



## **VOLUNTEERS - CARING FOR THE SPIRIT**

### **Spiritual Pain**

Spiritual pain “is a complex fear of dying, guilt and regret about one’s life, and sadness about the imminent separation from one’s love, children and friends. This kind of pain is more intense and lasts longer.

Not everyone is interested in spiritual support. It is important to be sensitive to an invitation into someone’s spiritual life, and also to a dis-invitation.

### Spiritual Pain:

- A sense of discomfort or unease that is very deep within oneself related to one’s relationship to God or to others in a spiritual sense.
- Feelings of having a void or lack of spiritual fulfillment
- A lack of peace in terms of one’s relationship to one’s creator.
- Expressions of loneliness, or the feeling that God is very far away and remote from one’s everyday life. A loneliness of spirit, a loneliness for God. When one’s sense of self as a person, that part of the person that is spirit, is violated
- Anger at God
- Expressions of helplessness, questioning the meaning and purpose in life
- Grief
- Expressions of helplessness, questioning the meaning and purpose in life
- What occurs when one sees evil in the world
- When I’m not able to say what I have to say
- Internal aching due to a disquieted self, an unsettled self
- When someone doesn’t live up to your expectations

Spiritual Issues may be:

- Sin, guilt, shame
- Identity
- Reconciliation –forgiving and being forgiven
- Purpose and meaning of life and death
- Meaning of suffering
- Nature of God
- Afterlife
- Nature and disposition of the Soul
- Detachment and disengagement
- Peace and contentment

### **Spiritual Care:**

We all have the same goals. We all want the same things out of life; we all want to feel safe and loved. We want to feel that we belong to someone or something and that our life makes a difference. We want to feel ‘alive’ \_ spontaneous and creative.

Spiritual care is a type of ‘companioning’ wherein the caregiver provides a caring, accepting companionship that supports and encourages the individual on their unique journey.

Spiritual Care helps us make sense of and accept all the things in life and death that are beyond our control. Death is not an emergency; it is not a catastrophe; and it is not a mistake or an accident. To this end Spiritual Care models an attitude regarding death as the inevitable and benevolent conclusion to life.

#### Desired Goals and Outcomes:

- More peaceful relaxed death- for everyone
- Intergenerational effect
- Individuals experience the reality of spirituality
- Improves ability to endure the tough times
- Improves post-death resilience of the survivors
- Contributes to a more positive and constructive end of life experience for the whole family
- Families have good memories of the death to carry forward into their new lives
- Families take away a positive personal experience of death which they will teach to their children
- Families begin to take notice and receive comfort from the meaning of life’s events
- Families begin to feel spiritually fulfilled because they can see the truth of their beliefs in action. May have an appetite for further spiritual development and community after the loved one’s death

#### **COMPANIONING VS.TREATING**

The Hospice Volunteer is a companion on the journey of living, dying and grieving. Companioning is...

- About honoring the spirit; not focusing on the intellect
- About curiosity; not expertise
- About learning from others; not teaching them
- About walking alongside; not leading
- About being still; not frantic movement forward
- About listening with the heart; not analyzing with the head
- About discovering the gifts of sacred silence; not filling every painful moment with words
- About bearing witness to the struggles of others; not about directing those struggles
- About being present to another person’s pain; not about taking it away
- Companioning is about respecting disorder and confusion; it is not about imposing order and logic
- Companioning is about going to the wilderness with another human being; it is not about thinking you are responsible for finding the way out
- Companioning is about being with an equal

#### **Hope**

- Hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It is not the conviction that things will turn out well- but the certainty that something makes sense regardless of how it turns out. - Written in prison by Vaclav Havel who became President of Czechoslovakia.
- Hope is not a fixed state but it transforms according to one’s circumstances
- First hope is always for cure. Next hope may be for time. Next hope may be for freedom from pain. Next hope might be for the company of loved ones.

- Patient's in end of life care hope for: a beautiful sunrise, a settled tummy that can enjoy some fresh custard, energy to go outside for a look at the garden, one more special backrub
- Some patients hope that their families can reconcile their differences before their death
- Some people hope for a timely death so their families will not be exhausted by care giving.
- Parents hope for a death that will not expose their children to the parent's suffering.
- War Veterans hope for a courageous death. Ministers hope for a faithful death.
- Most people hope for a gentle peaceful death; occasionally people may be excited about what is ahead.
- One person in response to the question "What makes today worth waking up for?" responded: "sunlight and ice water!" even in the face of death, life has beauty and value.
- Death does not cancel or invalidate a lifetime; it is a graduation beyond the accomplishments of a lifetime to a new place where life is no longer needed.

#### **Hope.....**

- "A feeling of expectation and desire combined; a desire for certain events to happen."
- Important to our quality of life
- Gives us inner strength
- Helps us cope
- Positive effects on our immune system
- "Hope lies not in a way out, but in a way through." Robert Frost

#### **Hopelessness....**

- Depression
- Suicide
- Negative changes in physical health
- "No hope; impossible to solve."
- In the face of a terminal diagnosis...people feel a sense of hopelessness.

#### **Hope in the face of death:**

- "Hope can be found in the darkest moments and surmount even the threat of death."
- There is always hope and it is OK to be hopeful
- Hope – a powerful force that can bring lightness to darkness and give us purpose and reason to go on.
- Hope to be comfortable – pain relief – not to suffer
- Hope to live long enough for a special occasion, complete a special project
- Hope to share what is important to you, to spend time with loved ones
- Hope that the time left has meaning joy and purpose
- Hope to make amends, bring people together, family will be OK
- Hope for dignity, love, support
- Hope not to be a burden
- Hope for a peaceful death
- Hope to be remembered

### **Hope Stealers:**

- Bad days – Symptoms out of control. Looking too far ahead
- Negatives messages – people don't want to be told too many times they are dying..
- Experience with the healthcare system – treated like a number, an inconvenience

### **Hope Builders:**

- Hanging on to hope in the midst of dying requires energy, focus and a fight...
- Do what you have to do- accept, recharge
- Supportive relationships – family, friends, care team
- Live in the moment – keep things normal, don't look too far ahead.
- Stay positive – look for good things, put away negatives, appreciate the day and what it has to offer
- Connect with something bigger and stronger – deep beliefs, simple prayer, higher power, nature, meditate, music, art
- Write your won story – stay in control, do it your way, make your own decisions

Research has shown that both hope and hopelessness are somehow contagious. They are both caught and given and that the responses of one person affect another.

### **Understanding of and comfort with the volunteer's role in promoting and supporting hope:**

Don't be artificially optimistic with: "Relax. Everything is fine, you're going to get better." No overdone cheerleading – "Happy, happt, joy, joy!"

### **DO :**

- Facilitate caring relationships – your attitude will influence a person's hope – have a hopeful attitude
- Foster humor and play- laughter and play can change a person's perspective and inspire hope – funny stories, jokes
- Encourage determination and courage – family/friends are "caught up in the dance"- be a source of strength, calmness, presence
- Help with attainable goals – talk to people about their goals, their hopes and support them to achieve them – work with the team to make their goals possible
- Support the religious and spiritual needs of people/families – understand and support their cultural beliefs, rituals
- Encourage them to share their Life's story – help them reminisce, tell you about their life
- Attentive listening – "What were your challenges today? What gave you hope today? What do you want for tomorrow? How can I help? **"One of the greatest gifts we can give is to listen."**
- Be there – be present- people are afraid of being abandoned – help people sustain a sense of meaning, purpose and self-worth