

Reflective Workbook and Experience Guide

Dying to Live:

A Sacred Conversation

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INTRODUCTION

This course is called Dying to Live because it's actually about living, living our lives as fully as we can for as long as we can while facing the inevitability of death. Many people have said it is knowing we will die that gives life meaning, poignancy and purpose.

We are an aging (and dying) population as a result of the postwar baby boom, with more seniors than children in Canada and a median population age of almost 50 by mid-century. Census data tells us starting in 2010 boomers began turning 65 at the rate of 10,000 persons per day! This will continue for the next 15 years. There are estimated to be about 80 million baby boomers in North America, 25% of the population.

With this kind of bow wave in front of us, it is amazing that dying is the most important conversation we're NOT having. In our youth oriented culture, death is a taboo subject and preparing for dying is seen to be tempting fate. We are key to changing this culture of avoidance, starting by talking about dying to each other, to our families and caregivers, and to our medical professionals.

The question is: Can we die to our current fears and inhibitions? Our assumptions about dying? This course will explore these questions. We have changed our worlds many times throughout our lives. We have altered the nature of child rearing. We have changed the education system, protested and changed the political system. We have transformed the role of women and minorities in society. And we have reframed our view of the environmental crisis. Can we also change the culture surrounding dying?

THE HUMAN JOURNEY

One way to understand the circle of life and death is through the hero's journey. Joseph Campbell researched stories through history and different cultures and realized there is a 'monomyth', a common human story contained in all stories, the story of the adventurer who sets out on a quest to solve a problem. Along the way the hero, who can be both male and female, is confronted with challenges and obstacles but also given gifts and help from guides. Through facing the shadows, both inner and outer, the hero is transformed and returns to share the learning with others.



There are three major elements in the hero's journey we will be exploring.

Departure: What is our quest or intention for being in the course? What kind of a call to adventure are we on? What do we hope to achieve?

Initiation: What challenges will we face? What fears do we hold about dying? Who might our guides be? What gifts might we be given along the way? How might we transform our values and assumptions about dying?

Return: How will we use what we learn from the course? What might we need to do differently in our daily lives? What plans might we make? What conversations might we need to have?

The human journey gives us a map for looking inward at our lives in order to go forward with increased love, compassion, gratitude and acceptance for ourselves and others. We have the opportunity to change the world through modeling our wisdom and grace in aging and dying.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

The desired outcomes for the Dying to Live course are:

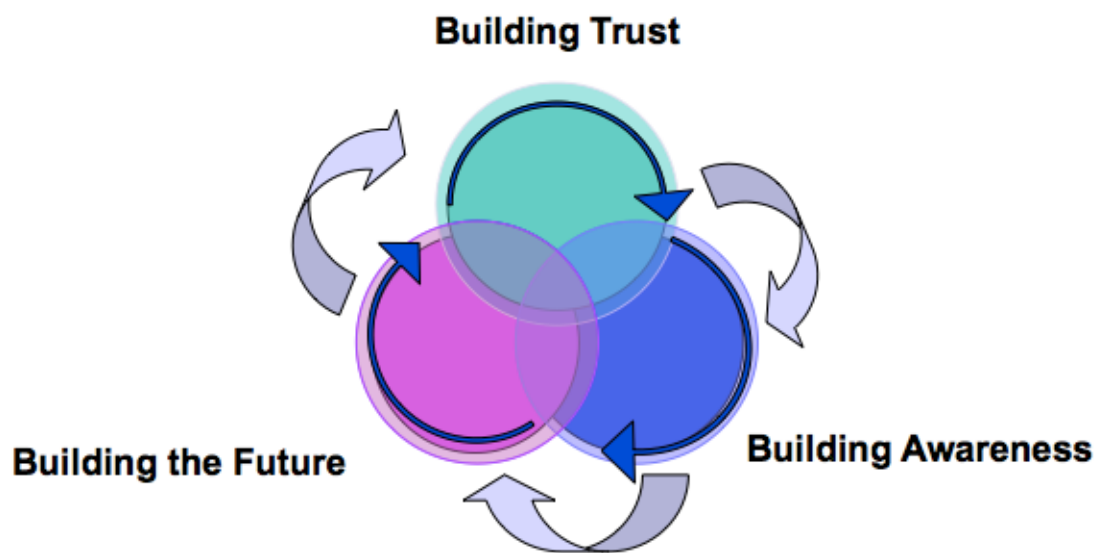
- To understand why it is important to explore dying while we are alive
- To look back at how dying has changed through time and how it is viewed today
- To discover what beliefs we hold about our own dying and what comes after
- To look at the process of grief and loss, and how we can care for others who are dying
- The steps needed to be clear about end of life issues
- Learning who we want to be now to live our lives fully.

