

End-of-Life Doula (AKA Death Doula)

Doula – what is it?

While Birth Doulas have been around since the 1990's, End-of-Life Doulas are relatively new, and it is an emerging field that is still being defined. The word "doula" means "trusted servant". The origins of the word are Greek and come from a time and culture when a family's most trusted servant, usually a woman, would attend to family members in great distress, but particularly when giving birth or dying.

End-of-Life Doulas

...provide non-medical, non-judgmental care and support of the dying and their families, coordinating with medical, hospice, and palliative caregivers to ensure that families get the best care possible. We empower clients during moments of important decision-making through informed guidance, emotional support, and connection to additional resources. We serve as companions to the dying and their families, offering presence, comfort measures, and physical and logistical support during the dying process itself.

Saint Louis Resources

<https://gatewayeol.com/midwest-end-of-life-doula-collective/>

The doula I used was Natalie Turner-Jones who (as most) has her own website:

<https://www.companioningthedying.com/>

The Value to Me

- A trusted resource – experienced, sensitive, understanding of both the patient and family
- Available 24-7 when the time came; she was there within 20 minutes
- Handled all the calls with hospice and family afterwards (I was not sure I would be able to function.)
- Became another adult friend as Helen declined
- Provided additional knowledge of the body's process of preparing for the end, helped me to understand what was happening with Helen
- Kept in touch afterwards
- While not expected to help with maintenance of the patient, she did pitch in and help

There is an article from the Post-Dispatch dated April 23, 2023, in which my experience and a video of me with my end-of-life doula are discussed, along with more information about those in the StL area. Search for “end-of-life doula”. The link is way too long to want to type, but here it is, just in case:

https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/metro/everyones-going-to-die-these-st-louis-residents-want-to-help-you-do-it-better/article_c311876e-af85-5ee5-99ac-ddb86c15cf47.html

The mission of the Midwest End-of-Life Doula Collective is to transform the end-of-life experience through awareness, collaboration, and advocacy.

End-of-Life Doulas are:

- Non-medical
- Family-centered
- Advocates for the dying
- Emotionally supportive
- Pragmatic and well-resourced
- Holistic
- Non-judgmental
- There to honor and support patient and family decisions & decision-making
- A complement to hospice care

End-of-Life Doulas may offer the following:

- Help with end-of-life planning, which may include green burial or home funeral
- Support from initial diagnosis through bereavement
- Sitting vigil with the dying and their loved ones
- Assistance with advance care planning
- Education, information and resources
- Addressing concerns of both client and family (i.e.: fear, dread, death process)
- Building a network of support
- Provide comfort before and after death
- Assistance with life review
- Respite or overnight care
- Household Support
- Personal care

Each end-of-life doula’s practice will differ based on their areas of expertise.

Ethical Standards

The Midwest End-of-Life Doula Collective is committed to a set of ethical standards. These [standards](#) are relevant for end-of-life doulas regardless of their professional functions, the settings in which they work, or the populations they serve.

These standards give the public and healthcare organizations an understanding of the ethical principles and practices that guide the professionally trained end-of-life doula. They are important when ethical uncertainties arise in the performance of end-of-life doula services to a dying person and their loved ones.