

Questions to Ask Yourself

Contemplating the events and your reactions after a patient dies can be therapeutic and help you recover from the resulting shock and grief. You can start by pondering and answering these questions. Consider writing out your answers if you think that will be helpful.

- Think about the patient who died – how would you describe him or her? What else did you know about the patient?
- How did you feel after realizing the patient would soon die? How did you cope with this impending death?
- How did you feel when the patient died? How did you cope afterward?
- Between diagnosis and death, did you talk at any time about this patient with colleagues?
 - If so, how did they respond and was it helpful?
 - If not, why didn't you talk to them?
 - In hindsight, what do you wish they would have said if you had talked to them?
 - Next time, will you talk with them? Why?
- Did you talk at any time about this patient with your family or friends?
 - If so, how did they respond and was it helpful?
 - If not, why didn't you talk to them?
 - In hindsight, what do you wish they would have said if you had talked to them?
 - Next time, will you talk with them? Why?
- On average, how many patient deaths have you dealt with on a weekly, monthly or annual basis?
- How many do you expect to deal with in the future?
- What happens when a patient dies in your practice in terms of protocol?
 - How do you interact with the dying patient?
 - How do you interact with the patient's family?
 - How do you interact with other members of the patient's care team?
 - Can improvements be made in the wake of your latest experience?
- Do you feel you need help?
 - What professional resources might you turn to for help dealing with your grief? Support groups? Counselors? Clergy? Others?
 - Who else who is understanding and close to you can turn to for help? Parents? Siblings? Other family members? Friends? Trusted acquaintances?
- What will you do differently next time?

(Granek 2013)