



Hudson Valley Hospice

Education Newsletter

Enhancing the quality of living for those at the end of life.

March 2023 Volume 7 Issue 3

Emotional Pain Management

By Robin Rosenberg, LCSW

Emotions are a natural part of living every day. They began as a lifesaving way for humans to respond immediately to potential threats in the environment. If you see a lion, you can't take the time to think about what to do- you simply run! The fight or flight response to threats comes from the brain. It sends a flood of hormones into the body allowing us to engage in sometimes superhuman activities to survive. While few people face life-threatening dangers, our bodies respond in the 21st century the same way we did tens of thousands of years ago.

When people become very ill, and when they are facing death, there are many emotions they may experience. Some may be positive- such as cherishing time with their loved ones. Others may be very painful, such as anxiety, fear, guilt, anger, loneliness, and grief. It is important that we help our patients, and their families, to manage those painful emotions. However, sometimes we may identify so much that we take on their pain. The situation the patient is facing may bring us to a similar time in our own lives. We may find it painful to let those emotions into our own awareness, and so we may try to push the pain away. Unhelpful responses that come from these two reactions include getting stuck with the patient, denying their emotions, or trying to reason them away.

One plan to assist our patients includes the following:

Step 1: Recognize the emotions that we experience in the face of our patient's emotional pain.

Step 2: Manage our emotions in the moment.

Step 3: Recognize the emotions in our patients.

Step 4: Manage emotions in our patients.

While this is a simple plan, it is not always easy! Recognizing emotions in ourselves requires us to be self-aware, and to allow us to name our emotions *as we feel them*. Naming our emotions is a huge step towards managing them. Deep breaths and holding a space to address our emotions later will help us manage how we feel in the moment.

Recognizing emotions in our patients may come easily to those in the helping professions. However, it's also possible to mistake common signs of emotion as they can, in fact, signal other things. Tears, for instance, can be a sign of sadness, but also of awe, joy, and anger. It is helpful to take the time to ask our patients/families how they are feeling, even when we think we know.

Some other strategies include:

- Bringing in Hospice team members such as social workers, spiritual counselors (chaplains), volunteers, and music therapists.
- Listening to feelings.
- Using humor to lighten the mood, if appropriate.
- Providing time to feel pain without necessarily trying to take it away.

Giving someone else a safe space to express their emotions is a gift that we can provide to our patients and their families together.

Have a Question? Call Us!

Referral Center
7 Days a Week
845-240-7555

Hospice Care
Call Us 24/7
845-240-7510

Palliative Care
845-240-7557

General Inquiries
845-485-2273

**Bereavement
Center**
845-240-7579



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Is it Time for Hospice?

Renal Disease

- No plans for transplant or dialysis or stopping dialysis
- Increased levels of blood in the urine
- Abnormally small amount of urine
- Edema/swelling that is difficult to manage
- Lab values that show declining kidney function:

Serum creatinine >8mg/dl (>6mg/dl if diabetic) or increasing rapidly

Estimated glomerular filtration rate (GFR) <10ml/min

Creatinine clearance <10cc/min (<15 cc/min for diabetics)

Social Work Month

**SOCIAL WORK
BREAKS BARRIERS**

“Social workers remove obstacles to
compassionate care.”

National Association of Social Workers,
March 2023.

Breaking Down the Myths

MYTH: Hospice is only focused on the patient
and pain control.

FACT: Hospice care is a holistic approach,
focusing on quality of life, and what matters
most to the patient. The interdisciplinary care
team includes physicians, nurses, social
workers, chaplains, home health aides and
other professionals.



Quote of the Month

“Empathy is about finding echoes of an-
other person in yourself.”

-Mohsin Hamid