A Communication Skills Module:
TALKING ABOUT DEATH

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IT'S A NATURAL PART OF LIFE...

Have you ever said that someone you know has passed away, was taken from you, or went to meet his maker? Was it easier for you to talk about this person using those terms instead of just saying, "He died."?

As health care workers, we experience death and dying more than most people. Yet, even for us, it can be a difficult subject to talk about.

Why? Our society is focused on youth, life and living. On television and in magazines, we see ads for how to feel and look younger. We don't see too many positive messages about getting old or about dying with dignity. Most of us would rather ignore the idea of death. But ignoring death doesn't make it go away. Death is part of life and part of your job.

Remember, as a nursing assistant, you have a wonderful opportunity to bond with your clients. Often, you spend more time with them than any other member of the health care team.

### Death Phobia (Thanatophobia):

Some people are so afraid of death that they have severe physical reactions when they think or talk about death. Such symptoms include: dizziness, dry mouth, a loss of control and/or feeling separate from reality.

To help your clients who are dying, you need to:

1. Think about your own beliefs and ideas about death.
2. Learn about the stages a dying person goes through.
3. Learn how to help your dying clients communicate their feelings.

This inservice provides you with the information you need to accomplish these three goals.
How Do You Feel About Death?

Okay, so we might not think about death unless we're forced to. But why? For most of us, death brings out feelings that we would rather not have, such as:

**Fear**

*Related fears might include being afraid of:*

- Dying.
- Losing a loved one.
- Dying alone.
- Dying in pain.
- Leaving our families.

**Anger**

*Death might make us angry because:*

- Death is unfair.
- Death tears families apart.
- A loved one has left us.
- We work in a job where so many people die.
- The world has been cruel.

**Guilt**

*It is common to feel guilty about:*

- Not being able to prevent a loved one's death.
- Not showing enough love to a family member before he died.
- Wishing someone would die and then he did.

**Grief**

*Sometimes feelings of grief can be overwhelming including grief for:*

- The loved ones we've lost.
- The clients we've lost.
- Our own lives passing us by too quickly.

These are just some of the feelings that you might have about death and dying. If you are like most people, you tend to stuff these feelings deep inside and not think about them. This may seem like the brave thing to do, because you are putting aside the emotions of death and dealing with the living instead. The problem is that these feelings don't go away just because they are ignored. For example:

- If you are afraid of death, you may not want to take care of dying clients. Or, you might rush through their care so you don't have to think about death.
- If you are angry about death, you may not be sensitive to the needs of your dying clients. You might just think, "Oh, get on with it and die already! The people I care about always die!"

- If you feel guilty about death, you might go overboard when you take care of dying clients. You might forget about keeping a professional distance, and get too involved with the client and the family. If this happens, it is likely that you could become too closely attached to the client.
- If you are full of grief over family, friends or clients who have died, you may be too sad to be of much help to another dying client.

It's important for you to understand how you feel about death, and how it may be affecting your client care. Take some time to think about these issues.

Or, you may need to talk about your feelings—with your family, your coworkers or a clergy person—before you can truly help another dying client and his or her family members.
The Five Stages of Death and Dying

Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross has written many books about death and dying. In her studies of dying people, she figured out that there are five main stages that people go through when they learn they are going to die. Each person is different and may experience these stages at different intensities and/or different times.

- When working with terminally ill clients, it can be extremely difficult to help them through each of these stages. It is possible that a client could lash out at you and/or completely reject your care.
- Remember to be patient with all terminally ill clients, as they may not realize they are projecting their feelings on to you. If you remain patient, your clients will probably keep calm and may respect your wishes and authority more easily.
- Also try to remember that a client's family is moving through a mourning process too. You could find that the family is unwilling to help you with the client and/or have become difficult to reach.
- Don't give up. Your client (as well as the client's family) depends on your help and care everyday.

A few supportive things to say to a terminally ill client:

"Please tell me how you are feeling. Maybe I will be able to understand better."

"I don't know what to say, but I will be more than happy to listen to you."

Things NOT to say:

"It is just nature's way."

"The same thing happened to my friend."

Stage One: Denial

"No! Not Me!"

"No!" Isn't that how most people react to news of a death or a terminal illness? We want to deny that this horrible thing is really happening. Denial helps protect people during the initial period of shock. Most people are not ready to deal with the full impact of death, so denying it "softens" the blow for a while. Some people never get past this stage.

