

Fact Sheet Four : Social and emotional care for yourself and the dying

Someone you love is dying and it feels as if a part of you is dying too. It is not easy to think about what all this means. What will life be like without them? What will happen to you in the future? What will become of your relationship?

It is important to know that you will experience a range of feelings, and that these will change over time. Try to find someone you can talk to about these feelings, especially if they are making you feel tired, irritable or stressed. The first reactions to the news of a terminal condition can be: shock, anger, denial, and fear. The person dying may blame others, or you may blame yourself.

Later, as you come to terms with the news of the terminal condition, you and the person with the terminal condition may want to talk more about your feelings and you may want to become more organised to give the needed care.

You may feel frustrated because your care isn't making the dying person feel better, or frustrated with and jealous of other members of your family who appear closer to the person with the terminal condition. All of these feelings are okay. Different people deal with their feelings in different ways.

The person with a terminal condition may experience feeling lonely, afraid, in pain, confused, sad, angry, or at peace. The emotional needs of the dying person may be:

- Companionship;
- Spiritual comfort;
- The opportunity to talk to loved ones and express his/her feelings;
- The opportunity for loved ones to listen to his/her last words of love and wisdom and special requests;
- Someone to make sure their last wishes are carried out; and
- Help in giving away his/her personal things.

It is important to accept people's reactions, respect personal beliefs and ensure confidentiality during this time. The important thing is to listen, be patient, honest, gentle and sensitive.

Places to get help

Winnunga Nimmitjyah Aboriginal Health Service

63 Boolimba Street
Narrabundah ACT 2604
Tel: (02) 6284 6220

Canberra Hospital Aboriginal Liaison Officer

Building 3, The Canberra Hospital,
Yamba Drive
Garran ACT 2605
Tel: (02) 6244 2222

Canberra Hospital - Palliative Care

Capital Region Cancer Service
Yamba Drive
Garran ACT 2605
Tel: (02) 6244 2222

Clare Holland House

5 Menindee Drive
Barton ACT 2600
Tel: (02) 6273 0336

ACT Palliative Care Society

PO Box 88
Civic Square ACT 2608
Tel: (02) 6273 9606

Carers ACT, Belconnen Office

Ground Floor, Churches Centre
54 Benjamin Way
Belconnen ACT 2617
Tel: (02) 6296 9900

Carers ACT, Torrens Office

1 Torrens Place
Torrens ACT 2607
Tel: (02) 6296 9900

Calvary Health Care ACT

Mary Potter Circuit
Bruce ACT 2617
Tel: (02) 6201 6111

