



PATIENT SAFETY TOOL BOX TALKS®

EFFECTIVE CARE & SUPPORT

END OF LIFE CARE THE LAST DAYS



v1.0

How can we care for someone as he/she approaches the end of their life... and in the days afterwards

KEY MESSAGES

Keep the person at the centre of all conversations

Acknowledge and address the family's concerns

Good end of life care is everybody's job, and continues after death

"To cure sometimes, to relieve often, to comfort always".

Anonymous physician, 16th century

"If patients couldn't control getting cancer or ultimately dying from it, they wanted power over such issues as treatment decisions, family issues, final days of life and control of arrangements after death."

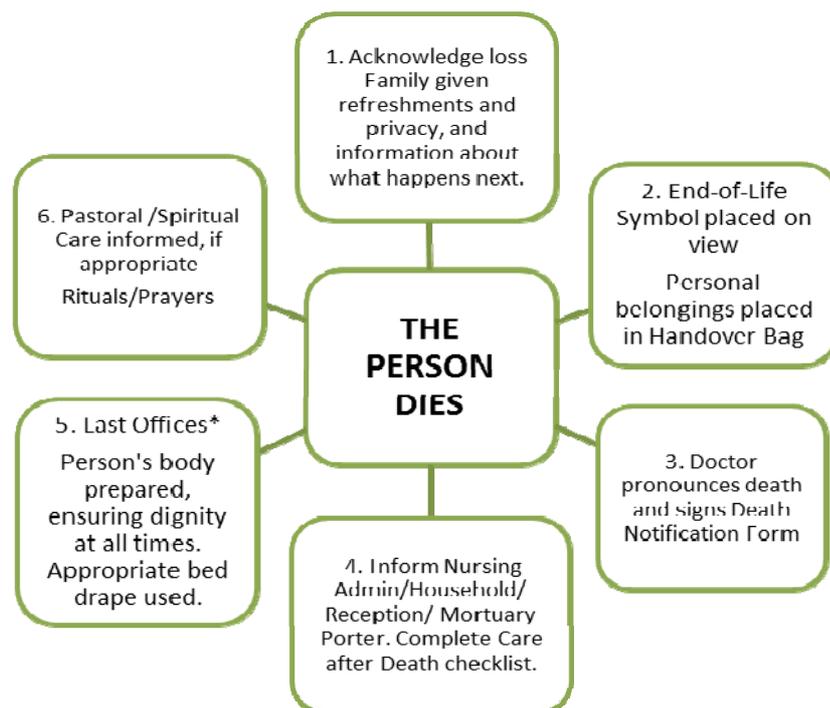
- Dr. Debbie Volker

MY ROLE: Keep the person at the centre - continue being available to them and communicating with them; break any bad news well; listen to the person's concerns and allow for tears; keep monitoring the person's needs and recognise when the person is dying. **Involve the whole team:** palliative care, social work, AHPs, pastoral care and HCAs. **Mind yourself** and look out for your colleagues too (this can be a hard time for staff).

The FAMILY needs... Family members need to have their concerns and fears acknowledged and addressed. They need clear information (given with the patient's permission), including being told clearly when the person is near death/dying. They need to be included in the caring, and linked with support services (such as social work, pastoral care). They need support, including privacy and having individual time with the person for conversations, and time to process with is happening..

The PERSON (PATIENT) needs... to feel like they are still fully respected and at the centre of what is happening to them through being included, having a say in their care, being listened to, being honoured, being supported, and good honest communication and documentation about their needs, concerns and wishes. The person also needs privacy, a chance to get their affairs in order, to have their spiritual needs met, and to be at peace.

CARE AFTER DEATH-WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?



*Last Offices (known as Laying out of the deceased person) refers to the care of a person's body after they have died. Last offices occur when the doctor has certified the person dead and the family have had time to view their deceased loved one.

CARE AFTER DEATH

CONTINUING TO CARE FOR THE PERSON AFTER DEATH

KEY POINTS

1. Acknowledge the loss. "I am sorry [NAME OF PERSON] has died"
2. Give support as needed but private time too
3. Practical Help: refreshments, information, access to phone
4. Be available to the family / relatives, etc...
5. Ensure dignity, privacy and time
6. Give Information

- Ensure dignity, respect and privacy for the person.
- Always refer to the deceased person by name. Leave the person's body undisturbed for an appropriate time.
- Establish the person's preferences — check any documented notes of their advance care wishes.
- Gather necessary information and contact numbers for family.
- Last Offices, as per policy — invite the family to play a part (e.g. fixing the person's hair).
- Prepare the room—use the HFH bed drape and ward altar. (For other cultures, refer to the HSE Multi Cultural Guide for End of Life).
- Place patient's personal belongings (but not food), in the designated Handover bag. When bringing the family back in to view the deceased person, tell them how the person will look now. Approach the body first yourself. Touch the person's head or hands and again acknowledge the loss. This simple gesture makes it safe for everyone. Stay a little while until family settles and take your leave.

SUPPORT FOR FAMILY / RELATIVES / FRIENDS

Make sure Next of Kin / Significant Other (s) are informed. Once the person has died, confirm the death to the relatives. Acknowledge the loss. Remember, even though the death may have been expected, it can still come as a shock. Stay with the family until they settle. Then, take your leave, assuring them that you are nearby if they need you. Ensure privacy. Invite people, especially partners/family members, to take five minutes each alone with the person if they want. Inform Pastoral Care, if appropriate. Reassure them that there is no need to rush. Provide refreshments and phone access, if needed, and information on what will happen next. When the family are almost ready to leave, return the person's belongings in the handover bag and give contact numbers and information on mortuary opening hours, how to collect the Death Notification Form, bereavement support, remembrance services, etc.

DO SAY

"I am sorry has died"
"Death is always a shock ,even when you expect it"
"This is hard for you"
"Take your time do not rush arrangements."
"Would you like some time alone to say good bye"
"I am just outside if you need me"
"Would you like to help us to lay out your loved one?"
"Would you like to bring in the children?"

DON'T SAY

"At least the suffering is over..."
"She is in a better place"
"He is happy now"
"He had a good innings"
"Wasn't he a great age?"
"You have an angel in heaven"
"He is gone!"
"It could be worse!"
"I know how you feel..."