



***Module 4:  
Emotional/  
Psychological Issues  
and Support***

# What is a Good Death?

- Dying is a very intimate, personal experience, and everyone has his own definition of “dying well”, but most people believe it includes:
  - Being pain free
  - Having a sense of choice and control
  - Maintaining dignity and privacy
  - Having access to emotional and spiritual support
  - Resolving long-standing conflicts
  - Satisfying final wishes
  - Having time to say good-bye
  - Being able to leave when it is time to go



# Needs of the Dying Person

## The Issue

## Appropriate response from volunteer

Fear of pain

- Reassure the person that he/she can be kept comfortable, without pain
- Remind the person to report pain right away rather than “tough it out”

Fear of death and other fears

- Listen and ask questions
- Be sensitive
- Avoid giving advice or forcing your own views
- Point out how the person has handled difficult situations before

Need for love, nurture, acceptance

- Recognize it is a privilege when someone shares intimate thoughts and stories with you
- Be respectful of the person; see him/her as an equal

## *Emotional/Psychological Issues*

# Needs of the Dying Person

Loss of independence

Concern about physical appearance

Need to “set things right”

Loneliness and isolation

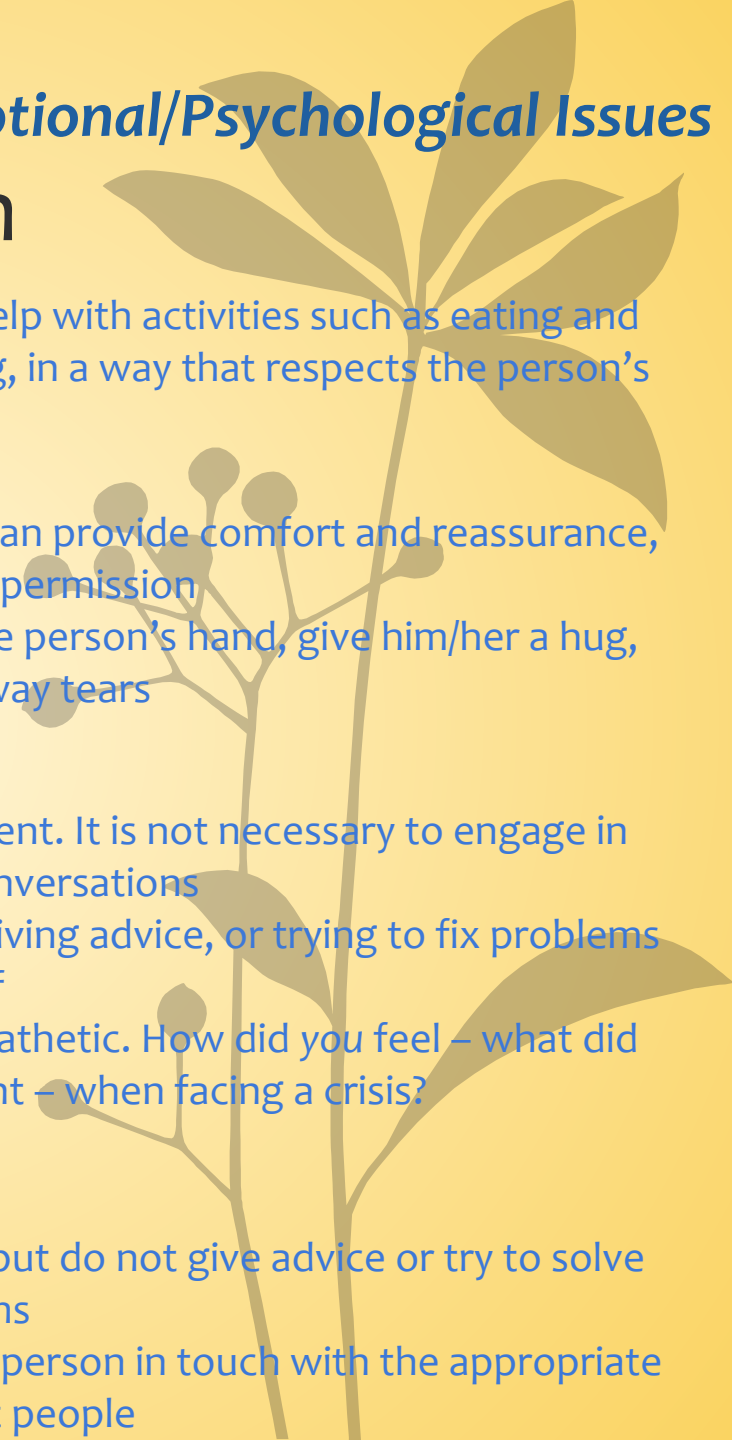
Lost dreams

Anticipatory grief

Concern about future of loved ones

Concern about wills or funeral

- Offer help with activities such as eating and drinking, in a way that respects the person’s dignity
- Touch can provide comfort and reassurance, but ask permission
- Hold the person’s hand, give him/her a hug, wipe away tears
- Be present. It is not necessary to engage in long conversations
- Avoid giving advice, or trying to fix problems yourself
- Be empathetic. How did you feel – what did you want – when facing a crisis?
- Listen, but do not give advice or try to solve problems
- Put the person in touch with the appropriate support people





