



TRINITY

Hospice Care of Georgia

Office: (770) 599-2477 | Fax: (678) 324-0548
trinityhc-ga.com

Preparing for the Final Transition

When someone we love nears the end of life, two deeply connected processes unfold:

1. The Body's Natural Slow-Down

The body begins a gentle “winding down,” gradually using less energy and preparing to stop. These changes are not emergencies—they are part of nature’s course.

2. The Spirit's Release

At the same time, your loved one’s heart and mind may turn inward, seeking peace, resolution, and the comfort of saying goodbye. This emotional and spiritual journey is unique to each person.

Each person's path is different.

Signs may not appear in any set order, and some may not happen at all. Our hospice care team is here to guide you, offering practical suggestions and quiet support so you can provide comfort, understanding, and love.

In the pages ahead, you’ll find:

- **Physical Signs & Gentle Responses** – what you might observe and simple ways to help
- **Emotional & Spiritual Changes** – common feelings or experiences and how to support them
- **What Comes Next** – knowing when death has occurred and what to do afterward

This guide is meant to reassure you of these two simple truths:

- 1. You do not need special skills**—only your presence, patience, and care.
- 2. You are the greatest gift your loved one can have** in this moment.



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Physical Signs & Gentle Responses

In this stage, you may notice some natural changes in your loved one's body. Below are common signs and simple, comforting ways you can help.

Decreased Appetite & Thirst

- As the body conserves energy, your loved one may eat or drink very little.
 - **You can** offer small sips of water, flavored ice chips, or glycerin swabs to keep the mouth moist—letting them guide how much they need.

Reduced Urine Output

- It's normal for the kidneys to slow down.
 - **You can** check in with your hospice nurse, who may suggest gentle catheter care or other measures if needed.

Incontinence

- Relaxed muscles can lead to loss of bladder or bowel control.
 - **You can** use soft absorbent pads, change linens frequently, and offer a gentle cleansing with warm washcloths to maintain comfort and dignity.

Increased Sleep

- More rest helps the body “wind down.”
 - **You can** sit quietly by their side, hold their hand, and speak softly if they stir—your presence alone is a comfort.

Restless or Repetitive Movements

- Subtle motions may arise from changing circulation or oxygen levels.
 - **You can** place a light hand on theirs, offer a gentle forehead or hand massage, or play soft music to soothe restlessness.

Confusion or Disorientation

- Metabolic shifts can cause occasional memory lapses or confusion.
 - **You can** calmly introduce yourself by name before speaking, use simple phrases, and reassure them: “I’m here with you.”

Fever or Temperature Fluctuations

- A mild fever often reflects metabolic changes, not infection.
 - **You can** apply cool washcloths to the forehead and underarms, and follow your nurse’s guidance on giving fever-reducing medications.



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“Rattling” or Noisy Breathing

- Secretions may settle in the throat, causing a soft rattling sound.
 - **You can** turn their head gently to one side, offer mouth wipes, and maintain a calm, reassuring presence—suctioning is usually not needed.

Cool Hands & Feet

- Circulation shifts toward vital organs, making extremities feel cool.
 - **You can** drape a light blanket over arms and legs and keep the room comfortably warm (avoid electric blankets).

Changed Breathing Patterns

- Breaths may grow deeper and slower, with brief pauses.
 - **You can** elevate the head of the bed slightly, hold their hand, and speak in soft tones—this shared calm brings peace.

These signs reflect your loved one’s body moving naturally toward rest. There is no “mistake” in any change you see—each one is part of a peaceful farewell. Your gentle touch, soft voice, and attentive presence are the most powerful comforts you can offer. Trust your instincts and lean on your hospice team whenever you need guidance or reassurance.



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Emotional & Spiritual Signs & Supportive Responses

As your loved one nears the end, you may notice inner shifts. Below are common emotional and spiritual changes—and gentle ways you can offer comfort and reassurance.

Withdrawal & Quiet Reflection

- They may speak less or simply turn inward as they process their journey.
 - **You can** sit nearby, hold their hand, and share your thoughts in a soft, loving voice—offering presence more than words.

Vision-like Experiences

- They might mention seeing or talking with people or places you cannot see.
 - **You can** affirm their experience (“That’s beautiful”), reassure them they’re safe, and let them guide the conversation.

Emotional Restlessness

- An unsettled feeling can signal unfinished thoughts or needs.
 - **You can** invite a favorite story, read a comforting passage, or play gentle music—helping them find peace.

Desire for a Smaller Circle

- They may wish only a few—or even one—trusted person nearby.
 - **You can** honor that need and remind others that giving space is itself an act of love.

Unusual Comments or Gestures

- Out-of-character remarks or subtle “tests” can be their way of saying goodbye.
 - **You can** respond with openness and warmth, acknowledging their words and validating their feelings.

Need for Permission to Let Go

- They may look for reassurance that it’s okay to die.
 - **You can** gently say, “It’s all right to rest when you’re ready—I’ll be okay,” freeing them from worry.

Saying Goodbye & Expressing Love

- When they signal readiness, it’s time for final farewells.
 - **You can** share memories, express gratitude, apologize for hurts, and simply say “I love you.”



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Legacy & Peaceful Closure

- Hearing how they've shaped your life brings comfort and meaning.
 - **You can** recount favorite moments and describe how you'll carry their spirit forward.

This inner journey is deeply personal, yet your compassion makes a profound difference. By listening without judgment, offering reassurance, and permitting release, you help your loved one find peace of mind and heart. In these moments of connection, your presence becomes their greatest gift as they prepare for the final passage.



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What Comes Next

As your loved one makes their final transition, here's what you can expect and the simple steps to follow:

- **Recognizing Death**

You may notice:

- No detectable pulse or heartbeat
- No breathing or chest movement
- Release of bladder or bowel
- Eyelids gently parted and unblinking
- Jaw relaxed, mouth slightly open

- **Taking the Next Step**

- **Stay calm.**
- **Call the hospice team.** Dial the hospice number and say, "I'd like to report a death."
- **Provide information:** your loved one's name, your name, and the best phone number to reach you.

- **After You Call**

The hospice team will notify the physician and guide you through any remaining steps.

- You will have a Hospice Nurse come and see your loved one, and help guide these next steps.
- You decide when and whether to contact the funeral home—hospice can make that call for you when you're ready.
- There's no rush; take the time you need with your family and let the hospice team support you.

A Heartfelt Thank You

Thank you for giving us the privilege of caring for your loved one.

Your compassion, presence, and gentle support have made it possible for them to journey with peace and dignity. In offering your love, you've given the greatest gift at this sacred moment—and we are honored to have walked beside you.