

DEATH AND DYING

The 5 Stages of Grief and Loss:

1. Denial and isolation
2. Anger
3. Bargaining
4. Depression
5. Acceptance

People who are grieving do not necessarily go through the stages in the same order or experience all of them. Please keep in mind that everyone grieves differently. Some people will wear their emotions on their sleeve and be outwardly emotional. Others will experience their grief more internally and may not cry.

Denial and Isolation	This is the first reaction to learning about the terminal illness, loss, or death of a cherished loved one. Denial is a common defense mechanism that buffers the immediate shock of the loss. For most people this stage is a temporary response that carries them through the first wave of pain.
Anger	During this stage emotions are redirected and aimed at inanimate objects, complete strangers, friends or family.
Bargaining	Person may make a deal with God or the higher power in the attempt to postpone the inevitable, and the accompanying pain. Guilt often accompanies bargaining. A person starts to believe there was something he or she could have done differently to have helped save the loved one.
Depression	It is a reaction to implications related to the loss. Sadness and regret are predominating.
Acceptance	Is marked by withdrawal and calm. This is not a period of happiness and must be distinguished from depression.

In the United States, bereavement practices vary depending on one's cultural background. Helping family members deal with the death of a loved one includes showing respect for the family's cultural heritage and encouraging them to decide how to commemorate the death.

5 key concepts you need to know when taking care of a dying patient:

1. The culturally prescribed rituals for managing the dying process, the deceased's body, the disposal of the body, and commemoration of the death.
2. The family's beliefs about what happens after death
3. An appropriate emotional expression and integration of the loss in this family
4. The gender rules for handling the death in this family
5. Are certain types of death especially traumatic for that cultural group (e.g., death of a child)?

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End of Life Care

The goal of care for people who are dying focuses on helping them enjoy as good a quality of life as possible. This may include:

- relieving suffering
- helping people stay as well as they can
- helping them achieve goals that are important to them before they die

The Dying Process

Signs That Death is Near

1. Physical changes: skin can become paper-thin and pale, with dark liver spots appearing on hands, feet and face. Hair can also thin and the person may shrink in stature. Teeth can get decolorated or develop dark stains
2. Psychological changes: the dying person no longer wants to leave the house or their bed and may not want to talk very much.
3. Increased sleep: Nearer the end, the dying person may increasingly drift in and out of consciousness.
4. Reduction in appetite
5. Changing of expression: The person may start to talk about 'leaving', 'flying', 'going home', 'being taken home', 'being collected', 'going on holiday' or making journey.
6. Special requests: the dying person may want something special such as to visit a particular place, or to be surrounded by their favorite flowers. They may want to hear certain music, to have family photographs nearby or to make contact with someone who has been important in their lives.

Coping Mechanisms for Family Member when Someone is Dying

- When someone is dying, it is impossible to do or to think of anything else apart from being with them or preparing for their death. And when a family member is not with them, they will be on red alert every time the telephone goes.
- They feel as if they are walking around in a bubble, unable to relate to 'normal' life. Everyday conversations may seem to them trivial and irrelevant. They may find loud places like supermarkets or restaurants intolerable.
- Some dying people may want to see friends and extended family, but others may not. This can change from day to day. Always check with them before letting them come in.