

10 Simple Ways to Say “Goodbye”

Acknowledging the importance of the relationship and saying goodbye are an important part of the grief process and an important part of sending the dying person on their journey through death. Some simple things families can do to say goodbye include, but are not limited to:

1. Hold the patient’s hand and simply be there with them.
2. Give the patient a kiss and/or a hug.
3. Read a poem to them.
4. Sing to them.
5. Say a prayer for (or with) them.
6. Say “I love you. Thank you. I will always remember you.”
7. Give the patient a photograph, flower, or other memento, describing what you are giving and how they have enriched your life.
8. Trace the patients hand to keep as a memento.
9. Make Thumbprint Stones.
10. Make Friendship bracelets.

Goodbye visits are always difficult and sad but they do not have to be scary for children and families. Goodbye visits need not be long, either- in fact, brief visits seem to work best. When leading children through saying goodbye:

- ✓ Begin by asking for permission to talk with them about something hard.
- ✓ Review with them what they already have experienced and observed about their person’s medical condition.
- ✓ Use simple, exact language “Their body cannot stay alive any more. It is going to quit working and they are going to die.”
- ✓ Validate their feelings “Everyone is really sad that this is happening.”
- ✓ Explain what they will see and hear and the reason for these (example, if the patients breathing or color is different, if others will be crying, etc).
- ✓ Offer to do the visit with them or offer them space if they feel they need to do it alone
- ✓ Provide reassurance that the person can hear them.
- ✓ Provide ways to say goodbye or ask them for their own ideas.

We hope that this information has been helpful to you. For more detailed information on this and other topics please ask for a copy of the book Staying Connected at the End of Life: A Guide for Parents, published by Hosparus Health. Your social worker or chaplain is here to help you. For additional assistance, you may also call the Hosparus Health Grief Counseling Center nearest you.

The Hosparus Health Grief Counseling Center offers the area’s most comprehensive programs and services for children, adolescents, adults and families who are grieving the death of someone in their lives. Services include individual, group and family counseling, as well as education, support and special events designed to help people through their grief journeys. **For an appointment or to speak with a grief counselor, please call the Hosparus Health Grief Counseling Center at 502-456-5451 or 888-345-8197.**