



Presented by mmLearn.org

The Emotional and Spiritual Attributes of Caregiving: From a Hospice Chaplain Perspective

with Darwin L. Huartson, M.Div. BCC
VITAS Bereavement Services Manager

The Path

- Who among us hasn't felt like we are in the wrong place in life at one time or another. Like we have somehow taken a wrong turn and ended up in a place that seems wrong.
- But I heard something the other day that I keep remembering. "The Path" doesn't get lost. It may take you into unfamiliar territory and you may be confused and afraid.
- But "The Path" doesn't get lost. It always knows where it is going.
- And if you stay on it, you'll come through the shadowy places, the murky places, the darkest valleys.
- You have been given a promise not that the journey will be an easy one, but that you never go alone.

End of Life:

- ⊙ Is a sacred time
- ⊙ Offers challenges and opportunities
- ⊙ Requires honest and compassionate conversation
- ⊙ Sharing “bad news” gives us an opportunities to redefine “hope”

Delivering “bad news” is challenging because...

- ⦿ Intense reactions
- ⦿ Fear
- ⦿ Don't want to take hope away
- ⦿ Stress
- ⦿ Feeling inadequate
- ⦿ It takes time

Keep in mind...

- ⦿ Trust that the person has the answer within
- ⦿ Keep good boundaries
- ⦿ Avoid use of clichés
- ⦿ Validate feelings
- ⦿ Proactive active listening
- ⦿ Ask if a person wants to pray...don't assume
- ⦿ Help clarify religious, spiritual values

Common Reactions

Helpful: tears, denial, anger, bargaining, realistic, hope, humor.

Unhelpful:

Guilt, pathological denial, prolonged rage, collapse, anxiety, unrealistic hope

When it's time for Hospice...

The most comprehensive option available to patients with a terminal illness is one that gives patients access to medical care that :

Addresses disease process

Provides pain management

Attends to the emotional, social, and spiritual impact of the disease on the patient and family

The Unique Experience of Death

- ⊙ Each individual has a unique experience
- ⊙ Nothing is concrete
- ⊙ There is no typical pathway
- ⊙ Death comes in its own time and its own way
- ⊙ Our most important task is to be present

The role of a Caregiver

- The role of a caregiver might be compared to a candle. A candle can help illuminate and experience, provide a path in the darkness and give courage to explore.

- Ken Doka