

A Publication of Angelic Health

# Touching Lives™

*Holding Hands. Holding Hearts.*

## 5 Ways to Support Loved Ones

**Go Ahead – Give  
Yourself A Break**

**Finding the  
Help You Need**

**Letting Go of  
Life's Regrets**

**Why Spiritual  
Beliefs Matter**



**ANGELIC HEALTH**

PALLIATIVE CARE • HOSPICE CARE

*We're by your side*

## FEATURE ARTICLE

### 10 5 Ways to Support Loved Ones

By Kerry Egan



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## Welcome to *Touching Lives* Angelic Health, We're by your side

Welcome to *Touching Lives Magazine*. In these pages you will be informed and inspired. You may even learn a few things you didn't know before. But what we hope most is that these articles will have you look at palliative and hospice care differently.

Angelic's palliative and hospice services are all about improving quality of life. Our healing and therapeutic touch, innovation, compassion, and our people make up the Angelic Health difference and sets us apart from the others. Angelic Health staff care for patients and their families as if they were their own. As a son, husband, and friend, I can honestly tell you that these are the people I would want to care for my own loved ones.



#### Angelic Health

Serving Southern and Central New Jersey  
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[www.Angelic.health](http://www.Angelic.health)

At Angelic Health we provide palliative, hospice, transitional care, and wound management to support patients and their loved ones anywhere they call home and wherever they are with their condition.

It is proven that those receiving palliative services have an improved quality of life and are better able to enjoy time with family and friends than those not receiving care. A person experiencing failing health and a life-altering diagnosis may qualify for the hospice benefit from Medicare, Medicaid and most private insurances.

Many people are not getting the care they need or are entitled to because of misconceptions about hospice care. Most of us are uncomfortable talking about our mortality, but it is something we all face. Having a plan for care in the event of a life-altering diagnosis will reduce the stress of learning about options when the patient or family is least prepared to cope.

We can answer your questions, and address your concerns about hospice or palliative care. Don't let misconceptions about these services keep you or a loved one from getting the care and support needed and deserved.

Warm Regards,

*Dan Mikus*

Dan Mikus, MSW, MBA  
CEO, Angelic Health



“Angelic Hospice has been a blessing to me in the care and attention my 101-year-old Dad receives daily. They also have wonderful, responsive social workers, nurses, and volunteers, who help coordinate some ‘me time’ occasionally. I’m grateful I found them.”

*Joan Conley, daughter of patient Ed Weber,  
Cape May County.*

# 5 Signs

## That Dementia Patients May Benefit from Hospice Care

By Margie Barham

**S**ome 5.5 million Americans have some form of dementia, and that number is growing, so it is likely you know someone living with this degenerative disease.

Dementia has many types—Alzheimer’s, Frontotemporal, Vascular, Creutzfeldt-Jakob, and others—and is the sixth leading cause of death in our country. Because people are living longer in the United States, it is projected that the prevalence of dementia cases will triple by mid-century.

This life-altering and debilitating disease takes much from the patient: their independence, their memories, and ultimately their lives. It also takes much from the caregivers. Caring for dementia patients is challenging to say the least. According to the Alzheimer’s Association, as much as 40 percent of family caregivers of people with dementia suffer from depression, anxiety, and develop their own illnesses due to caregiver stress.

*“Sadly, while there are treatments to slow the progression of some of the symptoms of Alzheimer’s, there is no cure; but there is help for both patients and their caregivers,”* said April Gall, RN, director of admissions

at Angelic Health. *“Palliative and hospice services provide much-needed clinical oversight to the day-to-day needs of the patient and address other illnesses that arise, such as malnutrition due to eating difficulties, safety due to ambulatory issues, and caring for loved-ones during a very difficult time.”*

This is a gradual disease, and a patient can live for years as the dementia progresses. Patients with Alzheimer’s and other types of dementia are eligible for hospice care when they exhibit the following traits:

- **Unable to walk without assistance**
- **Unable to do their own personal care: bathing, oral hygiene, or dress without assistance**
- **Incontinence of bowel and bladder**
- **Difficulty swallowing or refusing to eat with unintentional weight loss**
- **Unable to speak or communicate meaningfully**

Patients with coexisting conditions of congestive heart disease, cardiovascular disorders, COPD or restrictive lung disease, diabetes, renal disease, cerebrovascular disorders including stroke, and cancers complicate their dementia and may also make them eligible for hospice care.

