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# INTRODUCTION

I have written this booklet as a gentle guide for the family caregiver through the vigil with your dying loved one. It will help you understand the normal changes the body goes through during the dying process.

Suggestions are offered to help you understand and manage end of life symptoms. It is my hope that it will make you and your loved one's experience more peaceful and comfortable.

The word *vigil* is defined as the act of keeping awake and alert. As your loved one nears death, you may want to be at their side sharing this sacred time with them.

Your presence at their bedside, your touch and your caring heart are a comfort to your loved one as they prepare to leave.

This is a deeply spiritual time, but it is also a stressful and difficult time filled with emotional, mental and physical challenges that affect the whole family.

Your vigil over your loved one's dying process can sometimes seem lonely, especially in the wee hours of the morning when you may be tired and alone. It is natural to feel a multitude of emotions during this time.