Compassionate Companions

Creating volunteer programs for end of life

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Objectives

- Define Compassionate Companions
- Discuss recruitment and training
- Program logistics
- Supporting the volunteers

Compassionate Companions

Volunteers sharing compassionate presence with patients at end of life

- Adult patients dying alone in the hospital
  - Increased staff distress
  - Family guilt and distress
- Families sitting vigil with loved ones at end of life and needing respite
- Other special situations

Recruitment

New Volunteers

Existing Volunteers

Staff

Healthcare students

Training

- Explore personal loss history
- Skills to develop
  - Active listening
  - Healing or Compassionate
- Explore helper styles
- Boundaries
  - Whose need am I meeting?
  - Is it appropriate for me to share my experiences?
  - Prayer

Empathy vs. Sympathy

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KZBTYViDPlQ

Training

- Explore *The Needs of the Dying*
  - *The Dying Patient's Bill of Rights*
- Stages of Dying
  - Behavioral changes
  - Physiological changes
- *Interventions*
  - *Playing music or reading*
  - *Physical touch*
  - *Repositioning*
  - *When to ask for help*
  - *When to offer resources*

It’s Not About The Nail.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4EDhdAHrOg

Program Logistics

- Develop a system for notifying volunteers of needs
- Develop a system for sign up
- Have resources for debriefing in place
- Ongoing support and eduation

Challenges

- Underutilization
- Volunteer unavailability
- Unrealistic expectations
- Volunteer boundaries
- Sustainability

Successes

- Needs frequently met
- Family and staff gratitude
- High volunteer engagement
- Volunteers recruiting volunteers

Lessons Learned

Emphasize self-reflection

Reinforce boundaries

Be available for debriefing

Buddy system

Holidays are TOUGH

Assess every request

Modify as needed

For additional Compassionate Companion resources, use the QR code:

Thank you for attending!!

To evaluate this session, use the QR code.

Society for Healthcare Volunteer Leaders

Breakout Session Evaluation