Hospice provides comforting care to patients with dementia who qualify. This care includes regular nursing visits, home health aides to assist with personal care, social services, spiritual care, various complementary therapies such as massage and music therapies, and volunteer support. These services give caregivers a needed break and a professional guidance for their questions and concerns. Hospice care is 100% covered by Medicare, Medicaid and most private insurances. ❖



# Finding the Help *You Need*

**I**t's hard to imagine a time when hospice wasn't an option for every family who wanted a loved one to die with comfort and dignity.

When hospice care was first established in the United States, it was adopted mainly by cancer patients. There was no Medicare or insurance coverage for hospice care, and it was usually offered in the patient's own home.

But times have changed. Today, hospice care is widely accepted as an important level of care for any patient whose disease no longer responds to aggressive, cure-oriented treatment.

Of the 1.45 million Americans now in hospice, most have life-limiting diseases other than cancer, such as heart disease, lung disease, kidney failure, stroke or coma, liver disease, AIDS, and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). Hospice care is covered by Medicare, Medicaid, private insurance, and managed care plans.

More families are also turning to hospice care for aging parents debilitated by dementia, including Alzheimer's disease. As they approach the end of their lives, patients with dementia benefit from pain and symptom management, as well as the emotional and spiritual support that hospice provides, while family caregivers get much-needed help caring for their loved one.

In dementia units, a lot of intensive work is done with the families. When hospice gets involved, it's generally in the last phase of their lives, when they are debilitated. The treatment is the same – physical support, social workers, work with the family, and pastoral care.

*By Marlene Prost*

While most hospice care is still provided at home, that, too, is changing. Americans are living longer with chronic diseases, and many who can no longer care for themselves are moving into nursing homes, and assisted-living and dementia care facilities. That is now their home, which is why 32.8 percent of hospice patients last year received specialized end-of-life hospice care in a nursing facility.

This growth reflects the increased provision of quality care for dying persons who are not in the traditional home setting. For many people, the nursing home is their home, and they deserve the compassionate, quality care that hospice and palliative care providers are trained to deliver.

Compared to similar nursing home residents not in hospice care, hospice patients are more likely to be assessed for pain, twice as likely to receive daily treatment for pain, and more likely to receive pain management in accordance with clinical guidelines. What's more, they are less likely to require hospitalization in the final 30 days of life. ❧

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Marlene Prost is a freelance writer, magazine editor and book author.

# Getting THE BEST CARE

by Dr. Ira Byock

I've heard too many people say they are worried about what a doctor thinks of their decisions – remember, it is your life.

If you or a close friend or relative has recently been diagnosed with a serious illness, you are probably feeling overwhelmed and vulnerable since treatment options are often complex.

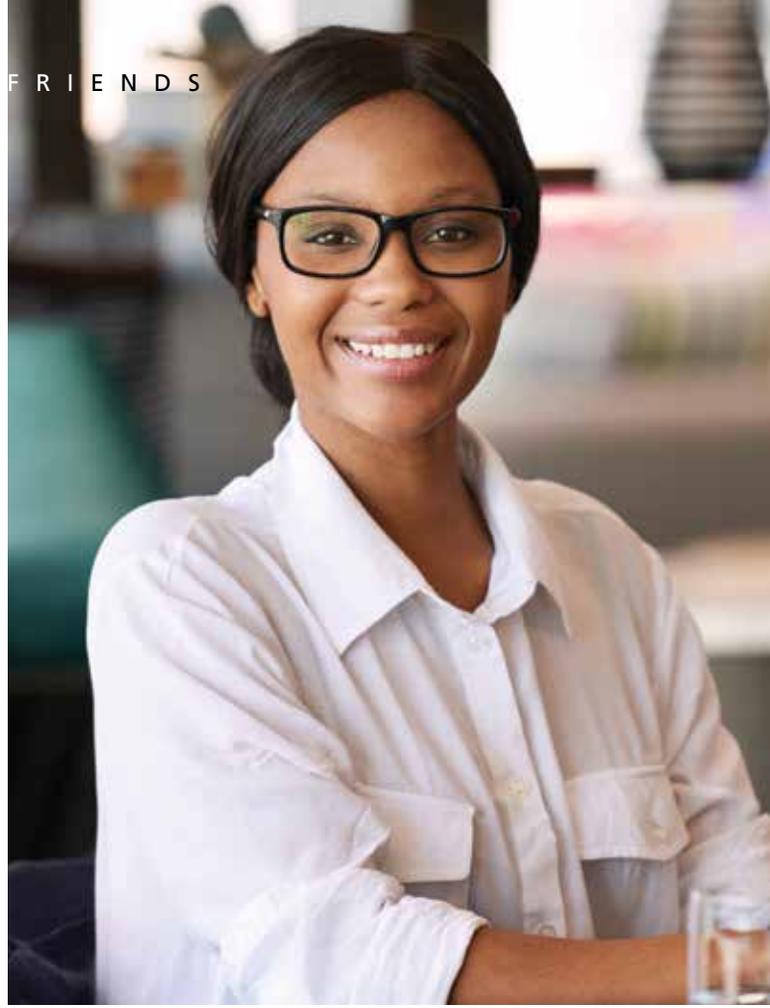
Although you may want to rely only on healthcare professionals for advice, it's important to be prepared to advocate for yourself and your family. As much as I respect my colleagues and am proud to be a physician, doctors exist to serve patients and the public.

