

# The 3 Paths to Spiritual Comfort

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**T**he emotional connections that support us during a terminal illness are no different than those that have been important all throughout our lives. Regardless of our personal faith or involvement, these simple values provide spiritual comfort at the end of life.

## Loving and Being Loved

We all long to be loved and to love. We all need to hear "I love you," and we all need to be able to say "I love you." This is no different at the end of life. You really cannot say "I love you" too much. Sometimes our loving may require us to forgive, or to thank, or to ask forgiveness. This is still, at its root, an expression of love. Some people will be out of practice at saying these three words. The floodgates of emotion that open when we connect with others at the heart are really vital emotions that are needed to sustain us in times of crisis. We need to be nourished by love. As our bodies weaken and we refuse to eat, love will be there to supply us with nutrients of the heart.

## Feeling a Sense of Purpose

We all want to know we have had meaning to other people throughout life. The best way to be reminded of your meaning is to sit down with other people—most often friends and family—and share either stories or photographs.

Talk about where you have been together in this journey we call life. Then, tell each other how much that has meant to you over the years.

It is helpful to share one thing that comes to mind when you think of each other: "I will never forget the way you helped Granny out when she was sick—you are so kind," or "You have always been so generous." These things, like love, will become a form of sustenance to us and nourishment to us in the days ahead.

## Needing to Care

We are always concerned about the well-being of others in our lives. This is no different at the end of life. It is necessary that we share how we will take care of ourselves and others during this time. This may mean saying, "Dad, we'll make sure Mom is OK after you're gone," or "Honey, I am taking my medicine and spending time with people I love every day." Letting our loved ones know about our lives provides a strong emotional connection and allows them to care.

Although ensuring that these values are in place and have some voice in our lives, it will not take away the sadness we feel at the end of our lives. What it will do is provide us with a safe and nurturing space to enjoy our final days with those we love. ❧

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