

Supporting your Patients with Palliative Care

A Definition of Palliative Care

Care focused on quality of life at the end of life, rather than on extending life expectancy at the cost of any quality

(Attributed to Dame Cicely Saunders who opened the first modern hospice in 1967)



Role of Support Worker in Palliative Care

Do you believe your role includes supporting the emotional needs of patients?

Do you believe your role includes supporting the emotional needs of patient's families?

How do you offer emotional support and keep yourself safe?



Being mindful of your own emotional wellbeing

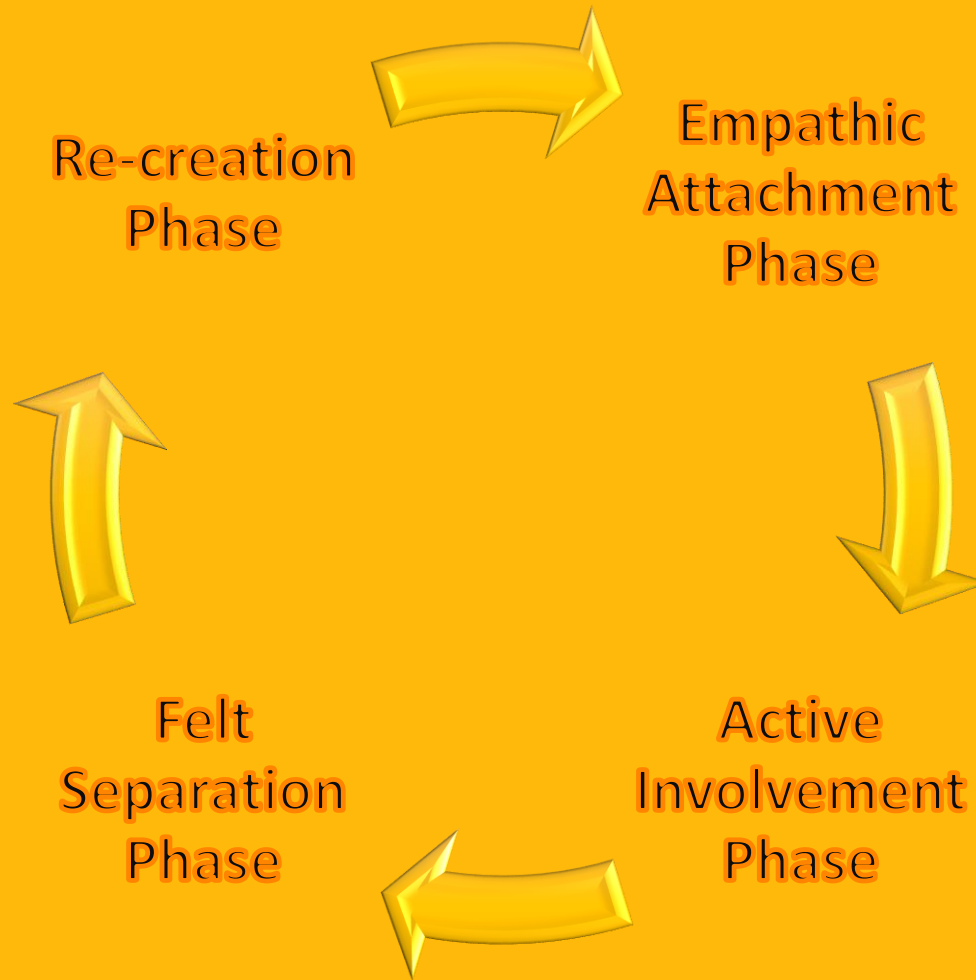


Listening carefully



Reaching out for support / assistance if you notice it feels difficult for you to hold

The Cycle of Caring



Burnout

.... A common and pervasive phenomenon in palliative care workers (Kamal et al., 2020)





Being mindful of own emotional wellbeing

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Resilience

A definition of resilience:

“the capacity to mobilise protective factors or internal and external resources and stay well in the face of challenging life events and stresses”

Adapted from Eriksson & Lindstrom, 2010.