Here are some ways to avoid problems and get the best care possible for yourself and loved ones.

## Take Control of Decisions

Identify doctors who are experts in your condition and then work closely with your health care team. Although we wish every physician had a warm personality, it is not as important as feeling confident that he or she genuinely cares about your wellbeing. If not, find a new doctor. Feeling comfortable is essential to your care.

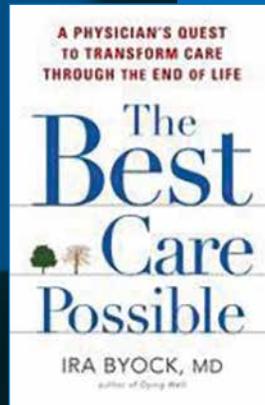
Here are some ways to help you take control and be an active participant in your treatment.



- **Write down questions** you have for your doctor. It can be scary to be seeing a specialist for cancer, memory loss or serious heart, lung, kidney, liver problems. It is not easy to remember all the questions you have had about your medications, symptoms or treatments.
- **Bring someone with you** to doctor's visits to support you and to remember (you may want to record) details of the conversation.
- **Keep copies of your health records** – it is your right to ask for test and biopsy results, lab reports, physician history, reports of physicals and hospital discharge summaries.
- **Keep a daily log of your symptoms and the medications you take.**

## Get A Second Opinion

When faced with a dangerous diagnosis, second opinions can be important in getting the best treatments. Use the internet, local experts and word of mouth and don't feel awkward about gathering second – or third or fourth – opinions from the best health care centers and teams.



## Do It Your Way

Visit **The Conversation Project** ([theconversationproject.org](http://theconversationproject.org)) a national effort to ensure that people's wishes are expressed, known, and honored. Information and advance directive forms are available at little or no cost from sites such as **Everplans** ([everplans.com/articles/state-by-state-advance-directive-forms](http://everplans.com/articles/state-by-state-advance-directive-forms)).

### Ask About Palliative Care

I strongly advise that one of the medical opinions you seek is with a palliative care physician or team.

Because palliative care grew out of hospice, many people assume that receiving palliative care means giving up. Not true. These days palliative care is provided together with treatments for cancer, heart, lung, liver, kidney and neurological conditions.

Specialized clinical teams work together to minimize pain, increase appetite, help patients sleep better, be more active and feel more comfortable physically and emotionally.

### Name A Trusted Advocate

The best way to support one another – and protect one's family from conflict and having to deal with ethics committees or a court – is to make it clear in writing who has authority to speak for you. Make it official.

Give the document to both your doctor and the hospital(s) where you are likely to receive care. Scan a copy of your signed document to share with your health care agent and trusted family members and friends.

### Don't Be Afraid to Make Changes

If you don't like or trust your doctor, hospital or medical facility, find a new provider.

Do not feel badly about being disloyal to the hospital you've used for years – this is your life.

Hospice programs provide end-of-life care including managing medical matters and supporting families. You should expect the hospice nurse, social worker and physician to be highly competent, friendly, proactive and responsive.

If the hospice staff seems uncertain, stretched thin, and slow to respond after hours (even though they may be warm and friendly), talk to other hospice providers and ask specific questions.

Remember, at the end of the day, what matters most is getting the best care possible for you and your loved ones. This is no time to settle for less. ✨

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Ira Byock, MD is Founder & Chief Medical Officer, Institute for Human Caring of Providence Health and Services. He is an active emeritus professor at Dartmouth's Geisel School of Medicine and author of *Dying Well*, *The Four Things That Matter Most* and *The Best Care Possible* available at [IraByock.org](http://IraByock.org).

