

Five Spiritual Signs that Death is Nearing

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One of the hospice benefits includes spiritual sensitivity. Spiritual signs that death is imminent motivate the family to engage in their own spiritual rituals and comfort measures. It is common to seek the services of the chaplain and/or personal clergy. The ultimate goal is spiritual readiness, the peaceful passage and triumphant arrival on the other side.

1. Life Review

During the physical and social decline of your loved one, spiritual activity is occurring. There may be stories forthcoming never told before. Spiritual lessons learned are passed on to the family. The desire to complete unfinished relational business is part of the “letting go” process.

Near the very end

As the body declines, the spirit activates a new dimensional level.

How you can help

- Be sensitive toward efforts to express spiritual emotions.
- Offer spiritual affirmations of love, prayer and support.
- Provide gentle touch for reassurance.
- Discover spiritual nuggets in family stories.

2. Emotional attachment

Each family has its own emotional attachment system. Some are very attached while others are reserved. A few are detached. Illness softens people when the masks are tossed aside. It is appropriate to express gentle feelings. Expressions, real or wished for, are appropriate in the

context of seeking forgiveness for failures. Detachment does not always signify a lack of love but preparation for leave-taking.

Near the very end

Though the loved one may not physically or verbally respond grief is acknowledged through expressions of forgiveness, thankfulness and love.

How you can help

- Provide family presence with the loved one.
- Express concern, care and support.
- Verbalize reassurance.
- Acknowledge that grace envelops the room.

3. The Work of Dying

You and your loved one have not travelled this path together. It is a first. A frequent question is, “How much time is left?” No one has a crystal ball but some significant signs become apparent. While moving toward the time to cross the bridge, your loved one is making the transition to a higher level than the present environment.

Near the very end

Some ease over to the other side peacefully. However, it is not uncommon for the loved one to experience pre-death restlessness. There may even be a short period of lucidity before ascending to a higher spiritual plane.

How you can help

- Acknowledge that the loved one may become restless.
- The time has arrived to say “good-bye” rather than “see you later.”
- Permission to leave releases the struggle between the human will and spirit.
- Your loved one may try to speak to you or to some unseen guest.

4. Spiritual Rituals, Rites, and Routines

Death is the most extreme of life's passages. Spirituality in daily life manifests in death.

Generational history of rules, sacramental rituals and religious rites influence significant death, burial and bereavement ceremonies. Family religious observances stimulate desire and dialogue as well as support

Near the very end

Imminent death motivates introspection about achieving spiritual meaning. "Who will cry when I leave?" motivates being sure of readiness to meet the maker.

How you can help

- Reaffirm faith through examples of life.
- Dialogue about important spiritual principles each has learned.
- Read familiar Scripture or inspirational meditations.
- Fortify beliefs through music and religious symbols.
- Invite chaplain or clergy for faith tradition support.
- Pre-plan with dignity the final day and memorial service.

5. Releasing Your Loved One to Cross the Bridge

Individual identity and social relationships influence humans to seek for spiritual wholeness. Further, connectedness to someone greater than self indicates that the spirit is indestructible. Therefore, during the last moments, soul consciousness becomes preeminent. Being "strong" gives way to expressions of grief that assists the spirit make its transition.

Near the very end

Your loved one is completing spiritual work. You as a family consider spiritual lessons that are adequate to help you through this separation. What has been learned also sustains courage that life will go on after loss.

How you can help

- Explore the sacred through conversation.
- Plan rituals and ceremonies appropriate for the dying process.
- Rely on your spirituality to comfort you.
- Express your sadness as you say, “I will miss you.”
- Pray your loved one safely across and yourself continuance of your journey.