

Dying with Dignity

Dying can be peaceful and simple, but depending on the disease and disability, it can also be painful, problematic, messy and emotional. But it is possible for your elder to die with dignity—to make peace with him or herself, with family members and with friends—and to make peace with death itself. In fact, dying can present wonderful opportunities for reconciliation and communication. As a caregiver, you can help your elder die with dignity. Here are some suggestions:



You can help your elder to make peace with him or herself, with family members and with friends—and even make peace with death itself.

Make Use of Hospice Care

Hospice care is care of the terminally ill, provided by volunteers and medical health professionals who specialize in helping people and their families through the process of dying. Some hospice care is done within the home, and some hospices run residential centers where patients can receive short-term care. Hospice workers help to manage pain and physical discomfort, and they also help to work through some of the emotional and psychological issues that accompany dying.

Manage Pain

Palliative pain management, or hospice care, for terminally ill patients is often a critical part of a dignified death. Ask your health care providers or hospice workers to inform you and your elder of pain management programs that might be appropriate in your situation.

Face Death

Facing death can be a critical part of dying with dignity. Talk with your elder, if conversation is possible, about their impending death and what it means to them. Death does not have to be something that is feared; it is a normal part of human existence. Facing it can make it easier to accept.

Make the Most of Time

Try to make the most of the time that you have left with your elder. Do things that make him or her happy—even if that means sitting quietly in the room, reading a book, watching family movies or simply holding hands. Be affectionate. Bring in family members and friends. This is precious time and you should try and capture as much of it as you can.

Reconciliation

Reconciling—with family members and friends—can be an important part of going through a dignified death. This can be a time to work through differences, disagreements and misunderstanding.