# Go Ahead – Give Yourself a Break

## Rejuvenate in ways that feel good

By Paula Spencer Scott

**L**aura Patyk hated to leave her mother's bedside when she had end-stage congestive heart failure, just as two years earlier, she'd hesitated to leave her father-in-law, who had kidney cancer.

Both elders were in the good hands of hospice programs but it always felt selfish to her to take a break.

"And sure enough, I kept getting sick and developed insomnia," says Patyk, who also cares for six school-age children. "I learned the hard way to take better care of myself, no matter what."

Burnout is a real risk for family members caring for a loved one. Professionals call it "compassion fatigue" – caring so much that you give yourself too little. It's a byproduct of the stress and fatigue that can hamper caregivers, says Patricia Smith, a certified compassion fatigue specialist in Mountain View, California, and founder of the Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project.

"Stress is all about 'too much' – too much work, too much activity, too much stimulus. Burnout is 'too little' – too little time, too little interest, too little energy," she says.

Whatever you call this distressing syndrome, here's a healthier approach:

### **Be aware that this is a very real issue.**

"The premise of healthy caregiving is this: Fill up, empty out. Fill up, empty out," says Smith. "Caregivers who are at risk for compassion fatigue empty out, empty out, empty out. They never learned to fill up so they have something to give."

Warning signs of burnout include isolation, bottled-up emotions, persistent sadness and apathy, lack of interest in self-care, and persistent ailments such as colds or gastrointestinal upset.



**Don't think that "nobody can do this but me."** It's true that you know your loved one better than anyone, and you provide a wonderful level of care as a result. But others – family, friends, community resources such as nursing aides and elder companions, or hospice and palliative care teams – can also provide competent, even excellent, care. And their doing so frees you up to refresh and recharge.

**Figure out what "fills you up."** Give thought to what replenishes you. Walking? Reading? Knitting? Spending time with friends? Being out in nature? Plenty of restorative activities don't cost anything and are always available to you.

**Recharge in ways that feel authentic to you.** If your best friend wants to drag you shopping but you find it draining, you won't feel refreshed. Find what works for you, not anyone else. "The art of 'filling up' is finding what brings you peace, well-being, and a sense of belonging," Smith says.

**Take technology breaks.** There are other sources of stress in our lives that can contribute to burnout. "Because we all love our iPhones, BlackBerrys, iPads, and pagers, we are 'on call' 24/7," Smith says. "Set boundaries. Check your email at 9 a.m., noon, and 6 p.m. only. Limit how much time you spend on your cell phone. Take a complete break from technology on weekends."

**Don't be hamstrung by fears of what you'll miss.** Patyk, the Charlotte caregiver-mom, is now caring for her widowed, live-in father, who has cardiac issues. But this time around, she listens to her instincts when she needs a break. She goes bike riding around her neighborhood and lunches regularly with friends. She even recently got away to the beach overnight.

"There's always a little calm even in a storm," she says. "Even if something happened in my absence, I have no regrets because I know I'm doing and saying everything I need to." ❧

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Paula Spencer Scott is the author of *Soul-Saving Wisdom for Caregivers* and 10 other books about family and health.

## What a Caregiver Needs to Hear

Many caregivers neglect their own needs because they worry what others, including their loved one, will think if they take time away from caregiving.

That's why it's so useful for caregivers to hear encouraging messages of support from patients and the rest of the family.

*"You're not selfish."*

It may be true that we exist to serve others, but our own bodies also need our attention, to be fed and exercised and replenished. It's not selfishness to divert a little attention from a sick loved one to your own needs; it's being your human self.

*"You're not uncaring."*

Even in the midst of a crisis, the rest of life goes on. Tending to your own needs momentarily isn't a reflection on the level of love and care you feel for another.

*"You're doing us both a favor."*

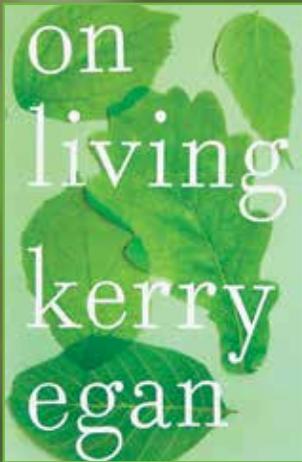
The stronger and more fortified you feel, the better able you are to provide compassionate, meaningful care, and the longer. If you're frazzled and dragging, you won't function well. And that in turn can endanger the comfort and safety of your loved one, which after all is your ultimate goal.





