

Psychosocial Support During COVID-19 Training Video Series

Video Two: When Death is Approaching

Key Messages

In the Hours Prior to Death:

- Encourage any family, if allowed to be present at the bedside, to use touch through Personal Protective Equipment (ie. hold the dying person's hand or rub their feet). Be sure to check with the medical team first before engaging in touch to ensure risk is mitigated.
- Invite family to talk to the dying person (ie. share memories, sing, read aloud). Remind them the dying person can likely still hear them.
- Explain to family members who may be at the bedside, the dying process (what is happening, what to expect next), as they are comfortable. In general, when we understand and can make sense of something, it is less frightening; However, it is important to follow their lead and check in regarding how much information they wish to have. Warning families of these common changes that they may witness may help prepare them for the time ahead, but some are still disturbed.

Service Providers Should Be Prepared to Observe Acute Traumatic Grief in Family Members...

Common responses to Trauma:

- Intense and unpredictable feelings
- Changes to thoughts or behavior patterns.
- Difficulty concentrating and inability to retain information/need repetition
- Sensitivity to environmental factors/hypervigilance/easily startled
- Strained interpersonal relationships (easily frustrated, lack of patience, anger at others (anger, rage, blame)
- Stress related symptoms (chest pain, SOB, Low or high blood pressure, shakiness), "shock" symptoms (dizziness, sweating, increased heart rate, nausea/vomiting, paralysis of emotion/numbness, excessive tearfulness)

Service Providers Can Support Family Members Experiencing Acute Traumatic Grief in the following ways:

- Be present – sending the message that they are not alone and you can handle their expressions of grief
- Provide comfort with touch, as appropriate and safe
- Allow for silence – grieving individuals need time to process their thoughts and feelings and too much stimulation can hinder this
- Allow for the expression of grief – emotions need motion! In order to move toward healing, the bereaved must first experience grief and feel their emotions
- Offer comfort care – glass of water, assist them to a chair, provide a warm blanket

Remember...Go Back to Basics:

- Acknowledge experience
- Identify the feelings
- Validate
- Normalize
- Support