

St. Andrew's Lutheran
End of Life Planning Series
Topic: Family Dynamics
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Presentation Goals:

- Describe hospice care
- Review common end of life signs and symptoms
- Explore family dynamics, family communication, navigating care
- End of life tasks, anticipatory grief for patient and family, self-care

What is Hospice?

- **Comfort Care** intended for a person who has a terminal diagnosis and life expectancy of 6 months or less.
- **Provided in the home or wherever a patient lives (including skilled nursing facilities, hospital settings, etc.)**
- **Hospice team members can include:**
 - **physician**
 - **nurse case manager**
 - **social worker**
 - **chaplain**
 - **certified home health aid**
 - **volunteers**

Common Symptoms of Approaching Death

*(Excerpts from “Gone From My Sight: The Dying Experience,
Barbara Karnes)*

One to three months before death: gradual decrease in eating habits; withdrawal, increased sleep, changes in communication

One to three weeks before death: disorientation - “one foot in each world;” physical changes - body temperature fluctuations, breathing changes,

Spiritual signs of approaching death

- using travel language, asking to “go home”
- metaphorical or confusing language, looking beyond
- energy surge, hearing
- sometimes waiting until everyone has exited the room to take final breaths

Family Dynamics

Factors

- **multiple losses**
- **previous experience with death and dying**
- **concurrent life stressors**
- **caregiving concerns (in-home care or coordination of care)**
- **changing roles in family system**

Family Meeting/Communication

- Review or explore goals of care
- Identify patient wishes/needs
- Express feelings and values
- Final arrangements

Hard Choices for Loving People

Hank Dunn

Giving up implies a struggle - letting go implies a partnership

Giving up lives out of fear - letting go lives out of grace and trust

“A natural response to the possibility of losing someone is to hold on tighter or try to gain more control. Ironically, this does not lead to a life of freedom and joy, the very things we were pursuing.”

The Last Tasks

Dr. Ira Byock

- **Ask for forgiveness**
- **Offer Forgiveness**
- **Offer Heartfelt Thanks**
- **Offer Sentiments of Love**
- **Say Goodbye**

More tasks

- **Keeping vigil/presence**
- **Rituals**
- **Reminiscence/sharing memories**
- **Reassurance**

Grief

- **Common grief reactions:**
- **difficulty concentrating**
- **roller coaster of emotions**
- **“grief attacks”**
- **changes in sleeping and eating patterns**
- **social changes/changes in roles**

Self-care and support

- **Recognize that grief is unique to each individual**
- **Identify sources of support (groups)**
- **Excercise/movement**
- **Breathing/centering**
- **Education**
- **Spiritual Practices**

Resources

- **Gone From My Sight: The Dying Experience - Barbara Karnes**
- **Family Caregivers: An Emotional Survival Guide - Connie Baher**
- **Hard Choices For Loving People - Hank Dunn**
- **Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue - Edwin Friedman**

Hebrews 12:1-3

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

Thank You

for joining us for this presentation.

We hope you benefit from its information.

Please share this information with your family and friends.