# 5 Ways to Support Loved Ones

By Kerry Egan



The hospice chaplain and author of *On Living* reveals what she's learned about supporting loved ones as they prepare to embark on their last journey.

## 1 Many are starved for touch.

"No one ever touches me anymore," my patient Betty said. "You can't imagine what that's like." She looked very small on her nursing home bed.

Didn't the aides touch her, I asked, when they took care of her, bathed her and helped her move?

Yes, she said, but it was different. They touched her because they had to, not because they loved her. It wasn't the same.

"I long to be held," she said, and her voice cracked and broke.

What could I do with such a deep, heartbreaking need right in front of me? What would you do? I lay next to Betty, wrapped my arms around her and kissed the top of her head, the way I do with my children when they go to sleep.

Many people who are dying are starved for touch. So ask your friend or family member whether she wants to be hugged. Put your arms around her. Hold her cheeks in your hands. If she wants you to, climb into bed.

## 2 They don't need to be told what to do.

There's a well-intentioned but odd piece of advice floating around out there that friends and neighbors of the dying should show up without calling first and do the laundry or clean out the refrigerator. Without asking.



People who are dying often feel like they've lost so much control over their lives already. Someone taking over your home without permission can feel like yet another loss to bear.

Yes, offer to help with chores, but don't decide you know what needs to be done. Call first to see if your friend is feeling up to having visitors that day. Set up a time so he can be ready. Ask how you can be helpful.

Dying is exhausting. If the person says he's tired, go home. And if he cancels at the last minute, know that it might be that he feels absolutely awful that day. Don't take it personally. If he says he's overwhelmed by phone calls, believe him, and send a card instead.

### 3 They know you are scared, but they still need you there.

People who are dying are still living. They laugh, and reminisce, and love to see the people they love. They're still who they always have been, even as they go through this new experience.

But they're often crushingly lonely. Too many times, I've heard about the children, the friends, the churches, the clubs who have stopped visiting. "She doesn't need prayers! She needs her friends!" a husband whose wife hadn't had visitors in years once cried.

I get it. I really do. I've had education and training to be a hospice chaplain, and have probably visited over a thousand people who are dying, and sometimes it's still hard for me. Sometimes, the sights and smells overwhelm me. Some people die quickly and easily, but most, at least in hospice, do not. The body struggles to hold on, and it can be really hard to witness.

Someone who's dying often looks different, sounds different, smells different and can't do the things she might have once done. Too often, these changes, and perhaps their own fears of death or saying or doing the wrong thing, make a dying person's friends and family afraid of her.

Can you imagine knowing you're leaving this world soon, needing the people you love more than you ever have in your entire life, and all of a sudden, seeing that they're afraid of you? So try. Try really hard to overcome your fear, and call or visit.

### 4 They might not tell you the truth about their feelings.

"Do you know why you're my favorite?" a hospice patient named Stan asked. "Because you're the only one who will pray that I die this afternoon."

Stan closed his eyes and started again on his favorite pastime: imagining his own death. The scenarios were always different, but what he imagined heaven would be like always remained the same: He'd be walking down a path in a park, and his wife would jump out from behind a tree and yell, "Boo!"

Just as she had 70 years before, on the day they met.

One of the most common things patients ask me to pray for is that they die soon. It can be a huge relief to talk openly about and pray for a quick death, because often their family and friends shush them when they try to.

On the other end of the spectrum, I've had plenty of patients whose families have assured me that their loved ones aren't afraid at all because of family beliefs. And many of those patients, as soon as the family leaves the room, break down in tears, terrified and grateful for the chance to finally talk about their soul-shaking fear.

Never assume you know anything about their spiritual life or feelings. If you want to pray with someone, ask him if he wants to first. Then, ask what he really wants to pray for. There's a good chance you'll be surprised.

### 5 They're willing to learn with you.

Kate, my new friend at the swimming pool, welled up when I told her I was a hospice chaplain. That didn't surprise me; it's a common reaction if someone's used hospice for their family before.

"The nurse gave us this booklet that explained what would happen as Mom died, and it all happened exactly the way the pamphlet said it would!" Kate said as tears slipped from her eyes. "It was totally accurate!" Her voice caught in her throat.

I was confused. Hospice nurses give out these booklets to comfort families, to assure them that what they are seeing

and experiencing is normal. Why did it have the opposite effect? Why was Kate so upset?

“How did I not know this?” Kate continued. “How did I get to be 45 years old and not know that this is how people die? That it’s so well known they can predict it? It just seems like something I should’ve known!”

