



# angels grace

## — HOSPICE —

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## Hospice Provides Grief Support for Families and Loved Ones

**E**xperiencing the loss of a loved one is one of life's hardest challenges. The grieving process can be even more frustrating and painful when the people around you expect you to grieve in a certain way and on a certain timeline. **At hospice, we know that everyone grieves in their own way and in their own time.**

Grief can be described as a roller coaster of feelings, with ups and downs and unexpected turns. There may be moments of joy, but there may also be long stretches where it seems like you will never be happy again. There is no wrong way to grieve, and it's important to allow yourself space to feel every emotion you need to.

One of the hardest aspects of the grieving process is not knowing what to expect from one day to the next. You may feel like you've been making progress through your grief, only to feel like all your forward motion has been undone in one moment. But it is impossible to move "backward" in your grief, even though it may seem like you are. You can't control the emotions you will experience, or if you feel worse tomorrow than you did today. Regardless of what each day brings, your progress is not being undone.

Grief is a process, not an event. It doesn't happen all at once. It may take months or even years to feel normal again. **It is okay for you to take as long as you need to grieve.** Grief is not something you "get over," but something you journey through. Your life will never be the same as it was before, but one day you will be okay again. Grief is an important part of the healing process. Trusted friends and support groups will understand and accept your grief.

Many support groups and other grief resources are provided by hospice, even if your loved one was not in hospice care. If you've experienced a loss or have begun to grieve a loss that's approaching, reach out to us for help. We are here for you during this difficult time.



### What can I do to help someone who is grieving?

- **Make specific offers to help.** Instead of saying "Please call if there's anything you need," volunteer to do a specific task, like bringing dinner or running errands.
- **Listen.** Encourage the grieving person to talk about their loved one if they want to. Accept all their emotions as they happen. Avoid responding with clichés like "They're in a better place now" or "This is part of God's plan."
- **Respect their needs.** Some grieving people need space. They may not want to be social or answer phone calls. Be available when they want company, but don't force or guilt them into doing anything before they're ready.

*Adapted from "Supporting Someone Who Is Grieving." CaringInfo.org*

## End-of-Life Information for Patients and Families

### End-of-Life Care Preferences Can Be Discussed Anytime

Many people wonder when it's the right time to talk to their doctor about the care they want at the end of life. As a result, some patients delay having these conversations and risk receiving medical treatment (like breathing machines or feeding tubes) that they do not want.

Medicare will now be covering end-of-life care conversations that patients have with their doctors, and it's not only for patients nearing death. Any Medicare patient can take advantage of the benefit at any time, allowing the patient to make their wishes clear before they become seriously ill.

There's also no limit to the number of conversations a patient can schedule with their doctor, so doctors can be continually updated on the patient's end-of-life care choices as the condition or prognosis changes.

It can be hard for physicians to begin a conversation about a patient's end-of-life care preferences. In a recent survey titled "Conversation Stopper: What's Preventing Physicians from Talking with Patients about End of Life and Advance Care Planning?", 92% of physicians reported that their main goal for advance care planning was to honor the patient's values and wishes, but nearly half also reported that they weren't sure what to say during conversations about end-of-life care choices.

Patients can help bridge this gap by starting the conversation and asking their doctor about the care choices available to them at the end of life. Don't be afraid to reach out to your doctor and schedule a time to talk. If you need ideas for what to say or how to bring up the subject, visit [www.acpdecisions.org/patients](http://www.acpdecisions.org/patients) for suggestions.

### Hospice Enrollment Helps Relieve End-of-Life Burdens

Because the goals of hospice include managing symptoms and making patients comfortable, patients often report a better quality of life after they enroll.

A new study published in the *American Journal of Medicine* has found that for patients nearing the end of life, the burden of "distressing symptoms" — like fatigue, depression, anxiety, muscle weakness, and feet/ankle swelling — is high. Many patients report that they spend over half the day in bed because of these restricting symptoms.

However, end-of-life patients can have hope that hospice will help. The study found that the burden of distressing symptoms was lessened once the patients enrolled in hospice, regardless of their illness. Hospice

patients are less likely to show symptoms, and when they do, are likely to have fewer symptoms than non-hospice patients. Since these symptoms can keep a patient from doing daily tasks, reducing their number can improve a patient's quality of life and help them do some of the activities they enjoy.

The study also found that, on average, patients were only enrolled in hospice for about two weeks before death. Since hospice is designed to relieve burdens for patients in the last six months of life, this late enrollment means patients miss out on the full benefit of hospice. In addition to getting relief for their distressing symptoms earlier, working with a hospice team also means having a support system for caregivers before and after the loss of their loved one.

If you think you or a loved one can benefit from hospice care, call us today.



Some people mistakenly think hospice care is just about dying...nothing could be further from the truth. Hospice helps patients and families focus on living. Angels Grace Hospice, LLC, brings comfort, dignity and peace to help people with a life-limiting illness live every moment of life to the fullest. We also provide support for family and friends.

We are licensed in the state of Illinois, Medicare Certified, Joint Commission Accredited and are locally owned and operated by experienced professionals dedicated to providing excellent end-of-life care for Will, Cook, DuPage, Kendall, Grundy, and Kane counties. Please contact us for more information.

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*To comfort always... this is our work*