Mindfulness

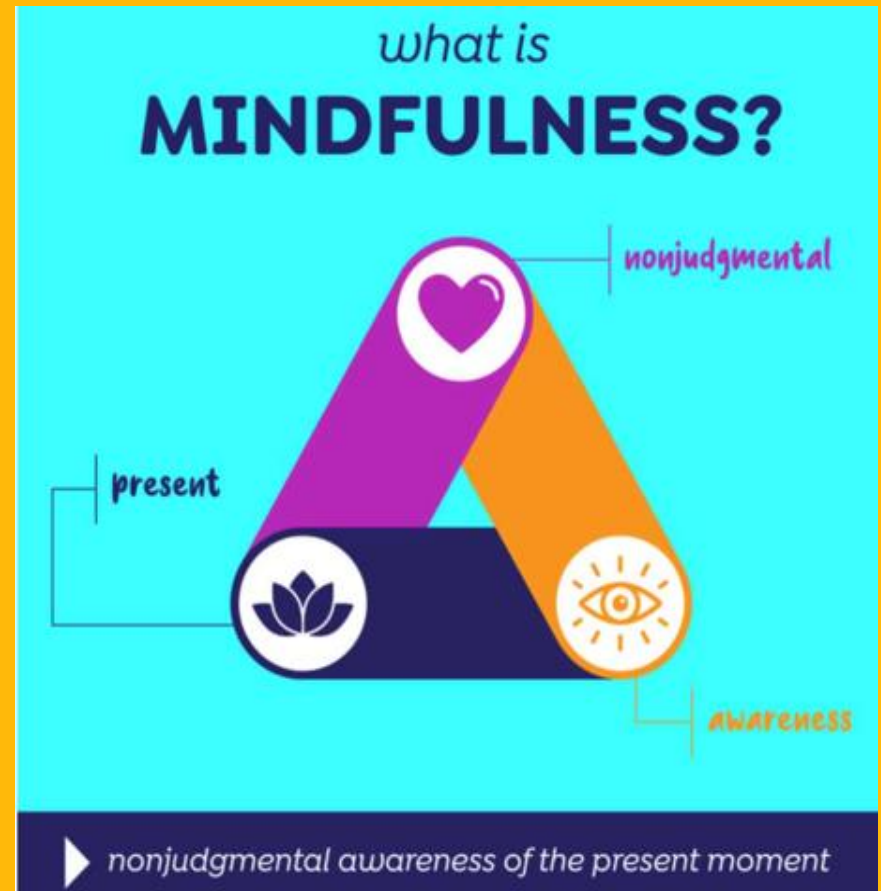
Mindfulness has been found to boost
resilience – Williams and Penman, 2010.

Mindfulness – Settling the mind

“Mindfulness is paying attention to the present moment, without judgement.”

Kabat-Zinn, J. 2013

“The basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we’re doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what’s going on around us.”



Looking after your own emotional wellbeing in day to day life

- Become more attuned to what your body is telling you – and pay attention to it
- Understanding what your base line / resting level of stress feels like
- Ensuring you prioritise self care – none of us can pour from an empty jug
- Recognise when you need to ask for help
- Practice shifting out of auto-pilot and noticing

Looking after your own emotional wellbeing in the workplace

- Take A Pause
- Develop your own 'cues' for noticing and breathing
- Practice being fully present
- Be confident in asking for what you need i.e. to step away for a few minutes
- All help with lessening the sense of overwhelm

Listening Carefully

By far the most common and important way in which we can exercise our attention is by listening ... how difficult it is to listen well
(Peck, M.S., 1978)