We don’t see death up close very often in our culture anymore, and most people have little or no experience navigating it, so it’s normal not to know how it usually happens, and that there are steps and stages to it. Add in the fact that you might already be grieving for your loved one even before he or she is gone, and it’s a recipe for confusion and regret.

It’s okay that you’re not an expert in dying. The person who is dying has never died before either. You can muddle through this process together.

Hospice patients are surrounded by aides, nurses, social workers and chaplains who do know what they’re doing. Ask them for advice and information. Don’t be ashamed of being nervous or overwhelmed. Not knowing what you’re doing is not a reason to stay away.

What people who are dying really need is to be surrounded by the people who love them, even if those people have no idea what’s happening. Your loving presence is the greatest thing you can offer someone. You don’t need to know anything to do that. ✨

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Kerry Egan is a hospice chaplain and the author of *On Living*.

## Share Your Life Stories

by Kerry Egan, hospice chaplain

No matter how you feel about a life limiting diagnosis, I want you to know that you are precious, and the story of your life is precious. There is a universe of wisdom in the story of every person’s life, if we would only listen to each other and to ourselves.

So find someone who will listen – it could be your chaplain, social worker, nurse, aide, or your volunteer from hospice. Or perhaps it’s a dear friend, or a beloved family member. Find someone you can trust with the enormity of your life’s stories, the joyful and terrible events and tiny details that mean everything to you.

I know your stories are there, waiting to be told, because no one has ever said to me, “You know what? Nothing really happened in my life.” Not a single person. There is a story, and great value to be found in every life.

If you can’t share your story with another person, for whatever reasons, tell yourself, or tell your God. Because this is how people find the meaning of their lives: by remembering the events they experienced, the things they created, and most importantly, the people they love and have been loved by.

# Why Spiritual Beliefs Matter

By Harold G. Koenig, M.D.

According to research, people who have a faith in God believe that nothing is random, that all things have a purpose, and that no situation exists that God cannot use for good. Interviews with people who are experiencing disabling, life-threatening, or terminal illnesses report that religious beliefs are frequently used to cope and the majority say that this gives them meaning and peace.

Even the archenemy of religion, Sigmund Freud, said that “... *only religion can answer the question of the purpose of life. One can hardly be wrong in concluding that the idea of life having a purpose stands and falls with the religious system.*” The scientific worldview sees life as having no ultimate purpose or meaning, but only a freak accident resulting from random forces of nature.

Research has also revealed that those who are more religious have more hope and are more optimistic. While atheists may call this hope “delusional” and such optimism “unrealistic,” they will never be able to prove their points since no one will know the answer to that question until they cross over the threshold of life – when it will either be too late or it won’t matter.

The person of faith, though, will possess the delight of hope and the joy of optimism during the remaining moments of his or her life,



something that the unbeliever may never experience, prevented by dependence on and trust in the rational mind.

When confronting death, a natural response is fear – fear of the unknown, of the ultimate loss of all control. Religion helps people to deal with that fear. In the Christian tradition (but certainly not limited to this particular faith) is a scripture that says, *“love casts out fear.”* What is the love that casts out fear? The love that casts out fear is the love of God and the love of people.

### **First, is the love of God.**

Loving God means trusting God with all the unknowns and unfathomable situations in life, including death. Trust in God means believing that when we stand at the precipice of death and must take that step into the unknown, that God will be there to catch us in his arms and carry us to safety.

The belief that God is real

outweighs any fear and concerns of what might lie on the other side, and the trust we have that God will protect us completely nullifies whatever fear we may have of the unknown.

Those who have known God in life have nothing to fear in death, for the one who loves them is waiting to greet them.

### **Second, is the love of others.**

This love also casts out fear and gives purpose and meaning to those who are dying, and so is essential to a good death. Religious teachings and rituals surrounding death help make the transition easier for the dying person and for the family that is left behind. These sacred rituals connect the dying and the living to the life that extends beyond this life, and helps all to say goodbye. That farewell, however, is only a temporary one.

Faith is what guarantees that there will be a time of reuniting and celebration beyond the grave.

Most religions have beliefs and rituals that make possible the forgiveness of sins committed during this life, and provide an opportunity for the forgiveness of others. That forgiveness helps to heal the wounds inflicted on the dying person and by the dying person on family and friends, and minimizes the pain of separation and the regrets and sense of loss that family and friends are left with after a person's death.

A good death should be one without regrets where the dying person has done everything possible to leave this earth with a clean slate and leave others with a clean slate as well.

