**D Word Workshop**

On Saturday 19th October a group of us attended the D word workshop led by Leslie and Jo from the Anne Robson Trust (

<https://www.annerobsontrust.org.uk )>

This workshop helped us explore the process of dying, the signs and symptoms and how to support a dying person by considering their senses and what would appeal to them.

The notes below are those taken at the workshop

Find the key for the person who is dying to keep them happy. EG Jo gave an example of reading the psalms to her granny which helped to calm her when she was agitated.

Any small gestures of support verbal and otherwise to reassure the people (family and friends) who are caring for the dying person, that they are doing a good job makes a huge difference to them.



They showed a youtube clip from BBC ideas with Kathryn Mannix entitled **Dying is not as bad as you think.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CruBRZh8quc>

**The dying process**

Death rattle - someone is so relaxed they are not clearing their throat. Known as Chynne stoking

Breathing can become shallow.

Being prepared for death means you can just be with the person who is dying.

**Signs and Symptoms**

Lack of appetite and thirst

As the body slows down the physical things go in on themselves and the spiritual body opens up

The body can last for a long time without food

Don’t force fluid on someone who is dying as they can get oedema

Mouth might be dry so use whatever they like to drink eg G &T

Lip care

Breathing slowly

Holding hands - they can respond

Rallying round can happen just before the end they can make a brief recovery

People can see things or people before they die. It brings comfort to them.

In and out of body experience. People can mention this to those around them. Do not be disconcerted.

Agitation - people get hot -almost like body burns off excess energy

Family can get upset that they need more help or drugs but it is a natural thing to happen.

Go with instincts -you are likely to be right

Picking at sheets

(Twiddle muffs with bells and ribbons for patients with dementia) Gives the person something to do with their hands

Their extremities can get quite cold. Bed socks and wrap them up with blankets

Syringe drivers give pain relief and often something against nausea and agitation - automatic delivery. There can be a heightened sensitivity to pain.

Soul midwife (<https://soulmidwives.co.uk/what-is-soul-midwifery> ) and Death Doula (<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2016/feb/03/death-doulas-women-who-stay-by-your-side-to-the-end> ) to help people as they are dying.

**Things that might make a difference to the room the person is in – a sensory audit**

**Sight**

Photos, to help people who are coming in to be able to talk and in hospital too

Colour eg bringing in a blanket from home. Warm colours

**Smell**

Room scent - natural fragrances - lavender

Favourite perfume sprayed onto a blanket

Blanketeers knit blankets for end of life care

**Touch**

Power in touch

Don’t rummage under a blanket

Hand on shoulder

Don’t rub but gentle stroke lightly

Skin can be paper thin

Handcream to massage feet

**Taste**

Mouth wash pink sponge or gauze or just apply to the lips. Dabbing

Lip salve to help with dry lips. Ask relative to bring in.

**Hearing**

Phones using dawn chorus or anything they would like to hear, music etc.

Encourage relatives and friends to bring things in for person

This is me booklet which can help visitors to find things to talk to them about (<https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/sites/default/files/migrate/downloads/this_is_me.pdf> )

**Kit bag for visitors to have when visiting someone who is dying**

Hand cream

Brandy

Hair brush

Little electric candle - side lights - take charge look at lighting. Staff will respond. Harsh lighting can hurt eyes. Softer lighting.

Dark Chocolate for you the visitor. Can be draining visiting so have a bite to pick up energy

Give relatives something to do

When you are wondering what to do go through the senses.

**Having difficult conversations so things can be put into order**

Paperwork involved

Donor card do we carry them?

Have to have conversations with our relatives about this

Also body donation and skin donations.

People who have a post-mortem cannot donate.

Donation can also take place from home.

Service for families or organ donations

Lasting power of attorney - looking at where someone would live, finances, and nominate your attorneys to help you make decisions or make decisions on your behalf if you do not have capacity.

Important for attorneys to have copies so the hospital know.

Do several copies and get it all signed by the person and the attorneys (photocopies are not acceptable)

Finance can come into force when they have capacity but don’t want to do anything

Advance statement of wishes but person, what they like and what they don’t like eg pjs and when to wear them - personal info but not legally binding

Advance decision statement / Living will - legal document lets your family know what you want to have done with medication, treatment etc and the professionals help you make the decision, eg resus, feeding tube, copies need to be in hospital notes.

Very helpful for the family to have because they don’t have to make the decisions.

DNR made and recorded in advance for CPR decisions.

Lions give a tub with DNR info in fridge and sticker on the door. Note about location of LPA etc.

Funeral planning support in the parish

**Children dealing with death**

Start conversations for children in the room.

Memory boxes physical or online

We can record voices

Videos of people

Looking at the dead in the home of rest.

Notes in coffin and photos

Take children to crem in advance and talk through service in advance.

**Miscellaneous**

Guilt - think about what you have done, don’t think about what you have not done

If someone asks you **‘Am I dying’** - turn tables - do you think you are? What can we do to help? Do you want to talk about it?