What Can You Say and/or Do?

- Accept clients who are in denial about their own death.
- Don't try to push them past the denial stage by reminding them that they are dying. Remember that all people approach death in their own way.
- You may think that by denying the issue, your client is giving up a priceless opportunity to make things right with family members or to say goodbye to loved ones. You may be right, but it's not up to us to judge how someone else handles his or her own death.
Stage Two: Anger

"Why Me?"

In this stage, people get mad. They think about how unfair it is that they are dying. This shouldn’t be happening to them! It stinks! People in the anger stage may talk about how mad they are at God for letting this happen. They also might express their anger at friends, family members...and you.

What Can You Say and/or Do?

- Accept clients who are feeling angry about dying. Don’t tell them that “it’s God’s will” even if you believe that to be true.
- Don’t take your clients’ anger personally. It may not be fair of them to take their anger out on you, but, to them, nothing is fair right now. Be patient, and don’t get angry too.
- Listen! What is the anger really telling you? Are your clients really scared, but it’s coming out as anger? Put yourself in their shoes.
- Give angry clients as much control as possible. They are probably mad about having no say in the fact that they are dying. Let them make as many decisions as they want about little things like what time they have their bath or what color sweater to wear.
- Mean what you say! If you tell a client that you will be back in ten minutes, make sure you are back on time. If you tell a client you will have lunch ready at noon, make sure it is ready. Don’t add to the client’s anger by not following through on what you say.

Stage Three: Bargaining

"If It’s Me, Maybe I Can…"

During this stage, people try to make bargains with God. They say, “If I can just live until Christmas, then I’ll die happy.” or “If I can please stay alive until my grandchild is born, things will be okay.” This kind of bargaining gives people a feeling of hope and, sometimes, of power. They are trying to fight the idea that they have no say-so in the timing of their death.

What Can You Say and/or Do?

- Accept clients who are in the bargaining stage, even if you believe that it’s wrong to try to bargain with God, or that there is no God to bargain with. Keep your own beliefs to yourself.
- Don’t ever take away a client’s hope, even if what they are hoping for is unrealistic. Talk about the future—even if it’s just tomorrow or next week.
- Treat dying clients as normally as possible. Their bargain probably includes having a normal life for a little bit longer. You can help them feel “normal” by talking about everyday events or things in the news.
Stage Four: Depression

"It's Me, and There's Nothing I Can Do About It. Poor Me!"

Depression is the stage when people feel like they have lost all hope. They realize that death is coming and that their life is nearly over. In this stage, people tend to feel an overwhelming sadness. They might want to be left alone. They may cry a lot, lose their appetite and spend a lot of time sleeping.

- Accept clients who are sad about dying. And, remember that you might feel a lot of sadness yourself, especially if you’ve worked with a dying client for a long time.
- Don’t try to cheer your dying clients up. They need to be allowed to feel sad. Try to keep a positive attitude and act as normally as possible.
- Pay attention to little things that might comfort a sad client, such as listening to a favorite song, receiving a back rub, or having a shampoo.
- If you are uncomfortable with the client’s sadness, try hard not to let it show. Don’t rush through client care because you’d rather be somewhere else.
- Don’t say, “I know how you feel,” because you really don’t. None of us can know how it feels until we are nearing death ourselves.
- Touching can be a wonderful way to communicate, but make sure your client is comfortable with your being “personal”.
- Sometimes, just a little hug or a squeeze of the hand lets a client know you care.

Stage Five: Acceptance

"Yes, It’s Me."

Not everyone reaches this stage, but those that do come to understand that death is inevitable. They wait for death with patience and with acceptance. People in this stage might spend time quietly reviewing their life. They may make amends or say good bye to friends and family. They are at peace with death.

What Can You Say and/or Do?

- Don’t worry about saying the right thing. Being there to listen to your client is much more important than anything you might say.
- A client may express some “final” desires to you, such as “Oh, I’d love to see my sister before I die.” or “I wish I could see the roses blooming.” Share this type of communication with your supervisor to see if the health care team can make these final wishes come true.
- Your client may not feel like talking. If appropriate, spend a few minutes just sitting nearby or just holding hands.
- Accept clients who have come to terms with their death, even if their friends or family (or you) aren’t ready for them to die.
Important Things to Remember About the Five Stages of Death

- There is no timetable for going through the five stages. Some people might spend only a few hours in a certain stage, some will spend weeks, and others might never go past that stage.

