

WHEN TO CALL HEART OF THE MOUNTAINS HOSPICE

You and your loved one are sitting in the doctor's office waiting to have a discussion on recent test results and where you will go from here. You are hoping for the best since you have been fighting hard to win the battle with your heart disease. The test results are not good and near the end of the conversation the doctor mentions it is time to contact Hospice. You have heard of Hospice. You are shocked.

You are caring for a family member with Parkinson's Disease who needs some advice on advance directives (informing family members of their wishes if they become seriously ill) and other end of life issues such as dying at home or in a hospital. A friend suggests calling Hospice. You know Hospice deals with dying people.

Your grandmother lives with you and in the last two weeks you have noticed that she is declining. She used to be able to eat by herself and now she doesn't want to eat. She is sleeping more and more. You wonder if you can take care of your grandmother alone if she gets worse. Some family members wonder if grandmother is dying. You think grandmother is too alive for Hospice.

Uncle Jim has cancer and he is in a lot of pain. He takes his pain medication the doctor ordered, but it doesn't seem to help. You don't want to contact Hospice, Uncle Jim is in great pain, he isn't dying.

You are the primary caregiver for a neighbor with liver disease. Your neighbor has been admitted to the hospital more than 2 times in the last year for symptom control. You think you need more expert advice taking care of him. Hospice has been recommended to you. You don't know if your neighbor will be open to talking to Hospice staff.

Your husband had a stroke a while ago. He has been recovering, however, recently you are needing to place urgent calls for medical attention for him. You want to know if there is some help available to help you monitor and plan ahead to prevent or be prepared for these emergencies. You have heard Hospice has Registered Nurses on call 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

You begin to feel like your wife, who has dementia, may not be here in a year. You have heard Hospice sometimes cares for people for a year before they die.

Your brother, who suffers from pulmonary disease, mentions that maybe he should stop "curative" treatments. You understand this means he could die. You wish you had someone to talk to honestly and frankly about your brother's disease. You have heard the Hospice Nurses are experts talking about these difficult subjects.

Your family is having "private" conversations about "how long the patient may have."? The patient is cousin Mary and she has Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS or Lou Gehrig's Disease). Mary has beaten the odds and lived longer with this disease than the medical community thought she would. Is it time now to face death more directly? Is it time to involve Hospice?

You have HIV Disease and you are wondering if it is time to discuss transitioning from curative to aggressive comfort care measures. You will need help with this. Can Hospice help you live comfortably?

You feel that your family could benefit from an information meeting with a Hospice admissions nurse. Your daughter's renal disease is not improving. The care regimen is too much for your daughter to go through some days. Is Hospice appropriate for your daughter now?

In all of these situations it would be good to call Heart of the Mountains Hospice. We believe death is only one moment and everything else is life. We are committed to making sure your life is the best it can

be and most of our work with you and your family will be about your life. We will be with you for your moment of death, if you want us there, and you and yours will know you were able to manage your pain, communicate your wishes to your loved ones, design your afterlife care, and face your final journey on this earth with dignity and compassion. Contact us at 887-9074 to discuss your situation, answer questions, or schedule a meeting together.



Joan Gaskins is the Executive Director of Heart of the Mountains Hospice. She is instrumental in securing grants for the organization, working with the Board of Directors, and managing all the billing and complex communications with governments and insurance companies. Amazingly, she does this all with a wonderful sense of humor bringing laughter to some of the mundane business aspects of hospice. We are very fortunate to have Joan's multiple skills and energies on our Hospice Team!