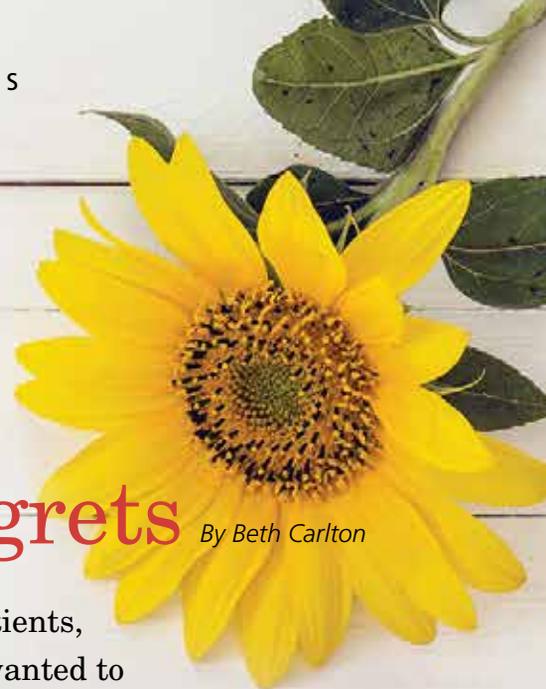
Those with faith, both the dying and the living, then will say “I love you” and “farewell for now” – each person leaving the other in the care of God, the comforter behind the door that all will someday walk through. ✕

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Harold G. Koenig, M.D. is the Director of the Center for Spirituality, Theology and Health at Duke University Medical Center, Durham, NC.

# Letting Go of Life's Regrets

By Beth Carlton



As a palliative care nurse/counselor caring for terminally ill patients, Bronnie Ware asked her patients if they had any regrets they wanted to share about their lives and anything they would do differently if given the chance. In her book *The Top Five Regrets of the Dying*, Bronnie shares the most common regrets expressed at end of life:

**I wish I had pursued what I wanted, rather than expectations**

The most common regret was about not honoring one's own dreams and making choices based on what others expected.

**I wish I had not worked so hard**

Expressed by every male patient, Bronnie asked what they would have done differently. Most believed that a simpler lifestyle and better choices would have allowed them to be happier and spend more time with loved ones.

**I wish I had the courage to express my feelings**

Many people suppressed their feelings to keep peace with others which often resulted in resentment. It's never too late to be deepen mutual respect and healthy relationships by

communicating kind, honest and constructive feelings.

**I wish I had stayed in touch with my friends**

Many had become so focused on their own lives that they had let friendships fade away. Often patients try to reach out to family and friends to restore relationships that were meaningful to them.

**I wish I had let myself be happier**

This is a surprisingly common one. Many did not realize until they were nearing the end of their lives that happiness is a choice. They had stayed stuck in old patterns and habits. Fear of change had them pretending to others and to their selves that they were content when deep within, they longed to laugh and be light hearted again.

Although we cannot change the

past, there are things we can do today to enhance our lives.

- Apologize for the things you regret and ask for forgiveness.
- Be willing to forgive yourself and forgive others.
- Fix what can be fixed and let go of what cannot be changed.

Talking with someone about these feelings – a partner, a dear friend, a spiritual advisor, someone you trust – can help process these feelings so that they no longer feel painful. It may take many tries but eventually many patients feel the burden lifted by coming to terms with their life regrets.

According to Bronnie, nothing else mattered to her patients in the final days of their lives but love and relationships. ❄

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Beth Carlton is a freelance writer who specializes in health care issues and end-of-life care.

# Volunteers

## are the Heart of Hospice Care

By Margie Barham

Caring for the terminally ill by community volunteers is at the root of hospice history. In those early days of hospice, the sick and dying received care during their final days from compassionate people with a mission to ease suffering. Today, clinical care is provided by registered and certified healthcare professionals, but the volunteer visitor continues to be an important part of hospice care. "We know volunteering for hospice isn't for everyone," explained Margie Barham, MBA, director of public relations and giving for Angelic Health. "Yet hospice volunteers will tell you that they get much more than they give. They delight in visiting patients, hearing their stories, and making their days a little more special."

"It is so rewarding to be able to help those who are experiencing the most difficult time in their lives," explains Angelic Hospice Volunteer Loretta Beisel. "Sometimes providing a respite for the caretaker so they can go to church, or the doctor's, or lending an ear to listen to someone recounting their memories of their life is such a simple thing but can be so profound."

