

End- of- life- ritual: Ceremonies for a dying person without loved ones present and for their absent loved ones.

This ritual-manual was made up by Luis Kaserer en Beatrijs Hofland, both Dutch chaplains.

It consists of 2 parts: Part A describes a ritual that can be performed by the caregiver in the presence of the dying patient. Anyone present near the dying person can perform this ritual. There is no need for a chaplain to do this.

Part B describes a possible ritual for family members who are not able to be near their dying loved once.

These two rituals can be performed at the same time and at different places. This would increase the connection. Social media can help, but are not necessary. The ritual can also be done separate, without connection to the relatives. This ritual can be performed by anybody present in the room of the dying patient. It is important to inform the dying person clearly about the task they have to fulfill at this moment: saying farewell to life and to their loved ones.

This ritual is developed mainly as an answer for the questions of caregivers at home. But it can also be used in an hospital setting.

You will find here some clear practical guidelines for you as a ritual counselor. Anybody who feels called to can do something to help and support the dying. And to help the loved once not present to better cope with the grief. As a caregiver you can make a real difference by making a connection between the dying and their absent loved once. You can bridge the gap. Let your heart and creativity speak in this situation. Actually, you cannot do anything really wrong. Many possible significant things can happen. Keep in mind the Dutch expression: that which cannot be healed can be caressed.....

The situation is unique. It's not possible to do everything you want. Don't feel guilty or annoyed about that. We work with whatever we have at hand. There is a lot of distress now, the emotional burden is high, there is urgency, there are boundaries almost everywhere. Yet, probably you can do much more than you would think. There are opportunities. Seize them so that the transition and farewell are more humane and loving, both for the dying and the relatives far away.

A ritual always has a start and an end and something in between, either said or done or easily available for reflection. Even if you are a ritual counselor without experience at all, you can say things, act or refrain from doing something, according to the situation. The situation is your guideline that determines what you do. So feel free to act at your own discretion and follow your intuition for the wellbeing, reassurance or consolation of the dying person. You are not there to achieve an impossible mission with empty hands and be speechless. Help is at hand, support available. That's what you are. Follow your heart, your common sense, your intuition and listen to your inner voice, to the dying person and all other people present in this setting.

That will give you the right compass. Keep in mind never to blame yourself.

Try to connect as much as possible with the spiritual background of the dying person. Sometimes it is not clear what that is. That makes it more difficult. It makes a difference if the patient is of a practicing or non-practicing Roman Catholic, Protestant, Humanist, Hindu, Muslim, Atheist, Agnostic, existential searcher background or whatever other spiritual or existential background. It goes without saying that every person has the full right to make their own choice on that matter and that there is also a great variety in this (e.g. multiple religious belonging).

It does not make any sense to wish that someone was different. It is what it is. That demands respect, tolerance and the capacity to be able to have a wider perspective than staying within your own spiritual borders. Try to get as much information as possible from the dying person and from their relatives about the spiritual tradition. It depends on what this background is which symbols can be used in the ritual and what the appropriate actions are.

It is not possible in this paper to provide a manual for all rituals from all traditions. To keep it simple, we describe three rituals: One for a dying person with a Roman Catholic background, one with a Protestant background and one for a person who does not have a traditional spiritual background or a spiritual background that we are aware of. Remember, the borders can be fluid.

Part A:

1. Farewell ceremony for a dying person with a Roman Catholic background.

A dying person with a Roman Catholic background would most likely prefer to have a priest or pastor administer the anointing of the sick. In consultation with the relatives, ask whether this is possible. If so, it is best to leave the procedure to the priest/pastor. It is however likely that there is no priest/pastor available. In which case, you can do it yourself.

It is also possible to make use of your own spiritual background. It is an advantage if this matches the background of the dying person. But first of all you need to realize that your own spiritual assumptions must never be the guide, whatever good intentions you might have.

The needs and wishes of the dying person and the absent relatives are leading. You are subservient to that.

