17.1: Grief and Loss Introduction

Learning Objectives

- Advocate for the ethical/legal concerns of the patient and family members making end-of-life decisions
- Identify evidence-based practices associated with end of life care
- Employ nursing measures to support palliative care during the dying process
- Demonstrate respect for the cultural and spiritual beliefs of the patient, caregiver(s), and family members experiencing grief and loss
- Outline available personal and community resources
- Describe nursing responsibilities associated with postmortem care

Have you ever experienced the loss of something important to you like a job, a relationship with a friend or significant other, or a pet? We all experience loss and grief at some point in our lives, with the ultimate loss being death. Nurses are typically the first line of support as they assist patients and their family members to cope with serious illness, feelings of loss, and the end of life.

This chapter is based on a curriculum established by the End-of-Life Nursing Care Consortium (ELNEC), an international educational project sponsored by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing. The ELNEC project gives nurses and other health care professionals the knowledge and skills required to provide specialized care and positively impact the lives of patients and families facing serious illness and/or the end of life. This chapter will discuss concepts related to grief and loss and evidence-based interventions advocated by the ELNEC.

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