

KEEPING COMPANY AT THE END-OF-LIFE



Ten ways to care for your loved one and yourself.



1 | Learn the signs and symptoms of the end of life.

It's not unusual to be afraid of what this process will look like. Sometimes people worry they will walk in the door and find their loved one dead. Disease usually follows a pattern, and becoming familiar with this pattern can alleviate some of the anxiety of the process.

2 | Take advantage of good days.

When your loved one seems to have more energy or is feeling "better," do something with that time—whatever she wants to do! And if she is exhausted the next day, it's okay. You have not hastened your loved one's decline. You have brought goodness or joy even into this journey.

3 | Gather important people before your loved one dies.

Celebrate or cry with your loved one. Bless your loved one with your heart words and let him bless you all in return.

4 | Record the word of blessing or the stories of your loved one.

Record her reading a book to or for her grandchild. Record him telling a story from his childhood.

5 | Plan a sentimental journey.

If physically possible, this could be a walk around a favorite park, a concert, a trip to an art museum—something for your loved one's joy.

6 | Speak your heart often.

Speak to your loved one and to your support system.

7 | Laugh without shame.

Memories will come from places deep within your heart and mind, and some will make you laugh and cry at the same time.

8 | Make funeral plans ahead of time.

Families are vulnerable at the time of death, and it is best to avoid making significant financial decisions in that period of stress if possible. This can also help avoid the "I'm not sure what he would have wanted" experience that can lead to dissension in families.

9 | Drink lots of water.

You have lots of tears to cry, so give your body what it needs to do so.

10 | Seek grief counseling or grief support.

Do this at least one time after your loved one's death. It can be a healing, affirming experience to be with others who are walking a similar grief path.

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