Does the patient have a positive connection with the Roman Catholic church? Then look for any available Roman Catholic symbols. Are they wearing a necklace with a cross or a medallion? Look around in the living room and/or bedroom: is there a statue of Mary, a rosary (this is a cord with many beads and a cross), a crucifix on the wall or desk, a photograph or memorial card of a deceased relative, a statue of angels or of a saint? Be aware of these symbols. If possible, discuss with the patient or with the absent relatives about these meaningful symbols. Even if you do not understand them: handle them with respect and put them where the patient can see them. Explain what you are doing. Arrange them carefully, for instance on a paper handkerchief on the bedside table or table. You are making a kind of shrine for them.

A candle, perhaps an electric one (due to the possible presence of oxygen!), is an important symbol. The lighting of a candle (safely!) or switching one on can be very meaningful to the dying person (and also for the relatives at home). This alone may be sufficient. But you can do more.

Note: Try to let the dying person be involved in what you do as much as possible, and also in what you see and what you notice, what you admire. Do this even if the patient is in a coma. They may be able to hear you but are unable to react. Once the candle is burning and the symbols are in sight of the patient, you may start performing the ritual.

1. If you haven't done so already, tell the patient that the moment of saying farewell to life and their loved ones is approaching. Try to find out whether the patient can understand you. If they are unconscious or in a coma, speak and act as if the person is conscious. Try to create an atmosphere full of calm and peace of mind.
2. Start lighting the candle or switch it on. Explain that this light refers to the light of God, to the presence of God at this special moment. Light gives warmth, consolation and always conquers the dark. Mention the hope that this divine light may accompany the patient with warmth on their way and ease the road in the presence of God's Holy Spirit.
3. Start with a moment of silence. Announce this out loud.
4. Explain that you will now connect with all absent loved ones with whom the patient feels connected. Invite the patient to make this connection with them now as well. Call these

loved ones by their name, one by one. Quietly and calmly. Mention all the other people who feel connected to the patient.

5. Invite the patient to picture these loved ones in their thoughts and to connect with them. By saying their names, this will happen automatically (visualization).
6. Ask the patient what they would still like to tell their loved ones. Take notes for a later moment. If the patient cannot speak, express your own thoughts, with as starting point what you yourself would like to let your loved ones know in this situation.
7. Describe your own feelings and what it means to you to be so close to the dying patient knowing that you are connected in your heart and thoughts to his loved ones. Realize that this too is a meaningful and special moment for you.
8. It would be fine and appropriate if the loved ones kept the dying person in their minds at the same moment in their home situation. This feeling could be intensified through a live video connection. But it is not absolutely necessary: the connection has been realized already and that's what matters most. You could express messages or words from the loved ones to the dying. You are then the messenger.
9. Now you could pray. If you are not used to doing this or you don't know what it is, that's no problem! Just read these two prayers that will be familiar to Roman Catholics in a calm voice. Just one of the two is fine too. Both and one after the other is better. It is The Lord's Prayer and Hail Mary. Perhaps the patient can pray with you, try to invite them to do so. Say: let us now pray, in connection with those we love, with the words Jesus taught us:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. Amen.**

After this prayer you may continue with the next prayer. Say: let us greet Mary and ask her for assistance for ourselves and our loved ones:

**Hail Mary full of grace,
The Lord is with thee
Blessed art thou among women,
And blessed is Jesus,
the fruit of thy womb,
Hail Mary, mother of God
Pray for us sinners
Now and at the hour of our death. Amen**

10. You may end the prayer with a few words. If it is safe, you can touch the patient softly or hold your hand above their head as a gesture of protection and blessing. You could make a sign of the cross on their forehead with your thumb. You may say words like this: Mention their complete name and perhaps their nickname if they have one:

**Your life is completed
Let it go in peace when time has come.
You may go in peace
You may trust that you will be safe
The angels and Saints, Holy Mary, and others will assist you.
You may trust that your loved ones will remain connected with you.
They always will remember you as a loving person worth loving
When the door to the Light opens for transition, pass through with confidence.
Have trust in the mercy and love of God.
You will get home, at your destination. All is well.
Your loved ones will miss you.
They will find consolation in the thought that you have reached your destination in
heaven and that you are free from pain and suffering.
Once you will be together again.
They grant you the happiness and peace of being with God and with all people who
went there before.
Love is stronger than death.
Your life was a blessing. You will always be blessed. Amen**

Now you can be silent for a moment. You may try to find out whether the patient has heard/understood what you said. You can hold their hands or caress them. You can encourage them to let go. You can tell them that they did everything to recover and that it is good to let go now.