WORKSHOP DESIGN

There are 6 topics in Dying to Live, each progressing toward a personal plan for living fully and dying well. Each time we gather we will explore one of the topics and express our thoughts and feelings through an art form: journaling, guided meditation, improvisation, story, drawing, reflection and vision boards, as well as through shared conversation. There is an art to

dying, and we will discover how we can each artfully prepare for and create the end of life we desire for ourselves, for our loved ones, and those we leave behind.

The workshop design is based on three interrelated components: Building Trust, Building Awareness and Building the Future. We will move through these components in sequence over the weeks of the program and we will also use them as our process in each of the sessions.



Building Trust: Trust is the starting point for any meaningful conversation so we will begin each session with a centering practice and a check-in question to bring ourselves into the circle. Often poetry or a reading will set the tone. As we get to know and trust each other, the conversation will deepen and enrich. A check-in is important for having each person's voice and viewpoint heard in the room.

Building Awareness: This is the meat of each session's topic area. We will discuss the workshop's material and share our stories. We will become more aware of our values and beliefs and see them within the broader context of the group and our background resources. We will use an art

form to express ourselves and gain new perspectives. We will share our learning in pairs and small groups and draw themes for further reflection. As we move through the six sessions of the course, our awareness will deepen.

Building the Future: As we end each session, there will be optional homework and resources to access for further information, a video, movie, article or other follow-up. There may be a question to ponder and suggestions for how to act on what has been discussed. There will also be a check-out question designed to summarize and integrate the learning from the session's topic and to close the circle. By the end of the course, we will create a plan for future living in order to die well.

“Life, when lived fully, dances lightly from test to test.”

New Self New World, Philip Shepherd, p. 199

SESSION 1:

INTRODUCTION & INTENTIONS

WELCOME

Let's begin by bringing our attention into the room, into this circle, here now. You might close your eyes, put your feet flat on the floor, settle into your chair, put your hands on your thighs... and take three deep breaths. As you breathe, please bring your awareness down into your belly as it expands and contracts with each breath. You will notice that just bringing your attention down into your body tends to help you relax, to release any tensions you have brought with you. You might soften your eyes, relax your jaw, drop your shoulders. Do whatever you need to in order to feel present and centered here now.

As you open your eyes and come into our shared space, know that we are embarking on a difficult journey, a hero's journey, that will have challenges as well as gifts. Let's be gentle with ourselves and each other.

CHECK-IN INTRODUCTIONS

Please check in and introduce yourself by answering these questions:

- Your name and age (if you dare...)
- What drew you here
- One hopeful outcome that would make this experience meaningful for you.

OUR TIME TOGETHER

We will be working through six topics over the next couple of days. The purpose of this workshop is to be with dying so we can more fully be with life. We will get to know each other and our stories through conversation,

and may learn things about ourselves as well. We will use a combination of thinking, feeling and doing, bringing our minds, hearts and hands to the tasks. We will have an opportunity to express ourselves artfully in each class, to write, draw, move, create in some form that goes beyond conversation to elicit our deeper thoughts and emotions. There will be reflective homework for follow up if you wish more, and a plan for conscious aging and dying to take away with you after our final session.

OUR TOPICS

1. Beginning – the what and why; our intentions
2. Dying through the ages and today; our own views
3. Dying well; how it informs our life
4. After life and grieving; our perceptions of what follows
5. The practicalities; preparing for the inevitable
6. Our living dying plan; how to live fully now.