- Not all people go through the stages in the “right” order. They might skip down to depression and then come back to denial. Then, they feel angry and then they go back to being in denial. **There is no right or wrong way to pass through the five stages.**

- Remember that family members and friends are going through a similar process. However, they will go through it differently than the dying person. Your client may have accepted death, but his wife is still in denial. Or your client might be in the angry stage and her husband is trying to make deals with God. This makes working with dying clients and their families a real challenge.

- There is no rule that once a client has accepted death, that he or she has to stay in that stage. You may sense that your client is at peace with death one day and the next day, he is mad as heck about it! Don’t be surprised, and don’t criticize the client for being mad. Hopefully, the client will find peace again, but that is out of your control.

- Remember that your dying clients, their families and their friends are dealing with very serious emotions. Try to maintain a positive attitude at all times, and keep your professional cool no matter what.

- The best thing you can do is to be **flexible!** Accept your clients each day, no matter what stage they are in. Provide support and be understanding as your clients make the final journey toward death.

Accepting a Client’s Death

When a terminally ill client dies, it can often be very difficult to accept. In your profession, clients depend on you and are often excited to see you on a day to day basis. Many times, this happiness becomes mutual. If you feel yourself experiencing grief after the death of a client, here are a few things you can do to help yourself through the process:

- Don’t forget that it is normal to feel sad after the death of someone who is close to you. Give yourself permission to cry.

- Remember that you did your best everyday to make your client comfortable and happy.

- Talk to your co-workers and/or supervisor about your feelings.

- If the client’s family is open to talking, sharing your memories of their loved one could help release some of your feelings of sadness.

- If appropriate, consider attending the client’s funeral. It may bring you the emotional closure you need.
How Can You Help Grieving Families?

Often times, families and friends of terminally ill clients pass through several stages of grieving for the impending loss of their loved one. It is important to understand that everyone mourns at a different rate and in a different way.

- Always be willing to listen. BUT, never force family members to talk about their feelings.
- When working with families, try to remember that each family may have different spiritual or religious beliefs that help them get through the process.
- Even a friendly conversation can help a person in mourning. In the stages of grief, some people find it difficult to talk about their loss, however, communication can sometimes help lessen their amount of grief.
- Smile! It may seem insignificant, however, smiling is contagious and can easily brighten someone’s day (no matter how tough a day it is).

The Five Stages of the Grieving Process

There are five stages that a grieving person or family may go through after the loss of a loved one. These stages are very similar to the five stages of death and dying. However, remember that each family may go through these stages at different times, in a different order and/or in different ways.

Stage One: Isolation and Denial
After the loss of a family member or close friend, a person may try to separate themselves from their lives, friends, and/or other family members.

Stage Two: Anger
An angered family member or friend may become extremely upset with their loved one. They often blame their loved one for inflicting this pain. Their anger could also be aimed at the world for allowing their friend or family member to die.

Stage Three: Bargaining
In this stage, a family or friend may attempt to make “deals” with themselves or with a religious figure to take away their pain.

“The pain passes, but the beauty remains.”
-Pierre Auguste Renoir

“In three words I can sum up everything I’ve learned about life: it goes on.”
-Robert Frost

Stage Four: Depression
A depressed person will usually attempt to withdraw from their life. They may still remain angry, however, they often feel numb to their emotions.

Stage Five: Acceptance
Once a family or friend has accepted the loss of a loved one, they slowly begin to feel less angry and sad. Remember, a family or friend will continue to miss their loved one as the grieving process usually never ends completely.
Listening Skills

One of the most important ways that you can communicate with a dying client or his family is to listen! When you really listen to people, you let them know that you are concerned, interested and that you understand. Unfortunately, most of us are better at talking than at listening. It takes practice to become a good listener. Here are some tips for improving your listening skills:

1. **Focus on the other person.**
Avoid turning the conversation back on you. Look at this example...

Mrs. Jones says to Mary, her aide, "I am really afraid of dying." Mary tries to show she understands by saying, "Well, so am I. But when I start thinking about it, I just say a prayer and then I feel better."

