



GET INVOLVED

There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." Psalm 34:18

Maybe it's a co-worker, a family member, someone in your church or on your bowling team. They've been sick for a while; treatment hasn't helped. Now you hear they're on hospice.

How can you support your friend?

Your friend is dying. The person you saw and spoke with so easily now seems impossible to call or visit. You put off seeing them because you don't know what to say, how to act.

Take a deep breath. This is about your friend, not you. Wise words gleaned from professionals and from people just like you can help. Hospice makes time for final words and second chances. Not only can you visit a dying friend, but both of you will be better for it.

First, of course, you should be yourself. Second, you're going to take conversational cues from your friend. Whether they want to talk about death or last night's game, you are there to listen, ask questions and keep the focus on them.

If you both sit silently, that is OK too. Some wonderful conversations arise out of silence.

Ask if there is anything you can do, from filling a water pitcher to walking the dog to picking the last of their tomatoes—long after your friend is gone.

Plan to stay 15 minutes. If it's going well and your friend has enough stamina, you can stay longer. Whether your visit is in a facility or at home, be cognizant of schedules and the patient's needs. Ask if you should step away if something needs to be done for the patient.

More ways to be a good hospice visitor:

1. Call ahead and ask when you should come. Ask if you can bring a certain food or gift.
2. Sit, don't stand. Take off your coat. Be at eye level with the patient. Make eye contact.
3. Greet as you always have: an air kiss, a big hug, a handshake.

4. If the patient is very sick, they may face away from you, close their eyes or be unresponsive. Don't be anxious. Talk quietly about a time you have shared, or mutual friends who wish them well, or even the weather. You are bringing the gift of presence; the sound of your voice or the touch of your hand is enough.
5. Talk about shared memories. A good phrase to begin with: "What I know I'm going to remember is ..."
6. Visit more than once, or visit in other ways: by phone, in texts or email, in short videos or an old-fashioned letter.
7. Read "What to say when you don't know what to say"
<https://www.vitas.com/family-and-caregiver-support/grief-and-bereavement/grief-support/what-to-say-when-you-dont-know-what-to-say> the tips there are as valid for a terminally ill friend as for a grieving friend.
8. Let the conversation go where the patient wants it to go. Listen to their anger or fears or tears. Or don't talk about death and dying at all, if that's not where they go.
9. It's OK to laugh.
10. If they do trust you with their feelings, do not correct or pontificate or talk about your feelings. You are there to listen.
11. If they are in another world, join them. A veteran may be re-fighting a battle; a 93-year-old woman may think she's in the house with her mom and dad. Don't reason with them. You could ask questions about what they are experiencing. Or gently assure them, in touch and tone, that they are safe and you are right here.
12. Don't promise to come back unless you will. Say what's true: that you love them, or are praying for them, or are thinking of them, and that you are glad you visited.
13. If you can't bring yourself to visit in any way, learn from that reticence. Where are those feelings coming from? What is frightening to you? What would it take for you to literally be there when a friend is dying?

Prayer for the Dying

Almighty, eternal God, heavenly Father, comfort and strengthen this your servant and save them through your goodness. Deliver them from all anguish and distress, release them in your grace, and take them to yourself in your kingdom; through Jesus Christ your dear Son, our only Lord Savior, and Redeemer. Amen.

Get Involved. You can make a profound difference in the lives of our patients and their families. See the many ways you can join us. It could be your life's best work.



Hospice of Michigan <https://www.hom.org>

By caring for our communities more than 40 years, we are the most experienced provider of hospice care in Michigan. Currently serving more than 4,000 patients annually in 50 counties.

We provide care for all—regardless of age, diagnosis, or ability to pay. Last year, our commitment extended \$4 million beyond what was reimbursed by insurance. Because we welcome those who are uninsured, or whose treatment is more expensive than what other hospices can provide, we depend on the financial support of our donors for the treatments, medications, services, grief support, and spiritual care of patients and families in need.

Become a Volunteer: <https://www.hom.org/get-involved/getting-started/>

Our volunteers are the heart of Hospice of Michigan.

We have more than 600 dedicated volunteers across the state serving in roles that build on their strengths and abilities—whether it's providing companionship or caregiver relief support at the patient's bedside, raising awareness in the community about our services or in a number of administrative roles supporting office staff.

Donate: <https://www.hom.org/donations/>

There is more than one way to support Hospice of Michigan. See which one is best for you and consider making a gift that offers immediate support for our patients and their loved ones.

Fundraise:

The new way to fundraise, your way! With around the clock access to easy-to-use online tools, creating your own unique fundraising event is simple! With the added benefits of being fun, personalized and an easy way to raise money, your participation helps Hospice of Michigan continue to provide the compassionate care our patients deserve!

50 Ways to Volunteer: <https://www.hom.org/50-ways-to-volunteer/>