

WHAT TO SAY AND DO FOR A DYING FRIEND

What Should I Do?

- Don't Say, "If there's anything I can do, please let me know."
- Suggest to the caregiver, some specific way in which you could and would help.
- Don't forget your friend's family.
- Don't make the visits long or make conversation. Just your presence can be comforting.
- Make signs for the family door: VISITORS WELCOME or SORRY, NO VISITORS TODAY.
- Bring a book or magazine for the patient.
- Bringing food for the family is an enormous help.
- Don't make promises you can't keep.
- Focus on hope instead of sorrow.
- If you do not feel comfortable or you feel unwelcome, do not be offended.
- Don't send Get Well cards, send Thinking of You cards instead.

What Should You Say?

- Don't Say:
 - "I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL"
 - "THINGS COULD BE WORSE"
 - "YOU LOOK GREAT" When they don't
 - Don't give False Hope or tell of a miraculous cure.
- Do:
 - Share honest thoughts and feelings and help the patient share there's.
 - "HOW ARE YOU DOING TODAY" instead of "how are you doing"
 - Don't be afraid to talk about dying.
 - Share Memories.
 - Quiet Time is better than nervous chatting.
 - LISTEN, LISTEN, LISTEN -

Source

The Memorial Committee, Unitarian Universalist Church, "Visiting a dying friend", May, 1994.

Build on Patrick's Three Guiding Principles

1. Maturing into our own grief work empowers us to be more present

- Panel shares about early loss and how they've changed (or not)
- Question for small groups (3-4 people): Recall one of your first experiences with death and grief. How do you think that experience has shaped you? How have you changed or stayed the same? How would you define "maturing into your own grief work"?

2. Flip WHO is making the contribution -- The Dying Person is the expert.

- One reason this is hard for some of us is because we have strong feelings that emerge as we contemplate being with the dying.
- Linda's story about "How do you feel about that?" from Social Worker
- Experiential moment: Imagine you are preparing to visit a loved one in hospice care. What fears and worries come for you? What are your concerns? Where do you feel that in your body? Write these down. How can you attend to these feelings before during and after your visit so that you can be as "present" as possible to the dying person?
- Relatedly, many of us will have multiple roles with a dying person -- Caregiver, health navigator, family coordinator, etc, so that just being present can be crowded out. Can you think of what kind of support you might need in order set aside some time just for "BEING" with the dying person?

3. Our Focus is a Ministry of Presence.

- Comfort Touch
- Gentle conversation. Open-ended Questions. Note Ira Byock's research about Four things that Matter Most (I forgive you. Will you forgive me? Thank you. I love you.)
- Small Group - How have you expressed those four things to people who love and/or whom you've accompanied as they die? What do you think of those? What would you add or take away?

4. AT GRACE: How do we support the dying and their families now? What opportunities are out there? How can we "show up" during this critical time for one another as a family of faith?