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The Myths of Palliative Care

There are myths that exist regarding serious illness. Learning more can help you and your loved ones cope with this new phase of your life.

MYTH: Accepting that this illness cannot be cured means that “nothing more can be done.”

FACT: When the focus shifts from cure to care, a great deal can be done to relieve physical pain and emotional suffering, and to ensure a good quality of life.

Remember: Learn about care and support options early on, before your care needs change. Hospice and palliative care offer quality medical care to manage pain and other symptoms and provide support to you and your family.

MYTH: People go through emotional “stages” when diagnosed with a life-limiting illness, and end up “accepting” their situation.

FACT:

You will face a wide range of emotions over time; fear, anger, grief, anxiety, disbelief, relief, loneliness.

Remember: You may feel some, all, or none of these emotions – and in no particular order. All of these feelings are real; there is no “right” way to feel. You may find support by talking with others who are facing similar situations, through books, through your faith system or within your network of family and friends.

MYTH: Dealing with a serious illness brings spiritual strength.

FACT:

For some, facing a serious illness will deepen their personal sense of faith and spirituality, or challenge them to question beliefs. Others may not experience any change with regard to spirituality and faith.

Remember: Thinking about spiritual issues is very common when coping with a serious illness. Don’t be afraid to reach out to your spiritual leader or faith community for help or support.

MYTH: People give up control and are usually uncomfortable as the illness progresses.

FACT:

You can have a great deal of control over what you want and don’t want as your disease progresses. With planning, you can ensure that your wishes are known in case you can no longer express them.

Remember: Have conversations with your loved ones about what you do and do not want. Designate a healthcare agent to speak for you in the event that you can no longer speak for yourself.

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MYTH:

Talking honestly about a serious illness with family and friends is difficult for everyone involved.

FACT:

While these conversations are never easy, dealing with the illness according to your background and beliefs can bring a sense of relief.

Remember: Hospice and palliative care professionals can provide information and emotional support for you and those who care about you.

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