11. You could consider putting on some music. For instance an Ave Maria by Schubert or Bach/Gounot, or other musical favorites of the patient. On YouTube there is a lot of music available for free. You may also discuss this with the loved ones, they probably know what the patient would like to hear or what they would think is appropriate for this moment. Everything is possible. Be aware of the wishes and the reaction of the patient. Music can be played right up till the moment of dying. A tear could be a sign of emotion, it is not always a sign of sorrow! Give the tears room to be shed, a calm place to be. That is comforting.
12. After death has come, it is helpful to inform the loved ones and to tell them about how the ritual went. Do not forget to mention the last meaningful words or gestures. This was important for the patient but it will also be important for the loved ones with respect to their grief. If safe and possible, you could hand over the candle and other symbols to the relatives. They might use them again if a ritual is required on an occasion in the future . Also think about whether a photo or film of the deceased would be important for the relatives. Talk about this. And remember to respect aspects of privacy!
13. Have you performed this farewell ritual? Very well done! You did something very worthwhile. Probably more worthwhile than you realize. The relatives will be grateful to you forever. You can be proud of yourself!

2. Farewell ritual for a dying person with a Protestant background

A dying person with a Protestant background would probably like to have contact with a minister or pastor. You might ask if this is possible. If so, it is best to leave the procedure to them. It is likely, however, that no minister or pastor is available. In which case you can do it on your own. It is also possible to make use of your own spiritual background. It is an advantage if this matches the background of the dying person. But first of all you need to realize that your own spiritual assumptions must never be the guide, whatever good intentions you might have. The needs and wishes of the dying person and the absent relatives are leading. You are subservient to that.

After asking for information about the patient's spiritual background, go ahead and look for Protestant symbols.

Look around the room for any of these symbols. Are they wearing a necklace with a cross or a medallion? What can you find in the living room or bedroom? Do you see a Bible for instance, or Biblical texts on the wall? Or a crucifix on the wall or on a desk, a photograph or memorial card of a deceased person, a saying or another religious symbol? Look around carefully and be aware of the symbols. Discuss the meaningful symbols – if possible – with the dying person or with the absent loved ones. Make a space near the bed where you can put them in sight of the patient. Make a 'shrine'. Explain what you are doing so that feelings of autonomy and involvement are enhanced. Do this even when the patient is not conscious. It is possible they will hear you but will not be able to react. As soon as the symbols are ready and the patient can see them, you can start the ritual.

You might decide to light a candle, or perhaps an electric one (due to the possible presence of oxygen!). It can be very meaningful for the patient and also for the loved ones at home to know this so that they can do the same where they are located. Sometimes this is sufficient. But you can do more.

1. If you haven't done so already, tell the patient that the moment of saying farewell to life and their loved ones is approaching. Try to find out whether the patient can understand you. If a person is unconscious or in a coma, speak and act as if the person is conscious. Try to create an atmosphere full of calm and peace of mind. Speak out loud everything you are doing.
2. Start lighting the candle or switch it on. Explain that this light refers to the light of God, to the presence of God in this special moment. Light gives warmth, consolation, and always conquers the dark. Mention the hope that this divine light may help the patient in letting go, accompany him on the road and ease the steps in the presence of God's Holy Spirit.
3. Start with a moment of silence. Announce this out loud.
4. Explain that you will now connect with all absent loved ones with whom the patient feels connected. Invite the patient to make this connection with them now as well. Call these loved ones by their name, one by one. Quietly and calmly. Mention all the other people who feel connected to the dying person.