What's wrong with what Mary said?
- First of all, count the number of times that Mary used the word, "I". *Four times.* This turned the conversation back on Mary instead of keeping it on Mrs. Jones.
- It also sounds like Mary doesn't approve of Mrs. Jones being afraid. Do you think Mrs. Jones will ever mention her fears to Mary again? Probably not.

So what could Mary have said instead? How about...

"Mrs. Jones, you say you are afraid of dying. What is it that you are actually afraid of?"

Why is this better?
- Using the word "you" keeps the conversation on the other person.
- Asking Mrs. Jones a question about her fears may help her talk about what's really bothering her. Is she afraid of dying alone? Is she afraid of leaving her husband? Mary has a great opportunity to listen to her client.

2. **Listen more than you talk.**
It's pretty hard to listen with our mouths open! Remember that old saying...*we should listen twice as much as we talk because we have two ears and only one mouth.*

3. **Use the other person's name.**
Don't you feel like someone is really interested in listening to you if they call you by name? Look again at the above example. The first time, Mary only talked about herself. It didn't sound like she wanted to listen to Mrs. Jones. The second time, she called her client by name. This added warmth to the conversation and let Mrs. Jones know that Mary was really listening to her.

4. **Ask questions that need more than a "yes" or "no" answer.**
Remember, you are trying to listen more than you talk. If you ask questions that can be answered with one word, who is going to be doing most of the talking? You are.

5. **Make eye contact.**
Have you ever tried to have a serious conversation with someone and that person wouldn't look you in the eye? Did you feel like he or she was listening to you? Probably not. It's important to look your clients in the eye when you speak to them and especially when they are speaking to you! Let them know you have time to listen to them and that you are interested in what they have to say. (But, remember, there are some cultures that are uncomfortable with eye contact, so be sensitive to your clients. If they look away every time you make eye contact, then don't push it.)

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6. Listen with your body, too.
Obviously, you have to get your work done. You can't spend all day just listening to your clients, even if you'd like to. However, it's important to let your clients know that they have your attention by facing them and not acting rushed when they are speaking to you. For example:

- If Mary turned her back on her client while Mrs. Jones was telling her about her fears, what do you think would happen? Mrs. Jones would probably figure that Mary wasn't listening and the opportunity to communicate would be lost.
- How about if Mary looked at her watch or did paperwork in the middle of her conversation with Mrs. Jones? It would probably give Mrs. Jones the idea that Mary didn't have time to listen.

Try to nod your head occasionally, giving your client feedback so that they know you are really listening. This is especially important for a client who is dying. They already feel like time is short, and that life is passing them by.

7. Don't interrupt.
Sometimes, it's tempting to interrupt the other person, especially when a client or his family is talking to you about death. If you are uncomfortable talking about death and dying, you may try to change the subject to something more "cheerful". However, it's important to let your clients talk about what is on their minds, even if it is uncomfortable for you. Let them finish talking before you begin.

8. Let silence happen.
Being a good listener means that sometimes you have to let there be silence. Don't think that you have to fill the air up with words. If there is a pause in the conversation, accept it. Let your client know you are supportive just by being there. Words aren't always necessary.

10. Give feedback.
- Some clients may need reassurance when they share their stories and/or feelings with you. Don't be afraid to encourage them to keep talking, however, remember not to force words.
- By simply resting a hand on your client's arm, or even giving a client a reassuring smile can initiate a longer conversation.
- When answering a client's question try to emphasize the positive.
  For example: If a client asks you what is going on in your life, don't complain about all the things that are going wrong. Try telling a client about the positive things in your life (such as your children, your husband, and/or your family).
- For clients who enjoy talking, make sure that you continue to listen to them. Some clients may repeat certain stories or memories they are fond of. Let a client talk rather than interrupting to let them know you have already heard the story. Remembering certain past experiences could help cheer up your client.

Don't forget to listen to the family as well as the client. Sometimes, the family has important wishes and/or information about the client that you would not obtain otherwise.
Asking the Right Questions

Remember that while you don’t want to force anyone to talk, asking some questions may help your clients open up and let them know that you are available to listen to them. They may be wishing for someone to talk to.

- Practice asking questions that need more than a “yes” or “no” answer. For example, if you ask someone “Are you ok?”, the answer will probably be “yes” or “no”. This is not very helpful. But, if you ask someone, “Can you tell me how you are feeling?”, you’ll encourage the person to open up.

