence and tears. Conversation may be an effort. Silence can still be comforting, just knowing you are there.
- Gently encourage them to talk about their fears or needs. They may have concerns about the family they will leave behind, let them talk. Where possible, reassure them of things that can be done on their behalf. Don't promise things that you know you cannot carry through.
- They may not always want to talk about their experience. They may be glad to know what is happening in the outside world. This can be a distraction from themselves for a time. Be flexible to their needs.
- Remember they usually don't want you to feel sorry for them, but will appreciate your empathy (feeling with them).
- Sometimes a smile, a gentle touch, may be all that is required to show you care. Remember for some, a hug may be too painful. In this case let your gentleness show in your eyes or in your voice.
- Very ill people often feel very tired. It is important to recognise this and be prepared to make visits short or sit in silence at the bedside.
- All practical help is best given compassionately, honestly and simply. Sickness may cause irritability and your efforts to help may be rejected. Don't be discouraged in your efforts to assist.
At times when people are seriously ill it may be impossible for them to eat. Try to realise this even though your feelings of helplessness can be so hurtful.

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, author of 'On Death and Dying' writes about some of the emotions a dying person may experience:

Denial - "It can't be happening to me."

Anger - "Why me?" Learn to realise that if they are transferring their anger, it is not at you personally. To stay away will leave them bereft of your support. The terminally ill person can be, at times, difficult to live with. They can be angry at being cheated of their life and the effect that their death will have on their family. Give them permission to talk about their feelings.

Bargaining - "Just let me do one more thing..." An effort to postpone death.

Depression - Grieving past and future losses.

This information has been kindly supplied by **HARRISON FUNERALS**.

Harrison Funerals publishes a range of brochures about grief. These brochures and other help is available through contacting them on 8447 1255 or 8265 6060, website www.harrisonfunerals.com.au or email info@harrisonfunerals.com.au

Acceptance - "I know it's me and it's okay." Realise that not all dying people achieve this. They may reach a time when they feel comfortable within themselves that they are going to die and try to make each minute count with their family. Acceptance may be reached only because they are physically weak and tired.

The family also will experience these intense reactions. Realise that seldom do the immediate family and the dying person move through these responses together. Each will do it in their own way, at their pace.

Be aware of organisations available to assist. The Hospice and Palliative Care Services are invaluable supports. They are programmed for total patient care that provides help in a positive way both to patient and family. The aim is to relieve the physical, emotional and social suffering of the patient and give continuing support to the family. This service can also help in allowing the patient to remain with the warmth and closeness of family and friends in their own home if they wish. Further information would be available from your doctor.

Listed below are some resources that will further assist you.

Books

Stuck for Words by Doris Zagdanski (Hill of Content 1994).

On Death and Dying by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross (Tavistock 1985)

On Death, Dying & Not Dying by Peter Houghton
(Jessica Kingsley Publications Ltd 2001)

Website

www.grieflink.asn.au

www.pallcare.asn.au

Harrison Funerals publishes a range of brochures about grief. These brochures and other help is available through contacting us, details below.

This information has been kindly supplied by **HARRISON FUNERALS**.

Harrison Funerals publishes a range of brochures about grief. These brochures and other help is available through contacting them on 8447 1255 or 8265 6060, website www.harrisonfunerals.com.au or email info@harrisonfunerals.com.au
