

wrongs, to shed old masks and move beyond the old rules that limited our relationship in the past. These are words of love for which some people wait a lifetime.

If the person lives longer than expected, there will be more time to say, "I love you," with less unfinished business in the way. Once death has come, knowing that "I said everything I needed to say," can bring real



comfort to the bereaved.  
**There is a Time to Let Go**

Jewish tradition speaks eloquently about death being a part of life, a part of the divine plan: (Ecclesiastes 3:1-2): "For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die...." It can be excruciating to decide when that time has come, yet it helps somehow to remember that all of us will die someday.

Sometimes a dying person needs to hear loved ones say, "It is okay to let go when you are ready," or "I'll miss you terribly, but I'll be okay." When it is clear that the time has come, words such as these can be an extraordinary gift of love.

### Death Can Teach Us about Life

Death teaches us about the preciousness of life and the value of each moment. Death teaches us about appreciating every day wonders and blessings. Death helps us see ourselves as part of the whole circle of life and gives us a glimpse of the mystery and beauty of living and dying.

Dying can also teach us about trust and about the courage to grieve and then go on. Death can teach us that change and growth are always possible, even at life's end. In the presence of death we find ourselves reaffirming what is most important in our lives, and this, too, brings us a measure of comfort and blessing. Let us find strength and courage in the time of our grief and may God restore us to life's goodness in peace.

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# When Someone You Love is Dying

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### All Things Pass

As much as we may fear death and fight it, the time will come when we will join those who have gone before. All things pass; all that lives must die. All that we prize is but lent to us and the time comes when we must surrender it. The truth is that we are all travellers on the same path that leads to the same end. And we, like them, will know what to do just as they did and we will take our place with them in the stream of life and death.

### Be Gentle with Yourself

As we care for our loved ones, we will quite possibly find that we are pushing ourselves beyond normal human limits, both physically and emotionally. We may forget that we are engaged in the most difficult work possible.

We must try to remember to be gentle with ourselves. We need to take breaks—meaningful breaks that can bring us rest, refreshment and distraction. We need help because no one in the world can do this alone. We need other loved ones who can listen and support us because we may cry

and rage. Our presence with our loved one can make a profound difference in his/her experience of the end of life. But we must take care of ourselves, too, in order to offer the best of ourselves to our loved one.



### Let Yourself Feel all the Feelings

Along with the physical work, we may experience many different emotions. We may feel love and sadness, anger with doctors, caregivers and family members and with the dying person as well. We may feel helpless, guilty or resentful. We may cycle through many contradictory feelings in a single hour. All this is part of what comes with caring for someone who is dying.

But try to let ourselves simply be. Fighting with our own feelings will only exhaust us further. Try to accept all our feelings as they are and as an inevitable part of the process of loving and letting go. It may be helpful to find someone who can listen without judgment or advice.

### Death is Rarely Beautiful

Watching a loved one die is nearly always heartbreaking. While hospice care can generally keep a dying person's physical

pain to a minimum, there is still fear, grief, indignity and, at times, suffering. Yet, it is not unusual to encounter moments of beauty and richness in the midst of the dying process, interspersed with long hours of managing pain, feeling powerless or working desperately to relieve suffering in our loved ones and in ourselves.

If we can be open to the moments of blessing in the midst of pain and sadness—feelings of deep love, the mending of a relationship, sharing treasured memories—it may also allow us to witness moments of exquisite gratitude for life's blessings. These small blessings are the nourishment that can help us go on. We can be ready to appreciate moments of love and holiness if they unfold from time to time, but we should not expect them at every moment.



### Say Good-Bye As Well As You Can

Some people fear saying good-bye will hasten the moment of death, but this is almost never the case. On the contrary: words of loving farewell almost always enrich the dying process. Now is the time to express love, to apologize for past