- Don’t be afraid of causing tears by encouraging your clients to talk. Crying is a normal reaction to dealing with death.

- Don’t forget to ask questions like, “How is your pain today?” or “Would you be more comfortable in the bed or the chair?” By helping your clients meet their physical needs, you give them more time and energy to deal with all the difficult emotional issues they face.

- Saying “If you ever want to talk, let me know.” is not very helpful. Chances are, your client will never say anything. Instead, ask a specific question like “How did your visit go with your daughter?” This may get your client to open up about how she feels.

- It’s okay to ask, “Are you afraid?” Your client may not tell his family about his fears in case it would upset them or add to their grief. But, he might tell you.

- Asking about special pictures in a photo album may encourage your client to talk about her feelings. Or, you can try asking questions like “How did you meet your husband?” or “Can you tell me about your career as a school teacher?” These questions might seem like “small talk”, but they often help people to begin talking about their feelings.

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Never tell a client that you “understand.” Sharing personal stories of your own could make a client feel as if their problems are insignificant. Remember to keep an open ear.

- When you get the ball rolling by asking questions, your clients may talk to you about important issues such as:
  - How they hope to be treated at the end of their lives.
  - Specific fears they have.
  - What sort of funeral arrangements they wish to have.
  - Their beliefs about life after death.

Be sure to report and/or document what you hear so that the rest of the client’s health care team has that information.

- If your client has a hard time expressing himself, don’t be afraid to tell him that you don’t understand. Ask him to repeat himself, or try to get him to talk louder. Just remember, try not to push your clients as it may be frustrating for them.

- Making conversation by asking everyday questions can sometimes help your client relax. Try asking a client questions such as, “How do you like this weather today?”, or “What is your favorite television show?”

- For an angry client, or a client who acts out against your attempts to help, feel free to ask them, “What makes you angry?” Tell them that you understand their frustration, and that you are willing to listen.

- Remember to ask if there is anything else that you can do. Even a simple task may be difficult for a client. Every attempt to help could aid in your client’s well being.
Giving the Right Answers

- Avoid telling your own stories. "Well, when my Aunt Hilda was dying, she met with everybody in the family, one at a time, to say her good-byes. We all have good memories of her because of that." You may just be trying help or to show that you understand, but it's best to keep these stories to yourself. Everyone has to experience death and dying in his or her own way.

- Be careful not to talk to others in the room as if the client wasn't even there. This tends to make your client feel like he is already dead.

- Don't worry about always saying the right thing. If you respect the dignity of your clients and their families, you'll be okay.

- Talking about death is difficult. But, it's important to try. Don't stay silent because you're afraid you'll say the wrong thing.

- Be sure to give yourself credit for your communication efforts.

More Communication Tips

- Report your client's request for spiritual guidance / clergy to your supervisor right away.

- Wear your name badge always and introduce yourself again, if necessary. This is a stressful time for your client and his/her family, so make it easy for them to remember your name and why you are there.

- Remember, when you speak to or near a dying person, speak as if every word might be heard—because it probably is. Hearing is one of the last senses to fail when a person dies.

- If you work in the client's home, call before you come. If you work in a nursing facility, knock before you enter the client's room. This shows respect for the client and family.

- Let the client make as many decisions as possible about his or her care. If you have questions about whether the client's wishes "fit" into your plan of care, discuss the issue with your supervisor.

- If a dying client asks you, "Am I a good person? Have I led a good life?", don't just brush the person off by saying, "Oh, yes, don't worry about that." Try giving some specific examples that you know to be true, such as "You always speak so kindly to your neighbor when she visits." or "You must have been a wonderful mother because your children love you very much."

- Remember that you have a job to do...to provide care and comfort to your clients. Your job involves keeping your clients safe and comfortable, helping to prevent additional health problems, and following the plan of care exactly. Because you spend so much time with your clients, you have the chance to help them be physically and emotionally comfortable. This is especially important when a client is dying.

- If the stress of caring for a dying client becomes too much for you, be sure to talk to your supervisor about it. It can be very hard on you to spend time with someone who goes from being angry to being demanding to being sad. Don't forget to look out for your own emotional health!