# Your Role

- The patient and his/her family need:
  - Empathy
  - Permission
  - Individuality
  - Advocacy
  - Truth
  - Time
- To provide effective support, the volunteer must:
  - Be in tune with his or her own feelings about death and dying
  - Give people the freedom to express their own feelings
  - Be sensitive to the special situation of each person in the family
  - Acknowledge the patient's and the family's sense of loss
  - Give people the time they need to come to terms with their fears and confusion

## Emotional/Psychological Issues

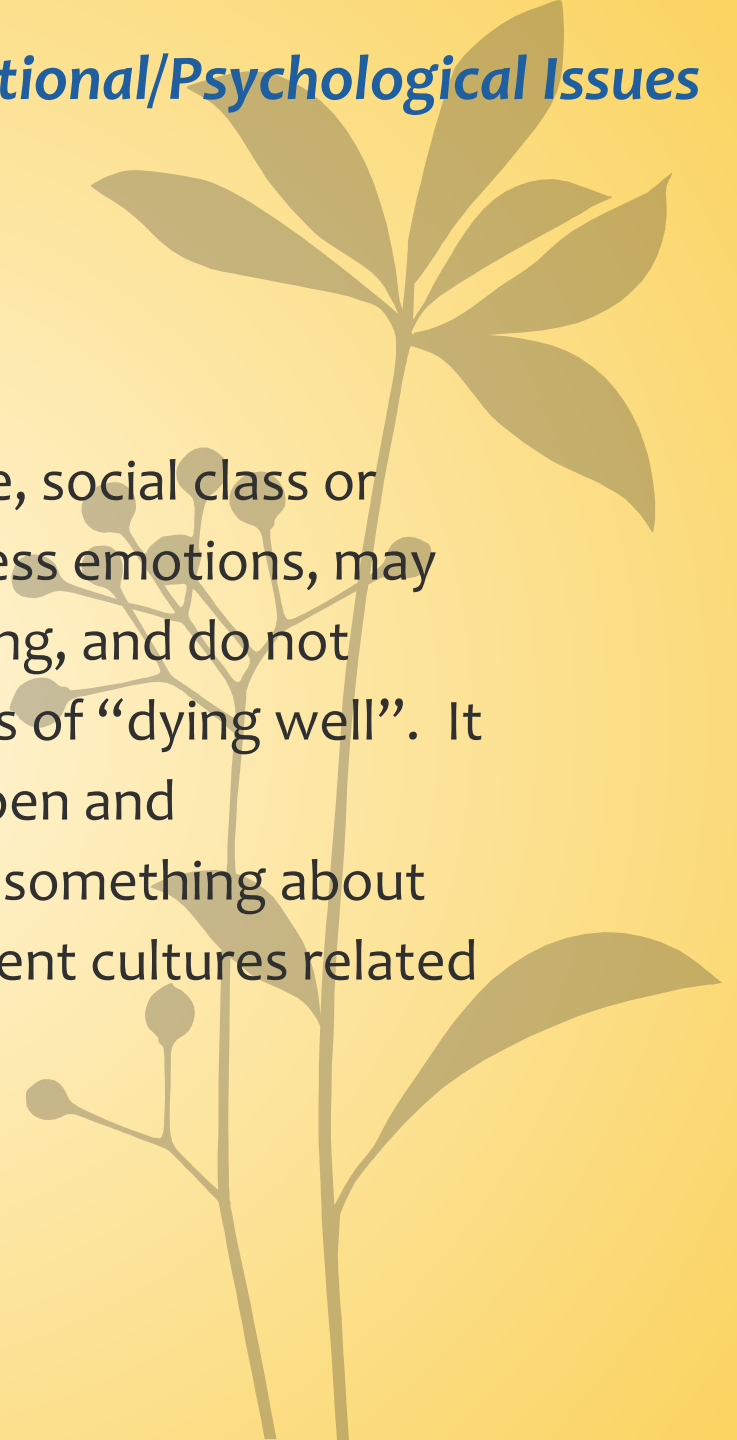
The great healer of our grief is  
**VALIDATION**, not time.



# The Role of Cultural and Spiritual Beliefs

## *Emotional/Psychological Issues*

Many people – because of culture, social class or personality – do not openly express emotions, may have taboos about death and dying, and do not subscribe to the accepted notions of “dying well”. It is critical that the volunteer be open and non-judgmental, and understand something about the beliefs and practices of different cultures related to death and dying.



# Next Steps?

- Click on the link below to take you to the *Module 4: Emotional and Psychological Support* quiz section
  - [Module 4 Quiz](#)