Colleen Ortiz became a volunteer because of her experience with hospice care for her parents. "I volunteer with hospice because it is my way of giving back. I want my patients to know that they are not alone in this transition and if I am able to make them more comfortable, I will do my best to achieve that."

Are you a musician, artist, writer? Use your talents to entertain, help a patient document their life in a memory journal, or even transcribe family recipes for posterity. Typical visits are filled with conversation and sharing of memories. Volunteers also stay with the patient for short periods of time so the caregiver can take time for themselves. We welcome Military Veterans to visit other Veterans on hospice service. Sharing this common bond is an important part of their lives. Certified Pet Therapy volunteers also visit those who enjoy spending time with furry friends. ❀

*A gift of your time and compassion to those on their final journey is so meaningful for patients and their loved ones.*

*For more information on hospice volunteering, call 609-515-3041, email [Volunteer@Angelic.health](mailto:Volunteer@Angelic.health), or visit our website at [www.Angelic.health](http://www.Angelic.health)*

# Angelic Health Innovations

## *Improve Care and Communications*

*By Margie Barham*

The house call of the past has taken on a new twist with how healthcare is provided today. Telemedicine is giving people with chronic conditions a way to manage their illness without leaving their home. Angelic Health offers patients the ability to meet with a palliative care specialist using a secure video conference from their home computer, smart phone, or tablet.





“We are leveraging technology to efficiently and effectively manage chronic conditions for patients at home, while maintaining a personal connection,” explained Angelic Health CEO Dan Mikus, MSW, MBA. Angelic Health provides palliative, hospice, transitional, and wound care to patients throughout southern and central New Jersey.

Using a secure video app for remote patient monitoring, the patient can meet with a nurse practitioner who specializes in palliative care. Questions and concerns can be answered, and in-person appointments can be made if needed. This process gives patients quicker access to care and removes barriers to care for those without transportation. The application for this service complies with HIPAA regulations. Like a doctor’s office visit, a co-pay may apply for this service.

Another way Angelic Health is combining high-tech with high-touch care is the use of an interactive tablet called AngeliConnect. The technology was developed specifically by Angelic Health for its hospice patients with chronic conditions that are prone to worsen quickly such as cardiac or pulmonary disorders. These conditions need more intensive monitoring and AngeliConnect provides an around-the-clock direct link to healthcare services. The customized program allows patients to consult with Angelic staff or schedule a visit with a Nurse Practitioner (NP) through easy touch-screen access. Pain and side effects can be tracked, and educational information and videos on comfort measures can be accessed.

### Videos Help Ease Caregiver Anxiety

We know the challenges that family members face caring for their loved ones at home. You have many questions, concerns and even fears about how to be a caregiver. Therefore, Angelic Health has produced educational videos to help family members through many tasks common to caring for a loved one.

The videos cover the most common subjects which were based on input from patient family members. Topics include:

- instructions on how to hook up oxygen
- moving a patient in and out of bed
- re-positioning a patient
- fall prevention
- making a bed with the patient in it
- diapering an adult
- medication dispensing; and
- nebulizer treatment setup.

The videos can be found on the Blog and Video section Angelic Health website at [www.Angelic.health](http://www.Angelic.health) and include step-by-step instructions. The videos are solely for educational purposes, and information included is not a substitute for professional medical advice. All content including, text, graphics, images and communication is for general information purposes only and is not all-encompassing.

### Taking the Lead in Education

There really is something new in healthcare every day. To keep our colleagues current with developments in the field, the Angelic Health Academy provides continuing education workshops, conferences, and credited courses for allied healthcare professionals. Our commitment to education also extends to the public and their personal health concerns. The Angelic Health Speakers Bureau provides experts to speak with community organizations on a variety of topics. To schedule a speaker, visit [www.Angelic.health](http://www.Angelic.health), or call 609-822-7979. ✖



It's about  
how you  
*live*

Having a serious illness comes with many challenges. At Angelic Health we recognize that you are not your diagnosis. Our team of healthcare professionals customize a care plan to meet your unique needs, one to provide the best quality of life possible.

Angelic Health is by your side, providing comprehensive palliative, hospice, and transitional care services, as well as wound management to patients throughout southern and central New Jersey, and professional support to their families. We are endorsed by the Accreditation Commission for Health Care (ACHC), reflecting our dedication and commitment to quality patient care.

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To learn how Angelic Health can help you  
or a loved one, call **609-822-7979** or  
visit our website at **[www.Angelic.Health](http://www.Angelic.Health)**

