

When death is near

If you are reading this leaflet, it is possible that someone close to you is dying at this time

..... the statement you have been dreading
..... the statement you have known was coming

Which ever it is, there will be a whole mixture of feelings:

Loss,
Pain,
Anger,
Fear of the unknown for yourself, and the person who is dying,
Relief that their suffering is ending,

and many more feelings that belong to you, because of your relationship with the person.

This leaflet may help you to make sense of some of these feelings, and may also offer some practical advice.

Partnership

At this time it is important that you talk with the ward staff about:

- any religious or spiritual needs or specific wishes you have, on the handling of the deceased person.

- how much you want to take part in the initial care of the deceased. *(Remember - you can change your mind)*

Taking care of yourself

For some people their dying may take some hours or days, so be aware of your own limitations as well as your strengths.

Who else might be around to support you both personally and practically - are there other family members or friends who can be around? Also be aware of the hospital team members who can offer both information and emotional support.

You may not feel like eating regular meals, but it is important that you try to eat when you can.

Take breaks even if that feels unthinkable. Whenever you leave the bedside say a silent goodbye.

When staying by the bedside have a conversation that is appropriate with the dying person, and don't be afraid to be **you**.

If you are not staying at night, inform staff of your wishes if the patient deteriorates or dies during the night.

Always check with staff to confirm the right telephone numbers, and who should be called.

If you have any special requests, talk them over with the ward teams, to see what is manageable in a ward environment.

General points that may be useful to think about

Who else needs to be informed, and told what is happening?

If in employment, what arrangements might you need to make?

Are there any medical questions you need to go over with the doctors, ward staff or palliative care team?

Are you worried about your financial situation? *(Do tell us, we can point you in the direction of possible help).*

Do you want any of the chaplaincy team to visit you, or your own minister of religion?

Is there a will, and do you know where it is?

Are there any thoughts regarding burial or cremation?

Do you want to visit the deceased in the hospital viewing room, or wait until they are taken to the chapel of rest?

Have you decided which firm of undertakers you wish to use?

The funeral

There are various choices you will be asked to make. Please remember you are able to take as much, or as little responsibility for how the goodbye is done.

For instance,

- what sort of service it will be,
- how long it will be,
- who might attend or take part,
- what kind of music there will be.

Other sources of support

When bereaved, services that you may wish to access include:

Hospital services, Guy's and St Thomas'

General hospital services

- Bereavement office for collection of death certificate and practical advice.
- Chaplaincy team.

For friends and families of those who have died of cancer or under the palliative care team, needing support,

Contact

Mike Fitzsimmons, Lead Therapist,
Carers' Psychological Support
0207 188 4741
(pager **08700 555500** code 843330)

Other services

Local / National

- London Bereavement Network.
www.bereavement.org.uk
- Southwark Bereavement Care:
0208 304 2949
- Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham Carers' Groups offer bereavement support.
- Samaritans: **08457 909090**
- Cruse Help line: **0870 167 1677**

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Carers' Psychological Support Service

Guy's, King's and St Thomas' Cancer Centre



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