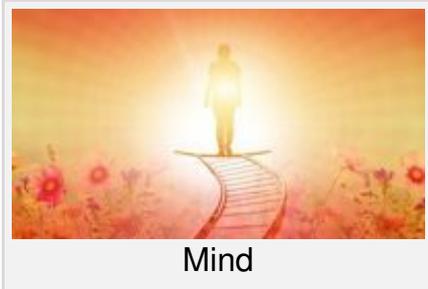


Giving the Final Gift: Eleven Ways to Help a Dying Person Let Go

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By Patt Lind-Kyle, author of Embracing the End of Life

We all know that our life will end someday, and most of us try really hard not to think about it. But when someone you love becomes terminally ill, not only they but you too must face death. It's a daunting prospect and one that fills most people with dread (not to mention the urge to run far away). Yet you don't have to feel this way. In fact, you have a powerful opportunity to help your dying loved one release their fear and embrace, and even welcome, their death.

Most people approach death with fear, anxiety, and avoidance. In a word, they resist. So when someone you love is dying, the best way to help them is by supporting their peaceful transition. In other words, help them stop resisting death and enable them to let go.

But to do this, you must also come to terms with your misgivings about death. And the sooner, the better.



We all enter a state of resistance (called the constricted self) when we separate from our mother's body at birth. This constricted state is what makes you afraid of death; it is fragmented, fear-driven, and disconnected from your higher energy and awareness, also called your expanded self. Your expanded self-realizes death is an illusion, a transition, and nothing to be afraid of. But when you face death early on (which my book *Embracing the End of Life* teaches how to do), you can access your expanded self and live a richer, happier, less fearful life—and have a peaceful and even joyful transition when the time comes.

Unfortunately, most people dwell in the constricted self their entire lives. So chances are, your dying loved one is struggling with fear and resistance, even as death approaches. Not only can you help your loved one experience a peaceful death, but you can also use the experience to come to terms with your own death.

You can give the gift of a good death to a dying loved one. It's about how they want to be cared for throughout their terminal illness. Find out the kind of music, or readings, or care your dying loved one wants. Remember that it is important to follow the process of death—not to impose your plan.

Follow these tips to help your dying loved one stop resisting death and let go peacefully.

First, prepare yourself. Near-death experience survivors have observed that at the time of death, they could sense any strong thoughts or negative emotions brought into space by others. These emotions can impact the dying person's state of mind. Therefore, before you visit your loved one during their final moments, inwardly prepare yourself so as to not negatively affect their death. You can do this by meditating, calm breathing, or practice mindfulness. The calm, inward-dwelling energy this creates will invoke a presence of love and care that positively influences your loved one when they die.

Heal lingering wounds between the two of you. If you and your dying loved one have existing hurts or conflicts, lovingly resolve those issues now. Give your loved one a chance to express themselves or clear the air, and (gently) say what you need to say to facilitate healing and peace.

Don't shy away from talking directly to your loved one about their death. Let your loved one know that you would like to help them come to terms with their death. Make them feel comfortable talking about any emotions and uncertainties they may be feeling. Ask them what they need from you, and try to give it to them wholeheartedly. It may be that they simply want you to sit beside them in quiet presence.

Help them practice the self-care they need. As a person dies, they need to be in their own rhythm with family, friends, and caregivers. Encourage them to sleep, eat, pray, and meditate while remaining in a consciously aware state. If at all possible, try to keep them peaceful and pain-free, and help them to focus on emotionally pleasant feelings.

Encourage them to meditate. Meditation is a practice that prepares you for death. A daily meditation practice trains you to release and let go of your constricted self every day. On a practical level, it trains the mind to let go of the busy resistances of daily life. And when you are in the dying process, meditation prepares you to relax, stabilizes your mind, opens you to

compassion, and creates a dynamic shift that reduces your anxiety and fear.

Encourage your loved one to meditate by using their breath, a mantra, or a chant that repeats over and over to help them let go of the mental world. This creates a growing sense of expansion beyond the boundaries of the body. If the person who is dying is unfamiliar with meditation, offer them a CD or video of guided meditation practices, or volunteer to lead them through a guided meditation yourself.