OUR ARTFUL TOOLS

- **Deep Dialogue:** sharing ourselves and our thoughts, beliefs, hopes and fears as openly as appropriate.
- **Journaling:** putting our thoughts into words/pictures, expressing ourselves only to ourselves.
- **Reflective Questions:** answering structured questions and sharing perspectives with a partner and/or with the group.
- **Guided Meditation:** visualizing ourselves on an inner journey of discovery prompted by a guided script.
- **Storytelling:** reviewing the stories of our life and reframing them for the emerging future.
- **Vision Board:** creating a vision board to capture our plans and fulfill our intentions.

OTHER RESOURCES

- **Research:** what those who know are saying
- **Centering:** relaxing into the space of contemplation
- **Quotations:** yours and mine
- **Books/Articles:** reading to expand and deepen
- **Video:** listening for new points of view
- **Movies:** how film represents caregiving, bereavement, living with dying.

CAVEATS & EXPECTATIONS

- Our sessions are introductions to the topics
- This is not therapy or spiritual guidance
- Others' information is confidential
- Listen for multiple perspectives and belief systems
- Honour the sacred space we are entering
- Keep time commitments
- Let us know about any special needs
- Others you would like to raise?

YOUR TURN – QUESTIONS?

What are your questions now? Do you have any concerns that will inhibit your being present as we move into this session's content? Make any notes you would like to jot down at this point.

Are we ready to begin? Let's start with a blessing from John O'Donohue, the Irish poet, from his book called *To Bless the Space Between Us*. You may want to soften your eyes and settle into your chair. I will read the first stanza and then ask each of you as we go around the circle to read the ones following.

For a New Beginning

In out-of-the-way places of the heart,
Where your thoughts never think to wander,
This beginning has been quietly forming,
Waiting until you were ready to emerge.

For a long time it has watched your desire,
Feeling the emptiness growing inside you,
Noticing how you willed yourself on,
Still unable to leave what you had outgrown.

It watched you play with the seduction of safety
And the gray promises that sameness whispered,
Heard the waves of turmoil rise and relent,
Wondered would you always live like this.

Then the delight, when your courage kindled,
And out you stepped onto new ground,
Your eyes young again with energy and dream,
A path of plenitude opening before you.

Though your destination is not yet clear
You can trust the promise of this opening;
Unfurl yourself into the grace of beginning
That is at one with your life's desire.

Awaken your spirit to adventure;
Hold nothing back, learn to find ease in risk;
Soon you will be home in a new rhythm,
For your soul senses the world that awaits you.

INTENTIONS

With your courage kindled and awakened to your spirit of adventure, think of one intention you can create for this journey. Remember your hopeful outcome as stated when we checked in – what intention will support the achievement of your hopeful outcome? Write your intention below.

GUIDELINES FOR DIALOGUE

Here are some guidelines for making the most of our time when we break into smaller groups. Of course, they apply when we're all together as well. If anything is missing for you, you may want to suggest others to add.

- Speak from the heart
- Share only what is comfortable for you and your partner – ask permission if unsure
- Monitor your speaking time so everyone has a chance to share
- Listen openly and without judgement
- Ask questions for clarity and understanding
- Do not give advice!
- Others you'd like to add?

PARTNER SHARING

Find a partner and share your intention. Take 5 minutes each, listening for the chime when it's time to switch. Make any further notes when you return to the circle.

COMING TOGETHER

Any comments about the process of sharing your intentions? How did it feel to say it out loud to someone else? Any surprises? Any questions?

A DISCUSSION ON DYING TO LIVE

You were sent an article titled "The Ultimate End-of-Life Plan" that appeared in the Wall Street Journal in 2013. Take a moment to recall how you felt when you read the article. A daughter writes about her mother's

‘good enough’ death based on her choice to forego medical treatments that might have extended her life.

- Do you think most of us here in Canada die the way we want to die?
- How do you feel about advanced life-saving technologies?
- Would you want them for yourself? Under what conditions?
- Do you believe when we know the end is near, we choose the timing of our death?
- Do you believe that as a society, we are removed from death?
- What might a new ‘DYING TO LIVE’ look like for you? For society?

