



Our Lady
of Peace

HOSPICE & HOME HEALTH CARE



THE *gift* OF HOSPICE

Our Lady of Peace Education Series

When we ask people, “what comes to mind when you hear the word hospice,” the common response is, “it’s where people go when they’re dying.” Would it surprise you to hear that hospice is also about living? Time and time again, the families we serve tell us, “hospice was a gift.” It gave them time to reflect on the life of their loved one and find peace in its lasting impact.

Our Lady of Peace Hospice Chaplain Brian Kroeger says the gifts of hospice go beyond words, when people allow themselves to be open to it, as they move towards death. It can be emotionally healing for the dying person, and everyone who surrounds them. Brian says, “Hospice allows people to enter a sacred space, where they leave normal time behind and go to a place where life and death are suspended. It’s here where people can explore what’s truly happening inside their heart.”

To make these words easier to understand, Brian shares the story of Nachiketa from the Upanishads, sacred Hindu scriptures.

THE STORY OF NACHIKETA

Nachiketa is a teenager with a successful and wealthy father who makes the decision to donate all of his wealth to build a temple, so he can be famous. His tenacious

son recognizes this and questions him on it, including asking, “Will you give me away too,” to which his father says, “I’ll give you to death.” At this point, Nachiketa questions whether his father has the ability to love him and attempts to seek answers through the process of death. He meditates without food or water for three days and three nights. In the process, the minions of death recognize his tenacity, and offer three gifts. One of the gifts Nachiketa asks for is love beyond words. He asks that his father receive him, like a parent with their first-born child, filled with overwhelming love and joy for the new life that came into the world.

Brian Kroeger uses stories similar to the one of Nachiketa to help guide spiritual, steadfastness, and he tailors the stories to the faith traditions and cultural understandings of patients and their families. He says it’s important that hospice chaplains meet people where they are and not inundate them with ideas that do not speak to their soul. Through these stories, Brian has guided dying people to a better understanding of the place where life and death are suspended, and it’s there where they were able to find peace. He says it’s a place of trust and gratitude for who you are and what you have accomplished, but to get there, you have to give up control.

Our Lady of Peace Hospice encourages people with a terminal illness to consider leaving the high-tech hospital to enter the high-touch experience of hospice, sooner rather than later. Sadly, people approach it with fear, rather than the comfort it provides to individuals and families. Time in hospice can be a gift to families because it offers time and space to speak honestly, but some find it difficult to find the words.

Based on the work of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, the 4 Gifts of Hospice offer words that can be shared by the person who is dying to loved ones, as well as by loved ones to the person who is dying:

The 4 Gifts of Hospice

1. I'M SORRY, PLEASE FORGIVE ME

A time to share thoughts and feelings, a time when it is possible that a forgiveness and reconciliation are experienced. We can say we are sorry for anything that may have gone wrong between us in our relationship with another person.

2. I LOVE YOU

Sometimes a more meaningful "I love you" is able to be expressed after an honest "I'm sorry" has been heard. People like to hear the words "I love you" said out loud. This expression of caring is not something to take for granted.

3. THANK YOU

Thank you for who you have been in my life, my husband, my wife, my son, my daughter, my mother, my father, my sister, my brother, my friend. A time to do some life review, looking at the good times and maybe those not so good. Getting out the family photo album or videos and sharing, expressing one's thankfulness for who this person has been in my life.

4. GOODBYE, I'LL BE OKAY

This may be the hardest but nevertheless a most important one. It is both giving and receiving permission to let go. Not that there won't be pain and grieving, but it may be the time to say good-bye and let the other person know you will be okay.



As hospice workers, we do what we can to facilitate and navigate a patient's spiritual journey within the sacred space where life and death are suspended. We meet people where they are in their spiritual journey, and it's clear that everyone we serve has a mythology, whether or not they are faithful. They are the stories they have spoken in their lives that shaped how they look at the world.

If you would like to learn more about the gift that hospice can be to you and your family, a chaplain from Our Lady of Peace Hospice would be happy to speak with you.



We're here for you.

We are passionate about community outreach.
We would love to meet you and discuss how
Our Lady of Peace can be a resource for you.

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