

When someone you care for is dying

Knowing a loved one is dying is painful.

When you find out that a loved one is dying, your world turns **upside down**. Nothing will ever be the same again. Getting this news can be one of the worst moments of your life. It can also start the pain of grief.

When does grief start?

Grief can start when your loved one is still alive. This is called **pre-death grief**. Your loved one has not died yet. But they are facing death, and their death occupies your mind.

This kind of grief feels different than the grief you will feel *after* the person dies. Not everyone experiences it the same way. But many people feel sad, angry, or stunned. Here are some common pre-death grief experiences:

- **Grief before death comes can be a gift.** It can give you the time to:
 - express your love,
 - ask and receive forgiveness,
 - ask questions,
 - spend time together,
 - work through any past hurts, and
 - relive past joys.
- People that allow themselves to experience pre-death grief often lower the strong and scary feelings that sometimes make them wish they could join their loved one in death.

- **Understanding pre-death grief can explain why you may be feeling detached.**

Some people detach from their loved one *before* their death. They may hope that more emotional distance will make their death less painful. But it usually doesn't work out that way. This could also make your loved one feel like you don't love them.

If you are feeling detached, find some support. Talk to a trusted friend or family member. Tell them how you feel. Whatever you are feeling is OK. Accepting our emotions takes us to a better understanding of life and relationships.

Does facing grief before death comes make the grief journey shorter?

Grief takes time.

Grieving a loved one's illness and death can take *many years*. Your emotional health will be stronger if you let yourself grieve now *and* after your loved one dies.

Give yourself time to cry, to laugh, to be angry, and to sit in silence. Take care of yourself — always. Breathe. Then take another step.

Need help facing grief before death finally comes?

YoloCares offers grief support to adults and children. And it's free. If you live in Yolo, Solano, Colusa, Sutter, or Sacramento, contact us:

Tel: **530-758-5566**

Email: griefsupport@yolocares.org