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DEATH, DYING & DISCUSSIONS

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Objectives

- Understand how people assimilate and adapt to serious illness
- Identify the signs and symptoms of approaching death
- Discern grief vs. depression
- Facilitate conversations about wellness, death & dying
- Questions & answers

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How People Assimilate & Adapt to Serious Illness

Kuebler-Ross Stages of Dying (1969)

1. Denial/Disbelief
2. Anger
3. Bargaining
4. Depression/Grief
5. Acceptance

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Grief vs. Depression

Grief	Depression
Thoughts preoccupied with sadness & despair	Worthlessness & hopelessness
Responds to comfort	Does not respond to comfort
Feeling tone is sad & tearful	Feeling tone is all pervasive misery
View of self is soul searching	View of self is self-loathing
Focus of attention is self & others	Focus of attention is self

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End of Life Symptoms: 1-3 Months

- Eat less
- Sleep more
- Talk less
- Withdrawal from people and activities

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End of Life Symptoms: 1 – 2 Weeks

- Very little food intake
- Sleep most of the time
- Change in vital signs
- Confusion
- Congestion
- Restless or agitated
- Near death awareness

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End of Life Symptoms: Days or Hours

- Comatose
- May experience a surge of energy
- Muscle weakness
- Weak pulse
- Irregular breathing
- Eyes glaze over
- Cold, purple, blotchy feet and hands
- Decreased urine output

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Signs & Symptoms of Death

- No pulse
- No breathing
- Relaxed muscles
- Bowel or bladder release

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Conversations about wellness, death & dying

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Why Have the Conversation?

- 90% of people say talking with loved ones about end-of-life is important
- 27% have actually done so
- 80% say if seriously ill, they would want to discuss their wishes regarding treatment with their doctor
- 7% have had this conversation

(The Conversation Project)

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Why Have the Conversation?

- Enables thoughtful choices and preparation
- Helps to alleviate fear
- Creates deeper bonds in our relationships
- Can smooth out the turning points

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Early Conversation Starters

- What does it mean to be well?
- What do you want when you are not well?
- What are your thoughts about quality vs. quantity of life?

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5 Wishes

1. Who do you want to make decisions for you when you can't?
2. What kind of medical treatment do you want/not want?
3. How comfortable do you want to be if you have pain?
4. How do you want others to treat you?
5. What do you want loved ones to know?

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Treatment Questions

- What is your understanding of where you are and of your illness?
- What are your hopes and fears about this treatment?
- What outcomes are unacceptable to you?
- What are you willing to sacrifice and not?

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Questions That Deepen The Bond

- When you look over your life, what mattered the most?
- What matters most now?
- What are your fondest memories and greatest accomplishments?
- How do you want to be remembered?
- What do you think happens when you die?

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Tips for Having the Conversation

- Now not later
- Let the conversation develop over time
- Listen to understand not change a person's views
- Stay centered in loving kindness
- Start with yourself
- Meet others where they are

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Tips continued

- Answer questions as honestly as you can
- Avoid keeping secrets
- Validate, comfort and acknowledge uncertainty
- Allow emotions
- Practice builds skill

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Resources

- On Death & Dying by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross
- Being Mortal by Atul Gawande
- Visions, Trips & Crowded Rooms by David Kessler
- Fivewishes.org
- www.floridahealthfinder.gov/reports-guides/advance-directives.aspx
- GriefInfo@TreasureHealth.org

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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

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Thank You for Sharing in

Death, Dying & Conversations

Mayes Center
1201 SE Indian Street
Stuart, FL 34997

William & Helen Thomas Counseling Center
5000 Dunn Road
Ft. Pierce, FL 34981

Phone: 772-403-4500
Fax: 772-403-4534
Referrals: 772-403-4551
Web: TreasureHealth.org

Caring for the Treasure Coast Community since 1982

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