Listening Carefully – Sounds Simple

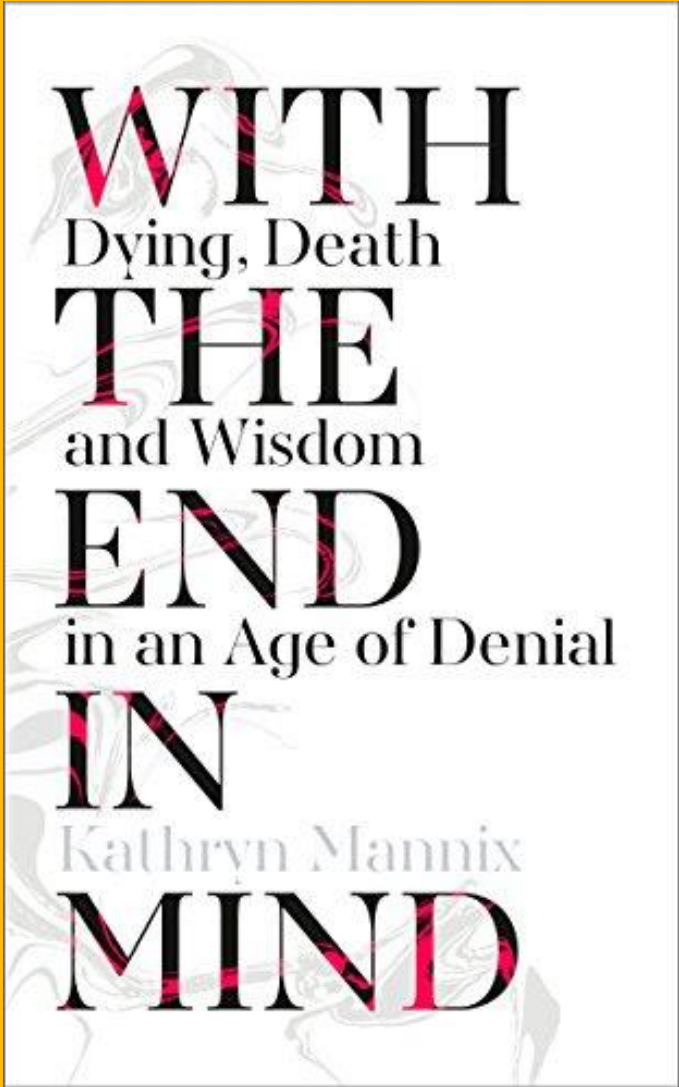
- Most of us don't listen carefully much of the time
- Noticing the language being used
- Noticing facial expressions and body language
- Paying attention to what is not said
- Checking out that we understand correctly
- Noticing our own bodily responses
- Mirroring / Reflecting

Responding Effectively

- Notice your own discomfort and stay with it
- Don't be afraid to ask for clarification
- Be authentic / honest
- If you really don't know what to say – say that!
- Resist the temptation to offer false hope
- Never promise anything that may not be possible
- Be respectful of the person's reality – it may not be the same as yours
- Say you need to call on someone else if necessary

In palliative
care we have
learned to
make no
assumptions:
we ask.

Mannix, 2017



WITH
Dying, Death
THE
and Wisdom
END
in an Age of Denial
IN
Kathryn Mannix
MIND



Reaching for Help

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Reaching for Help with Difficult Conversations

- Strength not weakness to seek help
- In the best interests of the patient / family member
- Looking after your own wellbeing
- Know who you will ask at the start of each shift
- Be clear with the patient / family member that you will be coming back to them if you need to go for assistance
- Remember you can always signpost family members to Maggie's
- Perhaps you have other options for redirecting?



Breaking News

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Breaking News to Families including Young People

- Prepare yourself as best you can
- Take care with the environment
- Ask if there is anyone else they would like to be there
- Prepare them as best you can – perhaps ask if they know why you have asked to speak to them
- Be clear with what you say – no room for misinterpretation
- Be honest – however difficult it is
- Offer your care and concern
- Check if they would like to be left for a few minutes
- Ensure you come back and check in with them



How you might feel afterwards

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Possible Emotional Impacts (for you) of Delivering Bad News

- Inappropriate sense of guilt
- Worries about whether you did it 'right'
- Concerns about how the loved ones will be coping
- Sense of wanting to 'rescue' the loved ones
- Feeling numb
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Feeling inadequate
- Becoming withdrawn / non-communicative
- Being intolerant of own loved ones

How to Deal with the Emotional Impacts

- Notice them – self-awareness
- Acknowledge them as appropriate and relevant
- Be open with the people around you about how you are feeling
- Create some space for yourself
- Engage in some self-care you know is helpful for you
- Recognise this as a temporary situation
- Seek help if it continues for a prolonged period



Resources

Helpful Resources

- www.childbereavementuk.org
- www.dyingmatters.org
- www.mind.org.uk
- www.winstonswish.org
- Maggie's online relaxations: <https://www.maggies.org/cancer-support/managing-emotions/relaxation-and-breathing-exercises/>
- NHS online relaxations: <https://www.cntw.nhs.uk/resource-library/relaxation-techniques/>
- Apps (with meditations or music to support sleep) – Calm, Headspace, Insight Timer, Sleep Radio, etc.

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Thank you

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