E-Learning Module A:
Introduction to Death and Dying

This Module requires the learner to have read Chapter 1 of the Fundamentals Program Guide and the other required readings associated with the topic.

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Please reference as follows:

GETTING STARTED

This e-Learning Module has been designed to consolidate key concepts from the required readings and provide an opportunity to begin applying these concepts through self-directed reflection and scenario-based work, in preparation for the case-based discussions, in-person, with other learners.
GETTING STARTED

In this module you will review the content highlights associated with Chapter 1 of your Program Guide.

It would be best if you have read Chapter 1 in advance and have the Program Guide, as well as the Domains of Issues Laminate with you as you complete this module.

You will be prompted to write down your thoughts or ideas during this module. You can do so in the ‘notes’ section at the end of Chapter 1 in your Program Guide. These notes are just for you; you are not required to share them.

Consider bringing forward any questions from the e-Learning Modules to your next Peer-to-Peer Exchange or your next Case-Based Learning Session.
TOPICS COVERED

✓ Emotional Responses to Dying and Death
✓ Views About Dying and Death
EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO DYING AND DEATH

In order to best support the person with a life-limiting illness and his or her family, it is important to confront your own feelings related to dying and death. Thoughts of death can give rise to many emotions. How you feel about death will impact how you care for other people.

Think back to when you drew your own death in the first Case-Based Learning Session and write down some of the emotions you experienced then.
EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO DYING AND DEATH

Knowing how you feel about death is important. Having an understanding about your own emotional reactions towards death affects your ability to understand the scope of emotions that dying people and their families face.
EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO DYING AND DEATH

FEAR

- Why might the person and/or family be fearful?
EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO DYING AND DEATH

FEAR

Why might the person and/or family be fearful?

- Fear of specific procedures
- Fear of losing control of bodily functions or cognition
- Fear of suffering with unmanaged symptoms
- Fear of being a burden to the family
- Fear of dying alone
- Fear of the unknown
EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO DYING AND DEATH

ANXIETY

- Why might the person and/or family be anxious?
EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO DYING AND DEATH

ANXIETY

Why might the person and/or family be anxious?

- Due to disability; inability to work
- Due to loss of a familial role
- Due to financial impact
- Due to desire to leave a legacy
- Due to unknown future well-being of family
- Due to personal religion/spirituality
- Due to examining the purpose of life now
EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO DYING AND DEATH

ANGER

❑ Why might the person and/or family be angry?
EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO DYING AND DEATH

ANGER

Why might the person and/or family be angry?

▪ Feeling fearful (fear is probably the most common source of anger)
▪ Feeling deprived of relationships
▪ Feeling robbed of hopes and dreams (e.g. the cruise, the graduation)
▪ Leaving unfinished business
▪ Experiencing delays in the health care system (e.g. waiting for test results, waiting for appointment)
EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO DYING AND DEATH

SADNESS, DESPAIR, AND HOPELESSNESS

- Why might the person/family feel sadness, despair, hopelessness?
EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO DYING AND DEATH

SADNESS, DESPAIR, AND HOPELESSNESS

Why might the person/family feel sadness, despair, hopelessness?

- Aware that a cure for the disease is no longer possible
- Experiencing unmanaged symptoms, e.g. pain not managed
- Realizing that life projects are not done and/or will go undone
- Going to miss an important event, i.e. wedding, birth
- Loss of relationships
- Aware of the totality of personal loss
EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO DYING AND DEATH

ANGUISH AND GUILT

- Why might the person and/or family feel anguished and guilty?
EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO DYING AND DEATH

ANGUISH AND GUILT

Why might the person and/or family feel anguished and guilty?

- Did not seek medical help soon enough
- Have regrets around life style choices
- Have had no connection with family for years
- Have persistent conflict with family and no reconciliation
- Feel they are abandoning the family
EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO DYING AND DEATH

Compare your feelings to the possible emotional responses to death? What do you notice? What are your reflections? Write down your observations and ideas.
EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO DYING AND DEATH

- Why is it important to consider how you feel as compared to how others might feel about death?

How might this knowledge help you to:
1. Continue through the Fundamentals program?
2. Provide support to the person and family?
EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO DYING AND DEATH

As someone providing support to a person and family in hospice palliative care, you are called upon to see death as a natural process. The thought of death usually arouses a variety of anxieties and fears.

Reflecting on your perceptions, beliefs and fears about death may assist you to better understand those in your care.

An individual’s reaction to dying and death is unique. Approach each person’s response with compassion, empathy and a non-judgmental attitude.
VIEWS ABOUT DYING AND DEATH

How we die and how we care for people who are dying and their families has changed over time. Understanding the generational perspectives on death can help you understand the beliefs, values and responses to dying and death of the person and his or her family.
Think back (or turn back) to Chapter 1 – What are the factors that impact attitudes towards death?

Try to think of at least 3 and jot them down on paper.
VIEWS ABOUT DYING AND DEATH

Consider the scenario of a family conference where the person is 45 and the family is comprised of generations that range from the person’s adult child in his or her mid 20’s to the person’s parents who are in their 60’s and the grandmother in her mid-90’s.

- Looking at the generations represented at this family conference, how will the information about generational differences assist you in your understanding of a person’s decision making around issues such as treatment choices and care settings?
VIEWS ABOUT DYING AND DEATH

The engagement of families and individuals in setting goals of care and providing the care can be complex and starts with understanding, appreciating and anticipating how their experiences may shape their approach to the conversation.
BRINGING IT TOGETHER

As care providers it is critical that we:

✓ Remember the importance of self-care and self-awareness
✓ Bring knowledge and skill to the bedside along with our experiences, history and beliefs
✓ Balance caring for others and caring for self
✓ Acknowledge the uniqueness of each person’s attitudes, values and expectations regarding dying and death
✓ Understand how the historical trends in the experience of dying and death in western society impact decision making and care planning.
BRINGING IT TOGETHER

- With what you know now, what might you start to anticipate as your own self care needs in the field? Capture your initial thoughts on a piece of paper.

Later in the program, you will revisit the concept of self care in more detail; however, starting to think about it now will help you in your journey through this program.
BRINGING IT TOGETHER

As you finish Module A of your e-Learning, we (your Facilitator) would like to take another opportunity to welcome you to the Fundamentals of Hospice Palliative Care program.

We are excited to have this opportunity to work with you by providing you with opportunities to gain knowledge and practice with tools and resources.
WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

To prepare for the next e-Learning Module, you will need to read the associated Program Guide chapter in advance. In order to complete the next e-Learning Module you will need both the Program Guide and Domains of Issues Laminate with you.

In addition, you will need a drinking straw and a clothespin or paperclip on hand when completing Module D.

View the Pallium website free on-line module “Taking Ownership”
https://pallium.ca/Taking_Ownership_Preview/story.html
This e-Learning resource is the property of:

The Palliative Pain & Symptom Management Consultation Program - Southwestern Ontario St. Joseph’s Health Care, London ON

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