



PATIENT / FAMILY TEACHING SHEET

RESPECTING CULTURAL BELIEFS

What is Culture?

- Culture is the part of each of us that guides our values, beliefs, and behavior and our interactions with others
- Our cultural beliefs and practices influence the way we experience important life transitions such as birth, marriage, and death

What Components Make Up Culture?

- Culture is often mistaken to mean only one's race or ethnicity.
 - It is more than that. It includes our membership in certain groups or our beliefs that influence values and practices
- Examples of these groups or beliefs include age (i.e., teenagers and older adults are part of a unique age group), religion, military, and spirituality

What's Important to Tell the Hospice/Palliative Care Team about Your Culture

- Let the team know
 - what language you are most comfortable speaking
 - how you want to be greeted. Some people want to be called by their first name and others want to be called by their last name
 - if you want to make your own decisions about your care, or if you want someone else to do it for you
 - who should be included when there are discussions

about your care

- Tell the team about any practices that are important in your culture and to you, so that we can respect and support your practices, for example
 - Food: Some groups have special foods that they enjoy together and others have some foods that they cannot eat
 - Religion: Some religions have certain rituals that are important when someone is ill or dying
 - Healthcare: Some groups use herbs or medicines that are common in their culture, especially to help manage pain and other symptoms. It is important that the team is aware of any herbs or medications you are using so that the medicines they order for you do not cause a problem with what you are already taking
- Death and dying: Some groups have traditions that are important in considering organ donation, the care of the body, and after death rituals. In some cultures, it is not appropriate to talk directly about a person's death. It is important for the team to understand what is acceptable to you
- Share your life's story. It helps the team to understand you, your experiences, and how they may influence the care that you want now

What can be done to honor and respect your values, practices, and beliefs?

- The team can help you
- make sure your plan of care includes what is important to you
 - contact spiritual, religious, veteran, or community leaders that you want involved in your care
 - share your life story with others important to you
 - honor your values, practices and beliefs

Other HPNA Patient / Family Teaching Sheets are available at www.hagna.org.

References

American Association on Colleges of Nursing (AACN) and the City of Hope National Medical Center. Module 5: Cultural considerations in end-of-life care. *End-of-life Nursing Education Consortium (ELNEC)* Geriatric, 2008.

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