



Mental Health: Sadness & Anxiety

Experiencing difficult emotions can be common for people living with a terminal illness, from diagnosis through end of life. These emotions may show in various ways for each person, including sadness or anxiety.

Sadness can be a feeling of distress caused by loss or disappointment. It is a normal emotion, a natural part of life, that may come and go with time. It can serve as a reminder of what matters or gives meaning to one's life. Sadness that does not decrease or go away over time may be a sign of depression.

Anxiety is a feeling or a deep sense of helplessness or fear. It may or may not have a known cause and can get in the way of daily activities. It can be one of the most common symptoms at end of life and may increase as illness progresses.

Common Emotional & Behavioral Symptoms

- Worry
- Quick to anger
- Difficulty thinking (some people may experience lack of concentration, and forgetfulness)
- Trouble coping
- Crying
- Withdrawal

Common Physical Symptoms

- Difficulty sleeping
- Feeling tired
- Stomach upset
- Sweating
- Tightness in chest
- Sensitivity to noise or lights
- Changes in eating habits
- Changes in sleeping habits (some people sleep more and others cannot fall asleep or remain asleep)

Common Causes

- Pain, trouble breathing or infection
- Financial concerns
- Having to rely on others for help
- A sense of losing control
- Unresolved concerns

Questions or concerns?

Call a hospice nurse at 513-891-7700. For caregiving tips visit www.HospiceofCincinnati.org/for-the-caregiver.



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If you believe your loved one is experiencing sadness or anxiety, contact your hospice care team.

The hospice care team can assess the situation to see what may be causing the distress and whether a physical symptom such as pain or trouble breathing is making it worse. Your hospice nurse will contact the physician if necessary. There are medications available to manage anxiety and depression.

Here are some things you can do now for sadness and anxiety:

- Create a calm, quiet setting
- Limit caffeine and alcohol intake
- Offer emotional support - listen closely to what your loved one is saying and provide reassurance
- Encourage sharing of emotions and feelings
- Encourage your loved one to ask for help as they need it
- Provide distraction: a television show, activity or something your loved one enjoys
- Suggest relaxation techniques: soothing music, relaxing touch, guided imagery or meditation
- Journaling is helpful to express what's going on in one's heart and head
- Utilize holistic services: massage, art therapy
- Call the social worker or chaplain to provide additional support
- Give medications as instructed to help manage symptoms

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