5. Invite the patient to think of these beloved persons and to connect with them. By calling out their names, this will happen automatically (visualization).
6. Ask the patient what they would still like to tell their loved ones. Take notes for a later moment. If the patient is unable to speak, express your own thoughts, with as starting point what you yourself would like to tell your loved ones in this situation. Describe your own feelings and what it means to you to be so close to the dying patient knowing that you are connected in your heart and thoughts to his loved ones. Realize that this is also a meaningful and special moment for you.
7. It would be good if the loved ones kept the dying person in their mind at this same moment in their home situation. This feeling could be intensified by a live video connection. But it is not obligatory: the connection has been realized already and that's what matters most. You could express messages or words from the loved ones to the dying. You are the messenger then.
8. At this time you might recite a text from the Bible. It is good to discuss the choice of text beforehand with the patient or the loved ones. Many people have a favorite text that they always carry with them. It is easy to find this text by searching in Google. It could be a text from the Bible or a religious song.

If there is no favorite text, then read Psalm 23, a well-known text for Protestants, if possible from the patient's own Bible. Mention that the Lord Jesus often prayed with this text.

These are the words, in case you do not have a Bible available. Read them calmly and quietly. Perhaps it is even good to read the text twice:

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
² **He makes me lie down in green pastures.**
He leads me beside still waters.^[a]
³ **He restores my soul.**
He leads me in paths of righteousness^[b]
for his name's sake.
⁴ **Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,^[c]**
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.
⁵ **You prepare a table before me**
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
⁶ **Surely^[d] goodness and mercy^[e] shall follow me**
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell^[f] in the house of the LORD
forever.

Now you could take a moment to reflect in silence. And you could say what this text means to you personally.

After reading the text, you could recite The Lord's Prayer. Perhaps the patient would like to pray with you. Try to invite them to do so. Say: let's pray together now – in our heart and thoughts connected to all those we love – with the words the Lord Jesus taught us.

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.**

You might finish the prayer with the following words and if it is safe, you can touch the patient softly or hold your hand above their head as a gesture of protection and blessing.

Say the patient's complete name and perhaps the nickname if they have one :

Your life is completed.

You may give it back to your Creator, when His time for you had come.

You may go in peace.

You may trust you will be safe in the arms of Jesus.

He gave his life also for you

You may trust that your loved ones will remember you as a person worth loving

When the door to the Light of your Creator opens, go through trusting there will be grace for you.

You are and will be a blessed person through the grace of Jesus Christ.

He will save your life and make it complete.

Your beloved ones will miss you.

They will experience consolation in their confidence and faith that you have found your destination in the arms of Jesus Christ the Lord.

They grant you the happiness and peace of being with God.

They will find the strength to continue their life.

Love is stronger than death.

Amen

9. Now you can begin a moment of silence. You may try to find out whether the patient has heard/understood what you said. You can hold their hands or caress them. You can encourage the patient to let go. You can tell them that they did everything to recover and that it is now good to let go.
10. You could consider playing some music. This is very personal. To sing a song (together) would be nice, but probably too difficult. It is not necessary either. On YouTube there is a lot of music available for free. You may also discuss this with the loved ones, they

probably know what the patient would like to hear or what they would think is appropriate for this moment.

Everything is possible, not only religious music. Be aware of the wishes and the reaction of the patient. Music can be played right up till the moment of dying. A tear could be a sign of emotion, it is not always a sign of sorrow! Give the tears room to be shed, a calm place to be.

That is comforting.

11. After death has come, it is helpful to inform the loved ones and to tell them about how the ritual went. Do not forget to mention the last meaningful words or gestures. This was important for the patient but it will also be important for the loved ones with respect to their grief. If safe and possible, you could hand over the candle and other symbols to the relatives. They might use them again for a ritual in the future. Also think about whether a photograph or film of the deceased would be important for the relatives. Discuss this. And remember to respect aspects of privacy!
12. Have you performed this farewell ritual? Very well done! You did something very worthwhile. Probably more worthwhile than you could imagine. The relatives will be grateful to you forever. You can be proud of yourself!

