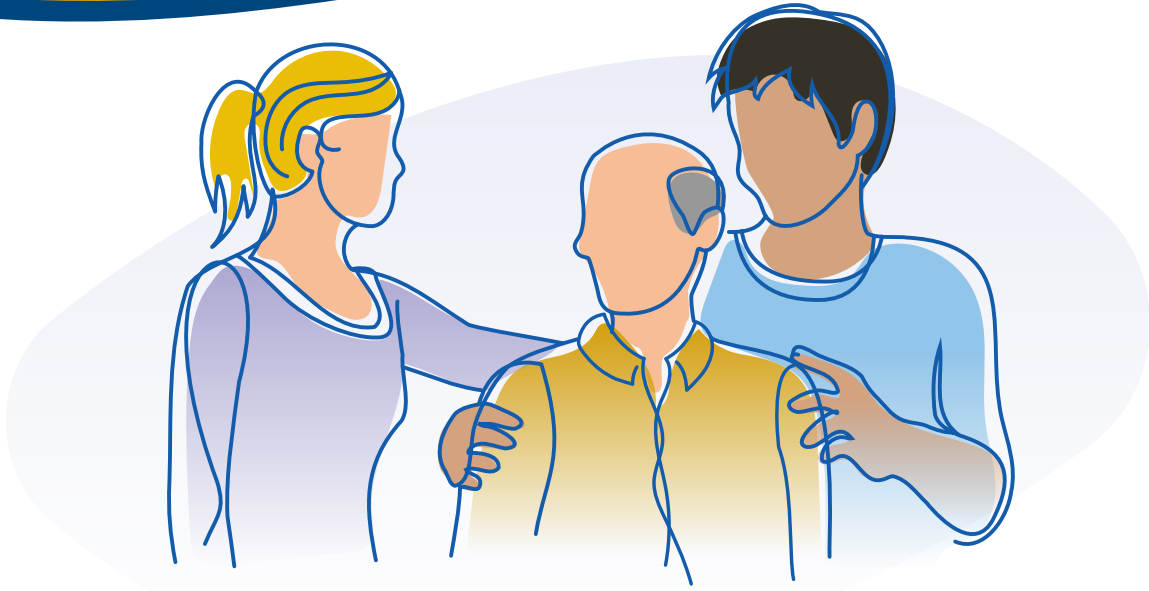


Intensive Caring

Reminding Families They Matter



A new paradigm for how families can support ill loved ones

Dame Cicely Saunders, the founder of the modern hospice movement, famously said, “You matter because you are you, and you matter to the last moment of your life.” Families often feel helpless and that what they do to support their loved ones *is never enough*. This is especially true when the person they are caring for no longer feels like they matter or that anything can really make a difference.

People vary in their ability to be family caregivers; this often depends on personal characteristics, family dynamics and complex emotional chemistry. Families need to be supported in roles they feel able to take on; and assured that their own health and well-being are important. *Intensive Caring*—originally designed for healthcare professionals—offers families able to do so, a way of being with loved ones who are suffering.

Intensive Caring has five key parts that are based on research and best practices. Intensive Caring reminds families that their presence makes a difference and shows their loved ones they still matter. Being present includes being interested and involved with the ill person; understanding what is still possible, even when someone is very sick; knowing even one’s demeanor can provide comfort; and that humility is crucial when facing things in life that can’t be fixed. *Intensive Caring* allows families to support their loved ones, comforted by knowing that what they are doing matters, and that their presence and involvement—within their ability to do so—are indeed enough.



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Five Elements of Intensive Caring



Non-abandonment

- Maintaining committed, quality connection
- Offering ongoing support



Having ongoing interest and connection with the person

- Enhancing empathy, respect, and connectedness
- Affirming worth of who they are, were, or tried to be, and what they achieved or tried to accomplish
- Reminding health care providers who their loved one is or was as a person



Knowing What’s Possible

- Finding hope for psychological, spiritual, and physical comfort
- Hoping for minimal suffering and a peaceful death
- Finding meaning and purpose in
 - * Relationships
 - * Sharing words/feelings (varying across families) such as regret, remorse, forgiveness, reconciliation, love
 - * Sharing reminiscence



Dignity Affirming Presence

- Being compassionate and empathic
- Being respectful and nonjudgmental
- Being genuine and authentic
- Being trustworthy
- Being fully present
- Valuing intrinsic worth of the person



Having Humility

- Tolerating ambiguity of the situation
- Trusting in the process
- Avoiding the need to fix

Chochinov HM. *Journal of Palliative Medicine*. 2024.

<https://surl.li/slciem>