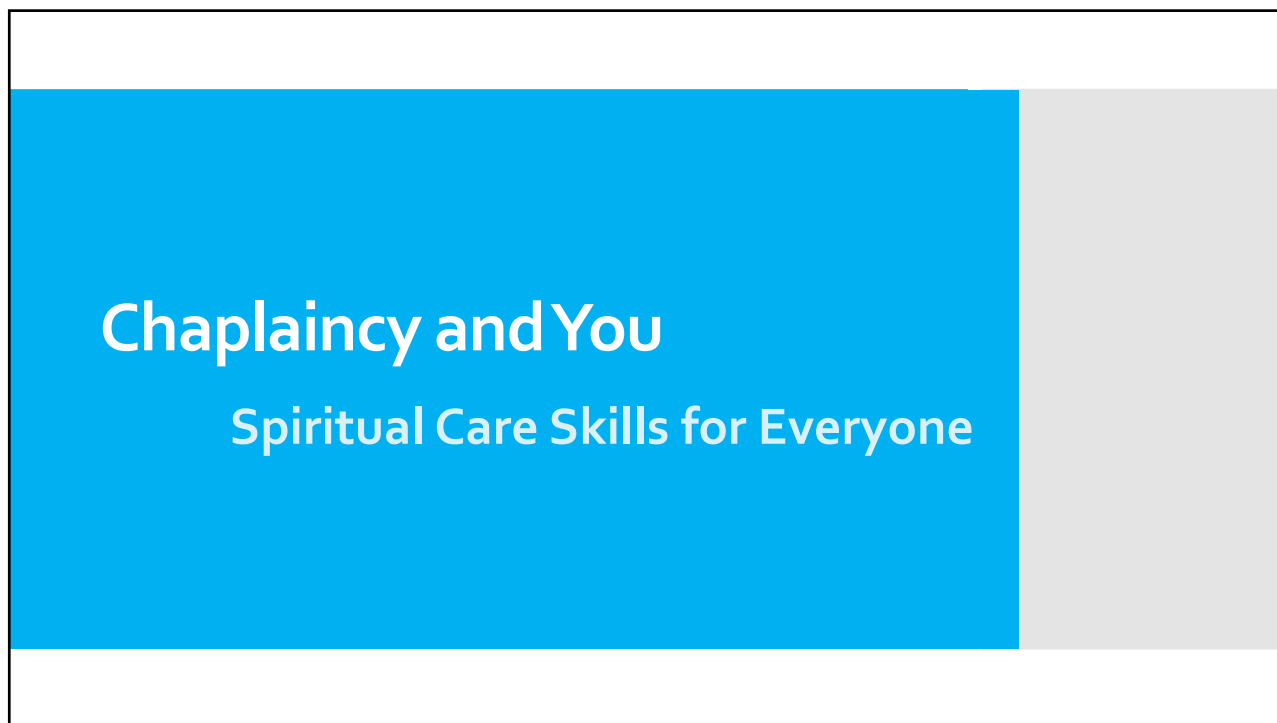




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# Ministry of Presence

- Many people use this term to signify a core component of spiritual caregiving. Unfortunately, it fails to capture just how difficult it can be to be present *fully* with another person who is suffering or in crisis.
- Background, personal history, and role expectations (nurse, clergy, family friend, chaplain) all play a part in modifying the encounter.
- Whatever the level of familiarity, it is important to *stay in the room*.

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# Staying In the Room

- It is easy for conversations to take a turn toward less difficult subjects (family, reminiscence, favorite things).
- It is difficult to stay with a person's anxiety, suffering, sadness, feeling of loss, insecurity, brokenness, hopelessness, fear, and fragility.
- Remaining open and curious about the other's emotional and spiritual state is key. To do this effectively we need to be aware of our own stories, and guard against bringing our own agenda into the room with us.

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# Comfort vs. Support

Comfort (Don't)	Support (Do)
Goal is to try to take away another's pain and suffering. Often drives disconnection and removes agency.	Goal is to be a supportive presence for the other. They determine the type of help and assistance they require.
Look for a silver lining.	Allow the pain to exist.
Focus on what to say next to make the person "feel better." Pro tip: Avoid sentences that start with the phrases "At least..." or "Don't worry..."	Actively listen to and acknowledge the feelings and emotions of the other person. Sit quietly if appropriate. Do not gaslight.
Push someone toward feeling differently, or encourage them to be anything other than what they are.	Allow the person to feel what they are feeling. Meet them where they are at and follow their lead in determining what will help them most.

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-Adapted from *What's Your Grief*

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"When we honestly ask ourselves which persons in our lives mean the most to us, we often find that it is those who,

**instead of giving advice**, solutions, or cures,

have chosen rather to **share our pain and touch our wounds**

with a warm and tender hand.

The friend who can **be silent** with us in a moment of despair or confusion,

who can **stay with us** in an hour of grief and bereavement,

who can **tolerate not knowing**, not curing, not healing

and **face with us the reality of our powerlessness**,

that is a friend who **cares.**"

-Henri Nouwen

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### **Four Attributes of Empathy:**

1. Ability to see the world as others see it (*perspective taking*).
2. Be nonjudgmental.
3. Recognize another person's feelings (*attunement*).
4. Communicate your understanding of that person's feelings (*resonance*).

**-Theresa Wiseman**

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# Use words ... if necessary

Listening involves paying attention ...

to **content**

(the details, a description, an explanation, events, etc.)

**AND**

to **energy**.

(tone of voice, bodily sensations, facial expressions, body movement and position, eyes, etc.)

\*at least 85% of communication is **nonverbal**

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## Posture: SOLER

- **S**quarely Face the person
- **O**pen position
- *S*light **L**ean toward the person
- **E**ye Contact
- **R**elaxed




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## Trust

Within the first few *milliseconds* of meeting another person our brain decides whether someone is a threat to our safety.

Most of that decision-making is unconscious and based on past experiences.

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## Tools for Joining and Exploring

- **Reflection** – repeat what you’ve heard, a brief word or phrase
- **Paraphrasing** – capture what they’ve said in your own words
- **Open ended questions** – start with “how”, “what” or “why”, NOT answerable with “yes” or “no”
- **Simple Prompts** – “Tell me more about that”, “Would you like to share more?”, “I’m here for you”, “I want to understand.”
- **Silence** – often more powerful than words, *being* in the moment

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## What NOT to say ...

- I know how you feel (you really don't)
- At least . . . (making comparisons)
- Have you thought about . . . ? (fixing)
- Why don't you . . . (giving advice)
- Don't feel that way ... (dismissive)

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## Getting to the Spiritual Side of Things

- What does this mean to you?
- Where do you see God in this?
- How is your faith helping you?
- What is most important to you right now?
- What is giving you strength?



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