3. Farewell ceremony for a dying person whose spiritual background you don't know or who does not have an explicit religious background

You might choose universal words and gestures for a dying person whose spiritual background you don't know or who does not adhere to a specific religion.

It is possible to make use of your own spiritual background. It is an advantage when this matches the background

of the dying person. But first of all you need to realize that your own spiritual assumptions must never

be the guide, whatever good intentions you might have.

The needs and wishes of the dying person and the absent relatives are leading. You are subservient to that.

After gaining information about the patient's spiritual background, you can now start looking for meaningful symbols that are important to them. Are they wearing a necklace or medallion? Look around in the living room or bedroom. Do you see any paintings or photographs? Be alert

to possible signs that refer to the patient's life vision. Discuss this, if possible, with the patient or with their loved ones. It might be anything! Showing respect, take them and put them somewhere the patient can see them. Always explain what you are doing, as this enhances a feeling of

autonomy and involvement. Do this even when the patient is not conscious. It is possible they can hear

you but are unable to react. As soon as the symbols are ready and in the sight of the patient, the ritual may start.

You might decide to light a candle or – if there is oxygen in the room – to switch an electric candle on (this can be very meaningful for the patient and also for the loved ones at home, to know this)

and to do the same wherever they are. Sometimes this is sufficient. But you can do more:

1. If you haven't done so already, tell the patient that the moment of saying farewell to life and their loved ones is approaching. Try to find out whether the patient understands you. If a person is unconscious or in a coma, speak and act as though the person is conscious. Try to create an atmosphere full of calm and peace of mind. Always say what you are doing, e.g. I am going to light a candle now. I propose we have a moment of silence now....
2. Start lighting the candle or switch it on. Explain that this light refers to connection, to hope and to light in the dark.
3. Start with a moment of silence.

4. Explain that you will now connect in your thoughts with the absent loved ones, with whom the patient feels deeply connected. Call them by their name, one by one, quietly and calmly. Call all the other people who feel connected to the dying.
5. Invite the patient to picture these loved persons in his thoughts and to connect with them. By calling their names, this will happen automatically (visualization).
6. Ask the patient what they would still like to tell their loved ones. Take notes for a later moment. Tell the patient you will tell their loved ones later. If the patient is unable to speak, express your own thoughts, with as starting point what you yourself would want to tell your loved ones in this situation.
Describe your own feelings and what it means to you to be so close to the patient, knowing that you are connected in your heart and thoughts to their loved ones. Realize that this is also a meaningful and special moment for you.
7. It would be good if the loved ones kept the dying person in mind at the same moment in their home situation. This could be intensified through a live video connection. But it is not obligatory: the connection has been realized already and that is what matters most.
8. Now you could read a poem. It is good to discuss the choice of text beforehand with the patient or the loved ones. Many people have a text that is very precious to them. It is easy to find this text by searching in Google. For instance by searching for mourning poems or farewell. If no suggestions have been made, you could read these words:

And now just only

Let the body go

Leave the dearest and the children

No more than to see the powerful light

The red, pure light of the evening sun

See it and follow it and travel on your own trail.

It became, it was, it has been done.

9. Now you can take a moment's silence. You may say what this text means to you. You could end with the following words, all the while touching the patient (safely!) or hold your hands above their head as a sign of protection and blessing (to bless means to wish all the best), for instance with these words:

**May the road enrich your life and that of others
day by day.**

Peace be with you on your journey

Peace to the outer world

Peace from within.

May the day be blessed being a bridge between yesterday and tomorrow.

May the power of life of ancestors and the ideals of your children carry you.

**That joy and sorrow about what has been and the expectations about what may come support
you.**

That the life experience of others and the proximity of your loved ones may inspire you.

Live in connectedness with those who lived before you and with those who will come in future together with your loved ones who are on the way just like you.

Live in connectedness with your soul and listen to the voice of silence.

Continue on your road. Peace be with you and with those with whom you are connected in love.

10. Now take another moment of silence. You may try to find out whether the patient has heard/understood what you said. You can hold their hands or caress them. You can encourage the patient to let go. You can tell them that they did everything to recover and that it is OK to let go now.

