The Time of Death Visit

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The importance of a time of death visit:
- At the time of death visit our job is to honor the deceased and mourner, support the grieving, listen, respect the dignity of the deceased, and follow the wishes of both the deceased and the family to the best of our abilities and within the framework of our jobs.
- Hospice has become our life’s’ work, it has changed us and shaped us into who we are and we will never be the same again.
- We have dedicated ourselves to this ministry, "the end of life".
- What a strange occupation most would say. We are called "Angels" by some and "Death Angels" by others, representing both light and darkness simultaneously.

How to prepare for the time of death visit:
- Ask yourself a few very important questions:
  o Am I prepared to face death at this moment?
  o Am I emotionally prepared to serve this family or facility staff at their hour of grieving?
  o What do I know about this patient?
  o Have I served this patient before?
  o What were the events leading up to the death?
  o Was it sudden, unexpected or anticipated?
  o Do I know the family or facility staff?
  o What are their expectations now that the patient has died?
  o What is their culture of death?
  o Should I call a hospice team member to give me background information on this patient?
  o Do I need another hospice team member to come with me on this time of death visit?

What to do at the time of death visit:
- Support the family in whatever capacity they decide is necessary for the deceased or themselves.
- Confirm the patient is dead
- Make phone calls
- Prepare the body bathe or dress as requested
- Is there a time element to hurry or be still?
- Are we waiting for others to arrive?
- Do they want the funeral home to pick up immediately, or in 3 days?
- What about all equipment?
- Use your best listening skills heart of compassion
- Please refrain from using clichés when speaking with the families.
- Let the families choose their own forms of expressions and support them in it without adding your own.
- Join in prayer, ceremony, or give privacy
  o All emotions are legitimate: crying, wailing, laughing, anger, sorrow and relief.

After the time of death visit:
- When you leave the visit reflect on the experience
- Take time to reorganize your thought
- Are you ready to drive safely?
- What are your examples of self-care when you care for the dying or deceased?