

# *My Gift: Myself*

A Guide to Excellence in End of Life Care

## **Hospice Volunteer Coordinator's Manual**

### ***A Word from the Author***

Welcome to ***My Gift: Myself, A Guide to Excellence in End of Life Care***, the end-of- life care training used successfully in hospices, long term care facilities, VA Healthcare centers, and prisons all over North America! This specific training for volunteers, comprised of a set of DVDs, this **Hospice Volunteer Coordinator's Manual** and a training packet for each volunteer (made up of a **Core Manual** and a **Hospice Volunteer Manual**) is designed to provide complete information in all areas of end of life care, using creative, hands-on learning techniques that appeal to the four basic learning styles.

Each chapter in the **Core Manual**, it's corresponding DVD, and the **Hospice Volunteer Manual** is divided into four segments. The first is ***"Just the facts, please..."*** This segment provides factual information about the topic and is designed to appeal to the **left side of the brain** where logical thought occurs. The information in this section tends to be more clinical and less personal.

The second segment in each chapter and each video is called ***"At the Heart of the Matter"*** and engages the **right side of the brain** where the spiritual and relational centers are located. The information in this section appeals to the emotions and stimulates the volunteer in training to look deeply inward to find his or her own heart responses to the material presented.

The third segment, called ***"Putting it Into Practice"***, is more "hands on" in nature, appealing to the portion of the brain that responds to programming for action. This section is where the "rubber meets the road" and provides a roadmap of practical exercises and real-life scenarios for the volunteer to utilize in his or her interactions with the hospice family.

**“A Closer Look”**, the fourth segment, focuses in more closely on one important aspect of the chapter topic. This appeals to the part of the brain that thrives on patterns and glean the information necessary to create them.

The **Hospice Volunteer Manual** closely follows the **Core Manual**, chapter by chapter, focusing on issues unique to volunteers. At the end of each chapter in the **Hospice Volunteer Manual**, you will find the **Skill Check** section. The tests in the **Skill Check** section challenge the volunteer to recall the chapter’s information in a way that cements learning. It is designed to be an open book test that serves as a guide to summarizing the chapter contents.

The **My Gift: Myself** Core DVDs are packed with interviews featuring volunteers, nurses, physicians, therapists, social workers and others addressing the topics that are covered in each chapter in the **Core Manual**. Be prepared to stop the DVD for discussion whenever appropriate or for an activity suggested in the manual. Volunteers love these discussion and activity opportunities and find them to be valuable and meaningful times of learning. Don’t leave them out!

Comments, suggestions, and answers to thought questions are sprinkled throughout the **Core Manual** and the **Hospice Volunteer Manual** sections of this guide in red print and are almost always suggested answers. Many of the questions require the volunteer to reflect on their own experience and respond in their own way. This is an important aspect of connecting with the material. There is no “right” or “wrong” answer.

In addition to the answer keys to the **Hospice Volunteer Manual** and the **Core Manual**, this **Hospice Volunteer Coordinator’s Manual** is packed with suggestions and instruction in attracting, screening, training, evaluating, and rewarding your hospice volunteers. This information is a distillation of the wisdom and experience of hundreds of hospice volunteer coordinators and other hospice staff members from around the world. Think of it as a round table discussion from which you can mine gems of wisdom and practical tips, added to your own experience and expertise, to develop or refine a hospice volunteer training program that is the best it can be.

I wish wonderful things for your program. May you and your volunteers, as you go forth to provide the dying and their families with the love and presence that are so good at giving, be richly rewarded in the ways that matter: with meaningful connections, a deep purpose and passion in life, and a knowledge that you have made a difference for good in this world.

JoAnne Chitwood, R.N.

