



WHAT IS SPIRITUAL CARE?

Everything we, as hospice volunteers, do provides care to the spirit if it is done with a loving and compassionate attitude. When we are willing to simply be with someone, when we listen to them with unconditional acceptance, we are making room for the possibility of connection, and the feeling of being connected is a necessary part of spiritual nourishment.

We are providing spiritual care when we bring certain qualities into any relationship. These qualities are:

- Compassion
- Tolerance
- Ease
- Kindness
- Humour
- Warmth
- Wisdom
- Authenticity
- Mindfulness
- Stability
- Openness
- Concentration

We need to try, as much as we are able, to bring to our hospice visits and interactions the qualities of a psychologically and spiritually mature person. As hospice volunteers, it helps to be spiritually grounded ourselves. We don't need to follow any particular religious or spiritual path, but it does help when we take the time to connect with our conception of higher power or greater purpose, and seek in our own lives for inner peace and meaning.



SUPPORTING THE SPIRITUAL WORK OF DYING

As a person faces his/her own death or the death of someone they love, they often deal with certain spiritual tasks. Below are some of these tasks, and ways that we, as volunteers, can provide support to the person dealing with them.

Reassessment: When the end of life is near, things taken for granted often need to be looked at and evaluated. Listen as the person ponders the meaning of their lives. Be interested. Ask them about their lives.

Healing and Repair: Listen if they need to talk about what they need to heal and what unfinished business they need to take care of. Don't tell them what to do, but help them to see and to act on what they need to get done before the death.

Growth: People live until they die. Facing and coming to terms with death can become a joyful and liberating experience. As volunteers, we can help them celebrate their life or the life of their dying loved one. We can help and encourage them to express what their life means. We can help arrange a ceremony or ritual if that is what the person wants.

Letting Go: The person who is dying often becomes more detached and withdrawn from this life as he or she prepares to leave it. We can support the spiritual task of letting go of life by understanding and allowing the withdrawal. Family members who are hurt by the withdrawal need know that this is normal, and be encouraged to let go, say goodbye and give the dying person permission to die.