

Parting Words for Loved Ones

Never underestimate the power of your words.

While our day-to-day thinking often centers on routine needs, by contemplating death we can experience a deeper appreciation of life. What do you treasure most in life? What is most fulfilling for you? Most will say, it is their relationships with others. A life-fulfilling connection to another is truly a prized possession, what we treasure most. We are not emotionally whole without those precious connections.

Unfortunately, sometimes significant relationships become broken. Whether by misunderstanding or intentional act, a true friendship can be gone forever if you aren't willing to heal the relationship. We need closeness in our relationships, and we should not depend on chance or time to heal something torn apart. You only need "Four Things."

Dr. Ira Byock, an international leader in palliative care, provides advice on that potentially broken relationship in his book *The Four Things That Matter Most: A Book About Living. Resources: pg. 59*. The hundreds of dying patients he has cared for have taught him again and again the only thing really mattering at death are relationships and being at peace with them. Those who could express the words "**Thank you ... Please forgive me ... I forgive you ... I love you ...**" were in a better position to avoid spiritual pain that can be difficult and perhaps impossible to alleviate. Words can bring healing, hope, strength and reconciliation, even if they are only expressed on paper.

Of course these most powerful words should be used not just at death, but on a daily basis. Asking for forgiveness, expressing gratitude and showing affection renews and revitalizes those precious connections. There is no need to hold old grudges, and one can always hope for emotional healing, no matter how tragic circumstances might be.

Spiritual pain can be carried on by the living, for they too are denied the chance to be 'at peace' at another person's end when words are left unsaid. The feelings and emotions your loved ones carry will continue long after you are laid to rest. Have conversations every day with your loved ones on these four statements Dr. Byock says are critical for having a sense of peace about our relationships, and most importantly do so at the end of your life:

Thank you...

Please forgive me...

I forgive you...

I love you...