

**SIGNATURE** healthcare  
at home

care where you are

# SOMEONE I LOVE IS DYING

The death of a loved one is one of the most difficult, painful experiences life has to offer. Grief doesn't wait until our loved one is gone, but often begins with the many changes and losses we experience through diagnosis, illness, and eventually, a terminal prognosis. We lose our hopes and dreams for the future; we lose the relationship as we knew it. Depending on the nature of the illness, we may watch helplessly as a friend or loved one loses independence, bodily control, or even the ability to recognize us. It can make us furious, resentful, guilty, frightened, and sad. Unfortunately in the middle of this experience, we do not recognize that we are already grieving, and so are unprepared to cope with the onslaught of changes and emotions. This handout is intended to provide families coming on to hospice a brief introduction to the grief process, and an opportunity to seek resources for support through Signature Hospice and through their own community.

## **GRIEF AND ANTICIPATORY GRIEF**

Grief is a series of psychological experiences we go through in coming to acknowledge, accept, and heal from the loss of a loved one. Grief is a process, it is not an event. Grief happens in different ways for different people. There are physical, emotional, spiritual, and psychological effects of grief. Anticipatory grief has many of the same processes, but with some additional elements. Anticipatory grief allows us to absorb our loss over some period of time, to complete any "unfinished business", and to plan for changes we can expect as a result of the death of our loved one. This may seem like too much to think about in the moment, but again, it is a process, and the role of Signature Hospice is to help both you and your loved one through it.

## **WAYS THAT GRIEF MAY BE AFFECTING YOU**

Grief affects us in many ways. Physical effects can include disturbed sleep, intestinal or respiratory distress, and fatigue. Psychological effects can include difficulty thinking and concentrating, forgetfulness and anxiety. The extreme emotions of grief can overwhelm us at inconvenient or unexpected times such as the

work place or some other public setting. These may not be normal experiences for you, but they are very normal for the grief process. Do not underestimate the effects of grief on your mind and body and make allowances for this as you begin the process of preparing for your loved one's death.

## **EXTREME EMOTIONS**

The lack of control over our loved one's illness can be infuriating and frustrating. One of the things that many bereaved people express frustration with is the fear of being overtaken by feelings of grief. One of the things I try to point out is that expressing intense emotions is not losing control, but rather a normal and very appropriate response to an incredibly painful experience. Repressed emotions can add to physical and psychological effects of grief, making the situation worse. Certainly it is preferable to express emotions in a safe place with the support of trusted friends. However, if feelings catch you unexpectedly in a situation, it is your own way of experiencing grief and does not necessarily mean you are "losing control".



**SIGNATURE** healthcare  
at home

care where you are

## SOMEONE I LOVE IS DYING [CONTINUED]

### SOMEONE I LOVE IS DYING [CONTINUED]

This information is meant to make you aware of the possibility that you are already grieving, and that there are ways that Signature Hospice can help you with this. By addressing your needs wherever possible, we hope to enhance the quality of life for you and your loved one as you live life to the fullest in the coming months. Signature Hospice is here for you as much as your loved one and we encourage you to take advantage of all we have to offer.

### GUILT, RESENTMENT, RELIEF

Many of us have some kind of expectation of how we “should” feel based on a variety of factors including our social, cultural, and childhood experiences. You may feel a sense of abandonment and resentment that your loved one is dying. You may feel on some level a sense of relief that your loved one will no longer suffer, and at the same time be ashamed of that feeling. You may even be blessed with moments of joy or happiness in which you forget that someone you love is dying and feel guilty about it. All of these feelings and more are very common in the experience of grief.

### YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Many times caregivers and loved ones of the dying are afraid to show fear or acknowledge feeling lost and confused for fear that this will cause additional distress to our dying loved one. Unfortunately, this often becomes the expectation we have of ourselves even when our loved one is not present. Exhausted caregivers can make medication mistakes, miss important information, and may come to resent time with their loved one, missing the chance to just enjoy it. It is imperative that you try to be aware of your needs and get them met. Reach out. If possible, share the load with friends and family members. Take advantage of community resources such as respite care, support groups, and other benefits. If you don't know where to start, Signature Hospice can help you.



#### Portland/Salem and Surrounding Areas:

P 800.936.4756 (Toll Free)

#### Eugene:

P 866.306.4279 (Toll Free)

[info@4signatureservice.com](mailto:info@4signatureservice.com)

Patient services are provided without regard to race, color, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability (mental or physical), communicable disease, place of national origin or military status.