

**10<sup>th</sup> Form Transcript**  
***(This text has been edited from its original version)***

Facing death head-on is a job requirement for many medical workers, but it's harder to prepare for the emotional toll. WMRA's Kara Lofton reports on an initiative called The Pause that started at the University of Virginia Medical Center two years ago and is slowly being adopted by hospitals all over the country.

At the University of Virginia Medical Center students are practicing for that moment when a patient is in the space between life and death. In a real situation, sometimes the medical workers are too late, or the patient is too sick and dies. After a loss, the team puts down their tools, cleans up and moves on. There's always someone else who needs saving.

For nearly a decade, variations on this scenario where the reality of Jonathan Bartels, a nurse working in emergency care. He says witnessing death over and over again wears on trauma workers. They often become numb or burned out. But about two years ago, after Bartels' team tried and failed to resuscitate a patient, something happened.

“We had worked on this patient for hours, and the chaplain came in and kind of stopped everyone from leaving the room”, said Bartels. “And I'm like wow, that's really bold. And she said, I'm just going to pray over this patient, and then you all can leave. And I watched it, and I felt it was - the act of stopping people really inspired me”.

The prayer wasn't totally comfortable to him because Bartels, like many at the hospital, is from a different religious tradition, but the act of pausing felt right.

“So the next time when we worked on another person who didn't make it, I decided to be bold and stop people from leaving,” said Bartels. “I just said, could we stop just for a moment and recognize this person in the bed? You know, this person, before they came in here, were alive. They were interacting with family. They were loved by others. They had a life,” concluded Bartels.

The team agreed.

“When it was done - and I only did it for about a minute, and then I said thank you, all, and thank you, all, for all the effort that we did to try to save them - people walked out of the room. And they thanked me, and they thought it was really awesome,” Bartell told us.

The idea began to spread throughout the hospital, particularly to emergency department workers. EMT and hospital tech Jack Berner says it helps him handle the toughest cases.

“You know, it's somebody's father, their mother, their sister or uncle or - rather than just somebody you just see for five minutes,” said Berner.

Bartels' vision for The Pause is that it will help medical workers like Berner accept the loss without disconnecting emotionally.

Bartels continued, saying that, “So you're able to feel, and you're also able to sense and give back. The best way to cope with that in a healthy way is you acknowledge your feelings when someone dies. You acknowledge the pain of that, but we don't own that. That's not my death. That's not my family, but I can acknowledge that this is a natural process, and this is what happens. And I can also acknowledge the pain that I bore witness to in caring for that family and for that patient”.

The concept is spreading beyond UVA. After the Dean of UVA's school of nursing talked about the practice in a speech at a national conference, a nurse from Providence Sacred Heart Medical Center brought it across the country to Spokane, Wash. For NPR News, I'm Kara Lofton.

This story is part of a reporting partnership between NPR, local member stations and Kaiser Health News