11. You could consider playing some music now. That's a very personal choice. Or to sing a song (together), but that is probably too difficult. But it is not necessary. On YouTube there is a lot of music available for free. You may also discuss this with the loved ones, they probably know what the patient would like to hear or what the patient would think is appropriate for this moment.
Everything is possible, not just religious music. Be aware of the wishes and the reaction of the patient. Music can be played right up to the moment of dying. A tear could be a sign of emotion, it is not always a sign of sorrow! Give the tears room to be shed, a calm place to be.
That is comforting.

12. After death has come, it is helpful to inform the loved ones and to tell them about how the ritual went. Do not forget to mention the last meaningful words or gestures. This was important for the patient but it will also be important for the loved ones with respect to their grief. If safe and possible, you could hand over the candle and other symbols to the relatives. They might use them again if a ritual is required on an occasion in the future. Also think about whether a photograph or film of the deceased would be important for the relatives. Discuss this. Follow your intuition. And remember to respect aspects of privacy!

13. Have you performed this farewell ritual? Very well done! You did something very valuable. Probably more valuable than you realize. The relatives will be grateful to you forever. You can be proud of yourself!

Part B:

Farewell-ceremony for relatives who cannot be present with the dying loved one.

You, the beloved ones of the dying person, have a hard time now. You cannot be together with your dying relative at this moment where he/she is dying. You will feel intense sad, perhaps you are confused and maybe it will take more time before you really can imagine what happens in this complex situation. It could be that everything is too much for you to realize that this is true. It is difficult. Hopefully you get good and quick information about the situation of your beloved one. They informed you about the expectation he/she will die in short time. This is unbelievable. And even now you can not be there. Neither can other beloved ones be with you. You cannot be together. This almost must be unbearable.

This ritual-manual is meant to be helpful for you in saying farewell in this incredibly difficult situation. Perhaps you heard about a ritual taking place in the presence of the dying person, you probably even know at what time this will be done. If so, you can take part. By participating in your own ritual you are more connected with the ritual for your beloved one, even if this takes place far away from where you are.

It is important that you inform the ritual counselor (the GP, nurse or whoever) who is present with your dying loved one about his or her spiritual background. You could tell them about meaningful objects that might be important for the dying person now. A 'sacred space' will be installed with a candle and important symbolic objects. And could you give information about music your beloved one liked or had a special relation with? Think about it please and ask others what they think. Try to find music on the internet (YouTube) or on a CD.

Yes, so many things happen. Try to stay calm. What would you like to do and what would you be able to do in this situation away from your dying loved one? Would it be helpful to know that your beloved one has you in mind at the same time as you do so with him/her? If so, you could participate in this ritual. A ritual can express what can't be said in words. This manual may help you. We would like to help you!

A few suggestions for what you could do:

1. Make an appointment together, for instance when the farewell ritual will be performed with the dying person or when they expect the really dying of your beloved one. You may connect with each other by performing the farewell ritual. A kind of connection will get into existence between you and other beloved ones and together you make a connection with the dying person.
2. It is important for you to know what happens with the dying person at that moment and how he/she is doing. Perhaps video contact is available, but think about it whether this is desirable or not. The view of your beloved one who is suffering might also be too much, too emotional. Most important is you feel connected with your heart, mind and soul.
3. Do you take part in the ritual? Start with making a 'sacred space' on the table. A nice tablecloth with a candle or a few candles. Also put important symbols on the table. Symbols that are important for the dying person and for you. That might be anything. Flowers, a picture or picture book, paperwork, a drawing or painting, a gift that has been

given or received, a religious object like a sculpture of Mary, a crucifix or any other object that is connected with the dying person and fits to this situation.

Share this also with other relatives who could do the same in their home. Show each other what the 'sacred space' looks like. Be creative. Don't forget meaningful texts, like letters, poetry etc. and the music you want to listen to.