Offer them affirmations for letting go. Changing one's thought patterns is important to help in releasing resistance at the end of life. Write down the following affirmations and give them to the dying person, or offer to read the affirmations aloud to the person so they can focus on them completely:

I am open to forgiveness and to my love flowing boundlessly in me.

I find the inner resources to be able to let go of my body.

I find the inner resources to let go of my emotions and my mind.

Death is not my enemy. Death is a doorway of continuing life.

My life is changing and I am open to my death.

I accept things as they are and I am free of fear.

Bring them soothing music to listen to. In the dying process, hearing becomes one of the most accessible experiences of your surroundings. Offer your loved one recordings of instrumentals, chants, and songs to bring them peace. If you are a musician, consider recording gentle music to soothe and relax your loved one in the months, days, or hours prior to their death.

Share your favorite stories and memories with them. Think of your favorite stories involving your loved one and share them during your visits together. Help remind your loved one of their best human qualities, allowing them to feel uplifted as they recall loving times in their life.

Speak prayers and reminders before and after death. As the hearing is the last of the five senses to go, it is considered helpful to speak reminders and prayers aloud. When a person is dying and just after they have died, these reassure your loved one that they are not alone in this new state. Ask them what readings they would like you to read to them when death is near and afterward.

If your dying loved one is religious, consider reading sacred scriptures aloud to them both during and after death. The three major monotheistic religions—Christianity, Judaism, Islam—as well as Hinduism and Tibetan Buddhism all offer prayers and meditations for the dying and at the moment of death.

Use this "release formula" if death is prolonged. When the person is peaceful and all the physical signs of death are present, but dying is prolonged, it may be caused by the family's refusal to let the person go. In this situation, I recommend Reverend Jerry Farrell's "release formula" for family and friends to say to the dying person. Softly and gently speak the following statements, either singularly or together. (Feel free to use your own words.)

Know that you have led a complete life and are dearly loved.

Know that we love you and want you to be at peace.

We know that the time has come for you to choose what is best for you.

None of us are angry with you and we release you from our care and concern. Know that you have our love and permission to go.

Know that there is no more that we can do for you.

We know that your pain and suffering will soon be relieved.

We love you and hope to see you in the next life.

We will do fine. We will be okay after you leave us.

Don't touch their body for 20 minutes after death. The first 20 minutes after dying is one of the most critical times for the person who has died; many traditions believe this period is the "gateway" passage of the soul out of the body into the next realm. Therefore, do not touch the body during this time. Instead, follow these guidelines to be respectful of whatever experience the dying person may be having. Recent research at the University of Michigan demonstrated that when the heart stops, the brain is still active for approximately 20 minutes.

Sit quietly near the body, breathe slowly, and relax your own body.

Imagine the body and consciousness of the person who has died take the form of a small light moving up their spine and then quickly flying out from their body at the top of the head like a shooting star and dissolving into the image of the heart of a divine or luminous Presence.

Affirm, visualize, and even pray that the dead person will be free from all mental and emotional suffering as they are in this Presence.

Imagine a light or star released from the deceased into the luminosity of the expanding light of the true nature of their mind. Then speak the affirmation: "May your freedom be for the benefit of all beings, especially those you are leaving behind." Sit in the presence of this person's body and trust that you are helping to release the individual into another phase of their existence and honor and appreciate them for their courage and the beauty of their journey.

The death of a loved one can be a challenging experience, especially if we ourselves fear the end of life. But instead of running from death when it hits close to home, you can choose to be present and help your loved one release their own fear and find peace in this very natural, universal process. This is the greatest gift you can offer them, and it can even help you become ready—truly ready—for your own transition someday.



About the Author:

Patt Lind-Kyle, MA, is the author of "Embracing the End of Life: A Journey into Dying & Awakening" and is a teacher, therapist, speaker, and consultant. Her book "Heal Your Mind, Rewire Your Brain" won the Independent Publisher Gold Medal Award and a Best Book Award from USA Book News.

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