

## Being with the Dying

What does the faith leader bring to the dying person and his/her family that's different—maybe even unique? (Unique to your faith, denomination and person)

1. A reminder of the presence of the Mystery (eg. God, higher power)
2. The ability to identify and water the seeds of happiness.
3. The awareness of and facility in working with the myriad decisions facing the dying and their family members.
4. An ability to explore and offer insight into the meaning of one's life and one's spiritual experiences, including dying.
5. The conduit to our culture's rituals around dying
6. The ability/assignment to just be in the presence of suffering
7. A willingness to enter into the unknown/to be a safe anchorage in a tumultuous sea
8. An ease/facility with the symbolic and experiential (to acknowledge, without suspicion, the special awareness the dying often acquire).
9. Facilitate the critical end-of-life tasks: saying I love you, Thank you, Forgive me, etc.

How can the faith leader be/feel present for the dying? (Being, not doing, which is hard to get our hands around. Involves opening our hearts to whatever is unfolding.

1. Do your own death work.
2. Confront your own demons around death and dying.
3. Have an ongoing "talking partner" (someone with whom to process this work and the feelings it engenders).
4. Rely on your faith and be familiar with your faith's tenets re: dying, refusal and withdrawal of treatments (including nutrition and hydration), pain management.
5. Feel safe in knowing that your comfort level will grow and be aware of what you will gain/receive/learn on this path

6. Use the Braille method — feel your way through.
7. Remember spiritual care is relational.
8. Make a space for yourself at the table. (Become part of the team supporting the patient and family,

### **What can the faith leader “do” while being present?**

1. LISTEN -- Listening for Cues and Themes.
2. Show up (be fully present).
3. Be a spiritual & religious presence.
4. Be a non-judgmental presence.
5. Have an inviting demeanor.
6. Resist the urge to impose your own agenda.
7. Be a conduit to faith and the spiritual.
8. Be a calming, open model to the family and caregivers.