

Strategies for Self-Care for Nurses Witnessing End-of-Life

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Purpose

- ❖ The purpose of our discussion is to explore strategies for nurses working within a variety of healthcare settings, in coping with witnessing end-of-life

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Presumptions of Nurse as Healer

As nurses, we are:

- ❖ Captivated by the concepts of healing and wellness
- ❖ Intrigued that by applying evidenced-based practice, nursing science, and research, our patients can improve
- ❖ Teachers of health promotion in order to improve the quality of life for others and their health outcomes

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Nurses Reality

- ❖ Patients present to nurses in healthcare, because of unanticipated deviations in their health, leading to detrimental changes in their overall health status
- ❖ Our patients do not always improve despite delivery of evidenced-based practice nursing care
- ❖ Not all patient outcomes are positive
- ❖ We develop close relationships with persons we care for, their families and significant others
- ❖ Sometimes, no matter the settings in which we as nurses work, our patients die

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Signs of Approaching Death (Hospice of Philadelphia, 2015)

- ❖ Speech may become difficult to understand. Hearing and vision impaired
- ❖ Oxygen supply to brain decreases
- ❖ Mental confusion
- ❖ Increase sleep as body weakens
- ❖ Less interest in drinking and eating
- ❖ Secretions collect in the back of the throat and gurgle, rattle as patients mouth breathe
- ❖ Breathing is irregular
- ❖ Loss of body's ability to control temperature—Hot and Cold, varies
- ❖ Loss of bowel and bladder control
- ❖ Visions of deceased spouses, friends, family, libraries, and gardens, etc.

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My Nursing Assessment and Death

The witnessing of excruciating or **unrelenting pain** and **death anxiety** is something that **nurses seldom experience in nursing school**



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My Nurse's Assessment and Death

Ask yourself this in relation to self-care as a professional nurse:

- ❖ Emotionally, what does it feel like to auscultate a heart beat and listen as your patient's heart slows and then stops?



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My Nurse's Assessment and Death

Ask yourself this in relation to self-care as a professional nurse:

- ❖ Emotionally, what does it feel like to see a patient take their last breath as family members look on? Or watch a child place their head on their dying parent's chest listening as a final breath is taken and the heart ceases to beat?

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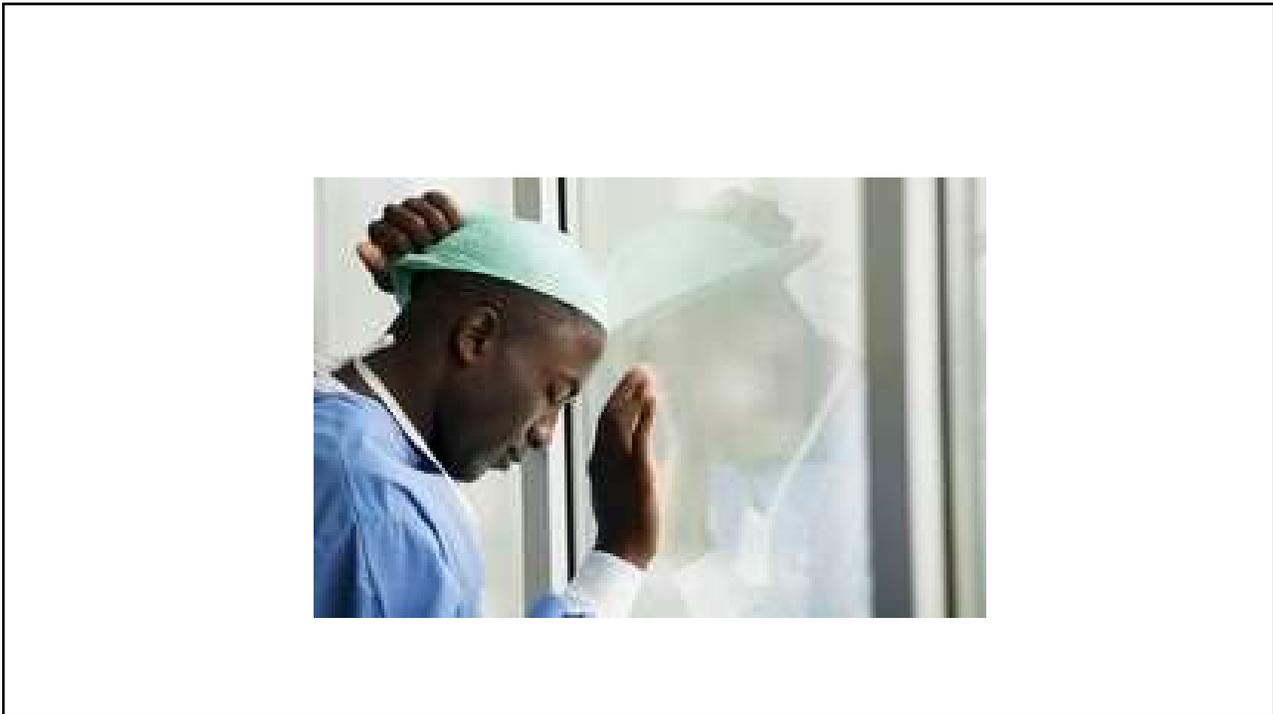
Nurses Seldom Process Death at Work: Why?

- ❖ No time, the care of patients that are living must resume
- ❖ Move on to the next patient
- ❖ Seen as weakness when an RN is unable to accept the normalcy of deaths
- ❖ Seen as an unprofessional attachment within what is a therapeutic nurse-patient relationship
- ❖ Who is going to take care of our other patients while we regroup?

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Processing Death

In processing death as nurses, we may at some point ask ourselves, if we have not already...

