

Withdrawal from Friends, Family and Dying Process

As patients acknowledge that they are dying, they may begin to withdraw from family, friends, and hospice professionals. They may have decreasing interest in their environment and relationships. Family members may feel that they have offended or upset the patient, especially when they have had an open, close relationship with their loved one. Withdrawal signifies a transition from this life. If withdrawal is normalized as a transition process, family members seldom take this withdrawal personally.

Withdrawal often signifies that the patient is letting go and transitioning towards death. The patient may prefer to be with only one person or a few close family members. Verbal communication becomes less important for the patient, and they are often more responsive to touch and simple presence. During this time, family members may need to be supported while they allow the patient to let go, sometimes by giving their loved one permission to die. Families may also need to be encouraged and assisted in saying their final goodbyes.