



Sacred Dying

Creating Spiritual Presence at the End of Life

Megory Anderson, Sacred Dying Foundation
www.sacreddying.org

RITUALS at the END OF LIFE

*"Rituals carry us from one state of being to another.
They transform."*

Letting go

Help the dying person detach and move into death.

- * Assist with good-byes both physical & emotional.
- * Assure them that life concerns and loved ones will be cared for.



Confession

Release whatever difficulties the dying person wishes to unburden.

- * Let them talk.
- * Do not judge.
- * Tell them "it's gone."

Anger

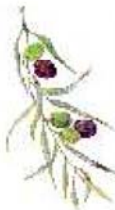
Diffuse issues in a physical way.

- * Rip paper/tear fabric to release angry thoughts.
- * Burn photos.



Fear

- * Recall happy memories & experiences of love.
- * Help the dying person find an internal place of love and safety.



Possibilities for Ritual at the Time of Death



Strength for the Journey

- * Use an item that has meaning & symbolic power to give strength.



Family support

- * Focus energy on the dying loved-one.
- * Leave family dynamics outside.



Reconciliation

- * This is something the dying person initiates, not you.
- * A time for loved-ones to show that all is forgiven.

Purification/Cleansing

Prepare the dying person's body for this transition.

- * Feeling clean can help prepare for whatever's next.
- * This is an opportunity for reassuring & loving touch.
- * Oils can be used for ritual anointing or massage.





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Stillness and silence are the cornerstones of sitting vigil.



Hold the space in prayer and meditation.

Sitting Vigil: Spiritual Presence with the Dying

"The journey into death is such an important one that I believe each person deserves as much support as possible. Our role is to help make the transition a spiritual one, deserving of careful and prayerful preparation. Our work is sitting, talking, praying, helping with those things the dying feel badly about, and creating rituals to help them let go. And then we vigil until they die."



Focus and listen to the dying person. If he or she wants to talk, and can: be available. If not, be silent.

Vigiling is fundamentally about being present to create and support a sacred dying experience. Sitting vigil is far more about being than it is about doing. . . Quiet presence is more than an absence of movement and noise; it is truly an active state. Even when you are still, you can meditate and pray. Continue to hold an image of what the dying person wants and needs. In other words, your spiritual presence brings peace and receptivity.



No TV or other distractions. Use reading, music, & discussion with *intention* (not as a way to "fill time").



Invite the dying person to join you in prayer and meditation.