- ❖ Why am I here?
- ❖ If there is a God, why did this person have to die this way?
- ❖ Why is there so much suffering?
- ❖ And how do I myself survive loss in order to be a support to others, including my patients, their families and friends, and the healthcare team I work with?
- ❖ How can I help someone else as a nurse, when I am myself grieving a death in my own family (or a close friend/co-worker)?

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Normalcy: Nurses may Grieve, Mourn, and go through Bereavement when their patients die

- ❖ **Grief-** Acknowledge your personal feelings as you process the loss
- ❖ **Mourning-** While acknowledging your patients' and their family members' cultural expression of mourning, personally apply your own cultural view to the death of your patient as you process their death
- ❖ **Bereavement-** Period of time in which the nurse mourns the loss of the patient(s)

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RN Self-Care

- ❖ Take a day off from work
- ❖ Sleep, hydrate, eat, and exercise
- ❖ Part of a faith community? Fellowship within that community
- ❖ Reach out verbally and physically embrace friends and family
- ❖ Make amends for past hurt, Forgive
- ❖ Pray and meditate
- ❖ Walk in nature
- ❖ Spend time focusing on what you are thankful for when you arise and when you go to bed
- ❖ Reevaluate what makes you happy and what does not; death makes us mindful of life's brevity----Live it to your fullest!

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What are some ways that you take care of yourself?

- ❖ **Please share in the Chat** ways that you provide self-care to yourself

- ❖ Sometimes as nurses we have the dual roles of caring for a loved one who has a progressive disease or is terminally ill, while we must also care for our sick and dying patients. How can this impact your ability to self-care?---**Please share in the Chat**

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Picture of Dying Patient-

https://www.bing.com/images/search?view=detailV2&ccid=IERCRkuK&id=9131E0BC0309CFD6937785234D9B993FDFFC0424&thid=OIP.IERCRkuKrnONiBL3eX1zNgHaFj&mediaurl=https%3a%2f%2fimg.medscape.com%2fthumbnail_library%2fis_180606_dying_palliative_cancer_patient_800x600.jpg&exph=600&expw=800&q=free+picture+of+dying+patient&simid=607993672319240630&ck=6670D40E71C44E6AEB4673AB83D8D841&selectedIndex=0&qpv=free+picture+of+dying+patient&FORM=IRPRST&ajaxhist=0

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Picture of a Stethoscope-

<https://www.bing.com/images/search?q=free+picture+of+a+stethoscope&qpv=free+picture+of+a+stethoscope&form=IGRE&first=1&scenario=ImageBasicHover>

Picture of Distressed Nurse-

<https://www.bing.com/images/search?view=detailV2&ccid=aR9LTZ5x&id=91C4FBD4695C67CF3EDB4D88C055FBCE77F3B4C9&thid=OIP.aR9LTZ5x0oYtxw-0ekcReAHaD2&mediaurl=https%3a%2f%2fwp.nurse.com%2fwp-content%2fuploads%2f2019%2f12%2fTired-or-stressed-nurse-FB-GettyImages-481074858.jpg&exph=625&expw=1200&q=free+picture+of+a+distressed+nurses&simid=607998998017607293&ck=E9BDE8460E887018AC15E77B96C9C02A&selectedIndex=8&qpv=free+picture+of+a+distressed+nurses&FORM=IRPRST&ajaxhist=0>

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Picture of Distressed Nurse (Male)-

https://www.bing.com/images/search?view=detailV2&ccid=WrvIAa%2B%2F&id=58E5C44009332D34D1934306A5EBF91A06C741F4&thid=OIP.WrvIAa-_wrEwVVAUO3cuCQAAAA&mediaurl=http%3A%2F%2Fmedia-cache-ak0.pinimg.com%2F736x%2Fa6%2F30%2Fcd%2Fa630cdde1c13b94a7b2fc41abd9a269d.jpg&exph=150&expw=220&q=free+picture+of+a+distressed+nurses&simid=608038069395262463&ck=79F66AFB72A1D76FA695079BD92B463D&selectedIndex=7&qvrt=free+picture+of+a+distressed+nurses&form=IRPRST&ajaxhist=0&vt=0&sim=11

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Picture of Morphine IV Preparation-

https://www.bing.com/images/search?view=detailV2&ccid=p4OfGKp&id=44D1DA0947C02AD8081801D9889B6B237BB8E115&thid=OIP.p4OfGKpAGvgyfj5LLQcfgAAAA&mediaurl=https%3A%2F%2Ffarm4.staticflickr.com%2F3810%2F9467246826_97305b346c_o.jpg&exph=350&expw=240&q=picture+of+IV+morphine%2Ffree&simid=608004856379475515&ck=2813990736E6BBDB815B787F4D320DDE&selectedIndex=2&FORM=IRPRST&ajaxhist=0

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Picture of IV injection Ativan-

<https://www.bing.com/images/search?view=detailV2&ccid=grxvwyCb&id=1051E6CB8E17E67E00BCE33F4F1E0FED1CBBC937&thid=OIP.grxvwyCbXPTBpZaZWUtPmgHaFj&mediurl=https%3a%2f%2fhealthool.com%2fwp-content%2fuploads%2f2018%2f05%2fAtivan-in-a-vial-which-will-be-given-to-the-patient-in-an-injection-form-intravenously-How-long-does-Ativan-stay-in-your-system-image-photo-picture.jpg&exph=375&expw=500&q=picture+of+ativan+iv%2ffree&simid=608012531563235599&ck=D0827D26E532D3AE501433E7689F9229&selectedIndex=2&qpv=picture+of+ativan+iv%2ffree&FORM=IRPRST&ajaxhist=0>

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Picture of Thank You-

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