

SOME GUIDELINES FOR ASSISTING AN APPROPRIATE DEATH

(LaGrand)

1. ***Be there.*** Your healing presence is a resource with incalculable impact. Life emanates from your presence.
2. ***Be reverent.*** Let the dying person be in charge, free to tell you when to come and go, what he/she needs, and what will be the topics of discussion.
3. ***Expect regressive behavior.*** There may be times when the person is demanding on the one hand and overly dependent on the other. Do not become alarmed at such mood swings.
4. ***Maintain dignity and hope.*** Do not take away the power and control that one still possesses. Without hope no one can cope. Maintain hope to help the person reach little goals.
5. ***Let Honesty prevail.*** There is a difference between being honest and blatantly truthful. Each of us can deal with our trials and assimilate the truth when it unfolds a little at a time.
6. ***Practice empathy.*** Place yourself in the position of the dying person when you are not sure of what to do. What must it be like to be losing all of your associations with the world? What does it feel like to be treated as though you are useless?
7. ***Accept anger as coping.*** Persevere in the face of anger. What your patient is saying is, "If you love me enough, you will let me be angry at you."
8. ***Silences are as important as words.*** When your question goes unanswered – let it be. It is good to be there without saying anything as well.
9. ***Listen.*** Our greatest contribution may simply be to listen when the dying person wishes to talk, particularly at night. Night time seems to accentuate loneliness when coping with life-threatening illness.

Listen also to their dreams. Through their dreams they may be letting go, getting ready for their journey. Help them decipher metaphorical language in dreams. What does it mean to them?