



FAITH IN OLDER PEOPLE

NHS Bereavement Education Annual Conference
Exploring bereavement from a new perspective

Companioning – a spiritual care approach

There is a profound issue of spirituality in enabling individuals to exercise their **autonomy and choice**, their rights as human individuals around decisions which prolong life and how they wish to live.



What is spiritual care?

- Spiritual Care can empower and benefit both carer and cared for; nurturing the individual to celebrate and flourish during times of joy and growth, supporting people to find strength and comfort during times of transition, uncertainty and illness.
- We all have a part of us which seeks to find connections and discover meaning, purpose and hope in those aspect of our experience that we most value and that matter to us. This is often referred to as spirituality which informs the whole of our lives; informing personal values and beliefs; affirming that tears and laughter, pain and joy are all part of the human experience.
- During times of change and transition such needs can become more pronounced. Health and social care staff have a role in supporting people to recognise spiritual needs, their benefits, and in partnership, work towards meeting them, as appropriate to their role.

PLANNING

- Family Plans
- Care assessments
- What would someone choose to do
- Knowing someone's spiritual or religious focus and how can this be supported
- Cultural issues



Loss and
bereavement

How do we offer support

From a faith perspective

Being a non-anxious presence

Companioning

What do we mean by companioning

- Being alongside someone
- Opportunity to ask questions
- To vent our feelings
- Being able to lament
- Being enabled to talk – to be listened to
- Being present – even if silent
- Being non-judgemental
- Not providing answers

SCENARIO 1

A middle- aged man whose wife is in the last stages of dementia admits her to a care home

QUESTIONS

What kind of companionship would have enabled James to retain his own sense of identity and at the same time cope with the double bereavement of his wife?

How do we as on-lookers, friends or relatives, companion those who are walking through the journey of grief and funeral arrangements?

SCENARIO 2

An older women recently bereaved is admitted to a care home

QUESTIONS

In the light of the losses that Joan and her family experienced - death of her husband, selling the family home, loss of independent living – how should the initial assessment in the care home have been approached?

What kind of companionship would have been helpful before, during and after the death of Bob?