# CONTENTS

<b>1. Who Are These People?</b> <i>The Hospice Volunteer Unmasked</i> .....	1
<b>2. Raising Awareness</b> <i>Attracting Your Team</i> .....	9
...	
<b>3. Creative Connection</b> <i>Embracing Diversity</i> .....	24
<b>4. Tailored Teaching</b> <i>Understanding the Needs of Adult Learners</i> .....	35
<b>5. Guidance in Growth</b> <i>Positive Problem Solving</i> .....	50
<b>6. Kudos</b> <i>Rewarding Volunteers in Ways They will Appreciate</i> .....	61
<b>7. Effective Evaluation</b> <i>Polishing Your Program Until it Shines</i> .....	71

# 1. Who Are These People?

## *The Hospice Volunteer Unmasked*

### Just the facts, please...

Hospice volunteers are a special breed of people. You know this. Chances are you have worked as a hospice volunteer yourself in some capacity in the past, and understand that there is a certain “something” that volunteers have that is a precious gift to the world. It can’t be measured. It can only be felt by the heart.



Hospice volunteers have long been known for their compassion and dedication. Just ask any hospice family who has had a volunteer what the experience was like for them. You will likely hear things like: “We couldn’t have made it without her” or “he was there for us when we needed him” or “her support was what got us through”.

What makes hospice volunteers such special people? Where do they get that reservoir of deep caring that creates such a bond between them and the families they care for? The answer is often, plain and simple, pain. Take a look at the word “compassion”. It’s Latin roots are “com” + “pati” which literally mean “to suffer with”.

Many of those seeking to minister to the dying and their families have had a personal experience with the death of a loved one. Others have been through losses of a different kind, such as divorce, financial hardship, or personal crisis. Working in hospice helps them maintain perspective and build meaning into their own experiences.

Pain, in a person with an open and teachable heart, can serve as an instructor, a motivator for growth, and a “softener” of the spirit, deepening the capacity for compassion and understanding. Those who are attracted to hospice care have almost invariably been through “the valley of the shadow” themselves and know from heartfelt experience how much the support of someone who understands and cares means in a time of crisis and loss.



This book is dedicated to assisting you in finding ways to draw out that special “something” in your hospice volunteers; those that possess it, those that don’t know yet realize that they have it, as well as those veteran volunteers who have been tapping into their inner wells of compassion for a long time.



## *At the Heart of the Matter*

*I encourage you, if you aren't already doing so, to start a personal journal in which to chronicle your journey with hospice work and the emotions and issues it brings up for you from day to day. This will be for no one's eyes but yours.*

*My favorite journal has lines on one page and a blank page facing it. I work through my feelings and responses in writing, then draw some aspect of that day's predominant issue on the facing page. It's a powerful way to stay in touch with my authentic self while working in a field that can be emotionally consuming without that solid anchor to my own heart.*

*Here are some questions to get you started in your journal. Answer them from your heart rather than from your head. Draw something that represents the answer to the question. Use bright colored pencils or crayons to express your inner feelings more fully.*

- 1. What attracted you, as a volunteer coordinator, to hospice?*
- 2. What have you learned through your own losses that you couldn't have learned any other way?*
- 3. List those losses and the lessons learned from each.*
- 4. In your journal, discuss the ways your own experiences with pain and loss have prepared you for hospice work.*





## Putting it Into Practice

Not everyone is cut out to be a volunteer, much less a *hospice* volunteer. What traits, in addition to high compassion and empathy levels, characterize successful hospice volunteers? Familiarize yourself with the following characteristics of an effective volunteer. This will make the process of attracting the right people to your program much easier, because you will have a clear vision of what characteristics you are looking for.

### Traits That Characterize an Effective Volunteer

- Has a source of internal strength that sustains them in times of trial and difficulty
- Has an external support system in place (friends, family, etc.)
- Is accepting of himself/herself and others
- Caring, gentle, kind and concerned
- High sensitivity level and an ability to cue into other's needs
- Able to maintain an attitude of respect and positive regard for self and others, no matter how different from themselves the "others" might be
- Tends toward idealism
- Altruistic in their attitudes toward life
- Able to be present, emotionally and spiritually as well as physically