4. Do not underestimate how spiritual connection in silence while having in mind the dying person may bring good vibrations. The effect will be even stronger when the dying person is being stimulated to keep his/her beloved ones in mind during the farewell ceremony at that same moment.
5. Be aware of the value of space and time to cry in this situation. It is important to give expression to the many and probably heavy emotions and feelings. Let them be. It is ok they are there and if desired they should be expressed. Encourage each other to do so. Swallow grief and suppress emotions does not work for you. It's not a good choice. Realize that your emotions are your friends who want to help you and surely they can. Don't wave them away but let them be with you and give them the space they need. This will help you now and later on.
6. Sit down at the table with the 'sacred space' with the collected symbols, well in time before the appointment.
7. Light the candle or candles in full awareness for your beloved one who is dying. Do this in silence. If you want so, mention the full name and the name you used in contact with your beloved one.
8. Make connection with him/her. Take a few times a deep breath, close your eyes and make an inner image of the person. Visualize him/her in the best period of his/her life. What happens to him/her now is not his/her whole life. There is much more. Let memories come in your mind. Be open to highlights but do not forget the moments of pain. Let be what is. Should something be forgiven? Do it now in the silence of your thoughts and make peace.
9. Speak out loud or in the silence of your heart, what you would like to say to the dying person. Are you grateful? Tell what you are grateful for. Are you sad? Talk about that. Are you angry, desperate, depressed or do you have no words at all? Say it!
10. Formulate the good memories you share together and what he/she has meant to you, what she/he means now to you and will do so in the future.
11. Imagine in the next step what you think your beloved one would like to say to you personally right now, at this special moment. See him/her in front of you and listen to what comes in your mind. Listen and take time for it. Breathing exercises like taking deep breaths might help to find some relaxation and feel more connectedness.
12. Now you might read aloud a poem, a meaningful Bible verse, a letter or something else or say a prayer that is important to both of you. You can do this aloud and have other

relatives listen to you and participate or do it in silence. With a video connection this also could be brought into the room of the dying. But it is not necessary.

13. Now you can listen to music you have listened to together in earlier times. Play music that is important for the dying person but also to you. Listen to the music that perhaps plays in the room of the dying at this same moment. Music opens the heart. Feel the connection it creates.
14. It is helpful always to end the ritual. Blow out the candle. Would you rather like it to keep burning? Do so. But try to find a way to close the ritual and to go back into the rhythm of the day, as far as possible in the extreme circumstances you are in. Take a drink, move around, try to get back into the daily structure of your life.
15. Try to think about the steps that will follow. Prepare for a farewell with more people together for instance at the funeral or later. But don't step too fast forward. Take it step by step. Be mainly aware of what is important for you right now, at this moment.
16. Listen to other beloved ones. They want to support you and they can support you. You also may be supportive to them even though you are not together now. Love is giving and taking and across borders. Tell each other what you would do if you could be at the same place now.
17. Formulate at the end of this ritual your wishes for the beloved dying person. If you don't have words, you might use words like these. Try to make them your own. You may say anything that's on your mind and in your heart.

We, Luis and Beatrijs, Dutch chaplains, wish you, from a distance the strength and power and blessings you need in this difficult time!

Dear I call your name, you are so close to my heart, and I love you so much!

I wish you everything you need for this special moment of transition.

I send you all my love and affection.

I send you my gratefulness for everything you meant for me, for what I meant to you and what we ever meant for each other.

You made me a different person.

Count on it: I will never forget you.

I will miss you, yes

And my heart cries not being able to be with you and hold you in my arms.

But do not be afraid: I do not know how, but I will cope with it.

I am weak but strong as well, like you.

We had good times together.

The good memories I always will keep in mind.

Other things I forgive you and I hope you will forgive me too.

I wish you peace and light.

I am sad, yes, but also grateful for you in my life.

For the love, tenderness and care and for who you were for us.

Go in peace and let go: find your way and go with the flow.

Love will always connect you and me

Love is stronger and more powerful than death.

.... You are so lovely, I love you so much.

Luis Kaserer, Dutch Chaplain www.curanimae.nl

Beatrijs Hofland, Dutch Chaplain, www.zingevingopdekaart.nl