

The Hospice Team – a Steadying Presence

By Gayle Heuser, MA, MM, SD | Spiritual Counselor



When Queen Elizabeth II died several months ago, much was written about the consistency of her presence in a changing world. As Britain's longest serving monarch, she demonstrated

a calming influence through many times of uncertainty and change. She committed her life to a purpose larger than herself and was loved for the stability she brought through her role. She was someone who had the capability of maintaining tranquility. When difficulties appeared, she was a steadying presence.

Perhaps the same could be said about the hospice team -- members who provide the "circle of care" for each patient in hospice and for their family. Hospice is known for its philosophy of teamwork and the hospice social workers, doctors, certified home health aides, nurses, hospice volunteers, bereavement counselors and spiritual care counselors all work together to address the unique goals of care for each individual. With their expertise, team members provide care for body, mind and spirit, alleviate pain and bring comfort to those in need.

But beyond bringing medical and clinical care, the hospice team also brings a steadying presence. In a 2019 peer reviewed article titled "What is

clinician presence? A qualitative interview study comparing physician and non-physician insights about practices of human connection," the word presence was defined as "a purposeful practice of awareness, focus and attention with the intent to understand and connect with individuals."

One of the conclusions drawn from this study was that clinician presence involves learning to "step back, pause and be prepared to receive a patient's story.... best enacted through purposeful intention to connect."

Hospice team members display this purposeful intention. They are devoted to their commitment of providing care. Because of their experience and training, they bring a kind of peace to each situation. Their support at the end of life can make all the difference in steadying the experience of a dying person and a grieving family, thus making the bereavement period more tolerable. Each member of the team, in their own way, brings something of this stability to the experience of dying.

Perhaps you're aware of someone who is a steadying presence in your life, even now. What is your experience of them? To whom have you been a steadying presence? If you have a loved one on hospice care, how do you experience your hospice team as they bring peace and reassurance? Is it something they do or say, or is it their steadying presence?

NEWSLETTER

Reflection During the Holidays

by Gerardo Camarena, BA, MAT | Spiritual Counselor

I lost my father in May of 2016. He was a few months away from his 68th birthday. Alzheimer's disease seemed to move rapidly through him. He spent his last few weeks of life on hospice. This was before I knew much of anything about hospice. Within a few months after my dad passed away, I took on my first role as a hospice chaplain.

The holidays came quick that year. It would be the first time that my brother and I would go through them without a father. Needless to say, it was not a holiday season like any before. Though my mom, brother, and I had been and continue to be deeply connected and involved in our faith tradition, which gave and still does give great meaning and joy to the holidays, there seemed to be a cloud hanging overhead. I know we wanted our families to be happy and experience the joy and excitement of that time of the year, but it just seemed hard.

I learned that grief seems to come and go. And it continues to do so. It could be a song, a memory, or even a smell. If any of you had dads with a favorite aftershave, you know what I mean. Before you know it feelings of loss or emptiness can come rushing in.

Perhaps this is your first year without your loved one or maybe it's the 5th or 10th or 20th for that matter. For certain, there will be thoughts, memories and stories that come up leading to a mix of emotions. That's ok! The reason we

celebrate the holidays is because of those we have lost. Think about it... the way we celebrate, the food we cook, the songs we sing and yes, the way we open up our gifts on Christmas day are all connected to loved ones from the past.

A big part of coping through the holidays includes grief, well, at least one of the stages of grief - acceptance. Coming to a place where you have accepted your loss helps working through the pain. As a chaplain and pastor, I am often called on to help relieve that emotional pain, but I often find that there isn't a lot I can say that is new or profound, that hasn't already been said. So, instead my suggestion usually is to those grieving is to connect with their understanding of the divine. My spirituality and faith tradition teaches that life, the physical life that we are all

familiar with, is fast and short but it also teaches hope in an eternal life that is beyond what we can see or imagine. A life that my dad is experiencing (and enjoying) right now.

How do we "cope" through the holidays? Accept and embrace them for what they are, times for reflection and refreshment. Perhaps looking to one's source of spirituality is what will give you greater reason to celebrate.



Holiday Traditions

My family tradition is to make Tamales and Christmas cookies with my family.

-Millely Arroyo, Regional Billing Coordinator

We help our mom make her traditional Slovakian family soup recipe for Christmas Eve. An annual treat -- sweet and sour -- so yum!

-Gayle Heuser, Spiritual Counselor

We used to have more traditions but now it seems there are so many kids so we take a picture of all of them on the stairs each year so we can compare.



-Julie Bynon, Business Office Manager

Every year my family sponsors children who are homeless or in transition, through the Bag of Hope Project. My daughter and son choose gifts and make Christmas cards for a child in need in our community.

-Seema Cisneros, Regional Bereavement Counselor

Every year I take my girls to the annual Christmas musical at the Laguna Beach playhouse.

-Jennifer Griggs, Senior Administrator

Our traditions have changed through the years. One that remains is making Puerto Rican food on Christmas Eve. My mother and I cook, Arroz



con glandules (Rice with pigeon peas), Pernil (Pork roast), and a garden salad. My Mom will also make "Granny's Candy" a walnut praline recipe that has been made for five generations.

-Valerie Lomeli, Regional Volunteer Manager

We hang an ornament that looks like a pickle on the tree. The person who finds it has luck for the year.

-Charlotte Cook, Regional QAPI Manager

My granddaughters gave me a Christmas gift called the granddaughter tree. Since I have 5 granddaughters they asked me to have a picture(s) of them on the tree of them growing up. It is called the GRANDDAUGHTER TREE. A small 3 foot artificial tree.

-Teri Siplivy- Slusarz, Community Educator

We cut down our own Christmas tree and also cut some coin shaped slices from the trunk. Then we decorate the wood slices and turn them into ornaments!

-Laura Kobzeff, RN

For the Domingos, we stay up late Christmas Eve for "Noche Buena" church in the evening, late dinner/snacks, we allow the kids to open 1 present.

For Christmas Day: Christmas breakfast then open the rest of the gifts. We hang out at home all day with family, kids play with all their new goodies, and parents get nap time in!

-Minnie Domingo, Director of Business Development

We like to play lots of different games and watch the Grinch.

-Trish Hernandez, Medical Records Coordinator

Every year at Christmas I take a pic of my kids in this piggyback pose since 2003! It's



fun to see how they've grown up through the years.

-Suzy Moriarty, Senior Liaison



Snickerdoodle Cookie Recipe

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup butter, softened
- 1/2 cup shortening
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 3/4 cups all-purpose or unbleached flour
- 2 teaspoons cream of tartar*
- 1 teaspoon baking soda*
- 1/4 teaspoon salt*
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon

Directions

Preheat oven to 400°F.

Combine butter, shortening, 1 1/2 cups sugar and eggs and mix thoroughly. Blend in flour, cream of tartar, baking soda and salt. Shape dough by rounded teaspoonfuls into balls.

Mix 2 tablespoons sugar and cinnamon; roll balls into sugar mixture. Place on ungreased baking sheet 2 inches apart. Bake 8 to 10 minutes or until set. Transfer immediately to a cooling rack.

Makes about 6 dozen.

** If using self-rising flour, omit cream of tartar, baking soda and salt.*

CONTACT US

24-hour line: (888) 328-5660

Fax: (949) 653-0452

Referral line: (800) 507-9726

Volunteer inquiries: (888) 328-5660

Visit us online with our 24/7 Live Chat Line: [silveradohospice.com](https://www.silveradohospice.com)



If you would like to leave one of your favorite team members a praise, you may do so on our Yelp page. Search **Silverado Hospice Orange County**