Don't be hard on yourself if you sometimes make mistakes when communicating with dying clients and their families. You might think you "put your foot in your mouth" at times, but at least you are trying. Learn from your mistakes, and keep making the effort to communicate and support your seriously ill clients. They need you!
Communicating Without Words

There are a number of ways that you can communicate your concern and support for a dying client—without saying anything at all. Here are some examples of “nonverbal” communication:

1. **Supporting the normal routines of your clients and their families.**

When they are dying, most people want to keep up their normal routines for as long as possible. It helps them feel like they are still in control and can still enjoy daily life. For example:

   *Let’s say you have a dying client, Mr. Smith. Every day for the past five years, his wife has been the one to shave him. Now, you are there to help with personal care. It takes Mrs. Smith twice as long as you to shave her husband. Even though you would like to do it yourself, you should let Mrs. Smith shave her husband. This is a daily ritual for them, and helps them feel “normal” as they deal with his dying.*

2. **Letting silence happen.**

As death approaches, many people become quiet. They may be reflecting on their life...the good things and the regrets. You can show respect for your clients by being sensitive to their need for silence. If you sense that your client doesn’t want to talk, don’t try to fill up the silence with humming or whistling.

3. **Letting sadness happen.**

Show your support by allowing your client and/or his family to cry. Crying is a normal reaction to the dying process. If you feel uncomfortable with tears, try not to let it show. Lend your support by just being there, or by a gentle squeeze of the hand.

4. **Communicating with touch.**

Some people are not comfortable being touched and you must be sensitive to their wishes. However, for many people, touch is a comforting thing. For example, to comfort Mrs. Jones, Mary might try holding her hand, brushing her hair, applying a soothing skin lotion, painting her fingernails, stroking her arm or tucking the blanket around her. These kinds of simple little touches are a powerful way to let someone know that you care.

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**The Mystery of Death**

*In the past, loved ones died at home. Their families took care of them while they were dying and after death. Death was accepted as a part of life.*

*Now, four out of five people die in hospitals or nursing homes. Many die alone without family or friends. Funeral homes take care of things after death.*

*In our society, death is a mysterious event that happens separately from the hustle and bustle of daily life. Is it any wonder that we have trouble talking about death?*
Confidential Communication

So far, you’ve learned that you should ask questions that encourage your clients to talk about their feelings. You’ve also learned that listening is one of the best ways for you to show your concern. But, your clients need to know that you will treat their feelings confidentially. They will trust you to listen to their innermost feelings only if they know you will keep them to yourself. Since all client information is confidential, this shouldn’t be a problem, right? Well, there are some tricky situations that you should be aware of. For example:

* Mr. Jones tells you he is thinking of ending his pain by overdosing on his medication. He asks you to keep it a secret.

Can you keep this information confidential? NO! Remember that you are part of a health care team. If you have information that is important for the entire team to know or if the information relates to a patient’s safety, you must report it. Whether you agree with Mr. Jones’ idea of committing suicide or not, you must report your conversation with him. And, you should tell Mr. Jones that you are duty bound to report it.

* Mr. Smith tells you that he doesn’t want his granddaughter to know he is dying. He asks you to keep it a secret.

Can you keep this quiet? YES! It is not your place to tell the granddaughter that your client is dying anyway. Spreading that information would be the same as gossiping.

* Mrs. Brown’s daughter tells you that her mother fell earlier that day. She feels guilty about it and wants you to promise not to tell.

Can you promise? NO! Again, you might try telling the family member that you are part of a health care team, and that each member of the team needs to know what is going on with her mother. (You might also ask the daughter why she feels guilty about the fall...)

Your client, Mrs. Johnson, is dying, but her family does not want her to know. One day, Mrs. Johnson asks you, “Am I dying?”

Do you tell Mrs. Johnson the truth? NO! Even if you don’t agree, you must go along with the family’s wishes. You don’t want to lie to your client, so you might try saying something like, “I don’t know about all your medical information, Mrs. Johnson, but I’ll let my supervisor know that you have questions.” Then, report the conversation to your supervisor. Perhaps the nurse or the physician can discuss the issue with the family.

The Bottom Line: As you work with dying clients, you may find yourself in the middle of families who are in crisis. You may hear things about a client’s finances or love life that is really nobody’s business. Be sure to respect the dignity of your client by keeping all personal information confidential. And, remember to share information with the health care team when it is important for the client’s health and/or safety.