Taking care of someone as they approach the end of their life is different than taking care of someone who is going to get better. Most people don't know that.

This booklet is a guide for keeping people comfortable at the end of their life. It provides basic insights into discomfort as the end of life approaches and explains the role of medications.

There are only two ways to die: fast or gradually. Fast death is getting hit by a truck, a heart attack, a stroke, suicide. A person is alive one minute and dead the next.

Gradual death occurs from old age or a disease that is not fixable. Dying from old age or disease has a process to it. It doesn't just happen. That process takes years for old age and months for disease. Gradual death is not painful. The disease that is causing death is what causes pain. Not all diseases that people die from cause pain.

Pain Scale

How a person expresses pain, talks about pain, and displays pain is based not on the severity of the physical pain but on their personality. To use an example: A stoic person will tend to down play their pain while a very sensitive person may think a hang nail is a level 7 on the pain scale.

The pain scale is a measurement tool used to gauge how much pain a person is experiencing. How bad is the pain? The number 10 is the worst pain and 0 is no pain. 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1-0. Knowing what number the pain is NOW helps us understand a person's comfort level which determines what type and how much pain medicine to give.

Dying Is Not Painful. Disease Causes Pain.

When assessing for pain at the end of life the first thing we do is look at the person's disease history. Some diseases that we die from cause no pain. If that is the case then just because the person is actively dying does not mean that now they are in pain.