A JOURNALING EXERCISE

What insights and questions arise for you from this discussion? Make some notes of your thoughts and feelings as you consider the points that have been raised.

STEPPING INTO THE MYSTERY

Dying is a mystery – we can never know how it will be for us when our time comes. It is often painful to consider, both for ourselves and for others we love and will leave behind. And it raises very difficult questions. So we might ask: Why step into the mystery? As Irvin Yalom asks in his book, why risk *Staring at the Sun*? Here is an adaptation of part of his answer:

"Why scratch where it doesn't itch? Why grapple with the most terrible, the darkest and most unchangeable aspect of life?

Because death *does* itch. It itches all the time; it is always with us, scratching at some inner door, whirring softly, barely audibly, just under the membrane of consciousness. Hidden and disguised, leaking out in a variety of symptoms, it is the wellspring of many of our worries, stresses and conflicts.

I feel strongly – as someone who will die one day in the not-too-distant future – that confronting death allows us, not to open some noisome Pandora's box, but to re-enter life in a richer, more compassionate manner.

I believe that staring death in the face will not only ameliorate terror but enrich your life.” (p. 9)

FOR FOLLOW UP

Do you agree with Mr. Yalom? Will confronting death enrich our lives and make us more compassionate? Does death scratch at your inner door?

As follow up, please reflect on these questions and your journal writing. Share your thoughts with one other person if possible. Make some time for further journaling about whatever arises for you. And please be gentle with yourself and others as we move into this deep territory!

Below are additional resources for follow up.

Article: An article you might read to further think about this discussion is Oliver Sacks’ op ed piece titled *My Own Life* on learning he had terminal cancer. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/19/opinion/oliver-sacks-on-learning-he-has-terminal-cancer.html>

Movie: The movie this time is a Frontline episode, a 55-minute portrait of Atul Gawande, based on his book *Being Mortal* in which he discusses being a physician and working with dying. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/being-mortal/>

Video: Each session, there will be a video for us to view and discuss the following session, each about 15 minutes long. These videos are a series of ten TED talks titled *New ways to think about death*. Just scroll down to view the video by its title. This week the video is: *Life that doesn’t end with death*. http://www.ted.com/playlists/241/new_ways_to_think_about_death

Make any notes after reading and viewing below so you have them for next time.

CLOSING

To close the session for this week, let's go around the circle with one word that describes how you're feeling right now.

“Opening to our own mortality is a liberation from pettiness and smallness. It allows a release from the inessential.”

The Grace in Aging, Kathleen Dowling Singh, p. 90

What is one 'inessential' you might release this week? Thanks and see you tomorrow.

SESSION TWO:

A HISTORY OF DYING

WELCOME

Let's begin by bringing our attention into the room, into this circle, here now. You might close your eyes, put your feet flat on the floor, settle into your chair, put your hands on your thighs... and take three deep breaths. As you breathe, please bring your awareness down into your belly as it expands and contracts with each breath. You will notice that just bringing your attention down into your body tends to help you relax, to release any tensions you have brought with you. You might soften your eyes, relax your jaw, drop your shoulders. Do whatever you need to in order to feel present and centered here now.

As you open your eyes and come into our shared space, remember your intention from last time so you have it in mind as we look together at dying in different periods of history and culture, and at your own beliefs about dying.

CHECK-IN

This session, our artful tool will be improvisation. Improvisation is saying or doing whatever comes to you in the moment without thinking or analyzing. In improv, you take what you're given and extend it creatively and spontaneously. Examples of improv in different arts include jazz and rap music, Second City comedy and perhaps most famously Robin Williams who was best known for his improvisation.

To check in, let's try improv. With one word, add a "yes and..." to what has already been said: "Dying is... "

“Release everything that will hold you back. Look forward, let go – and relax.

Preparing to Die, Andrew Holecek, p. 90

HOW HAS DYING CHANGED?

We are living longer and better than ever before – dying of old age is a new phenomenon. Life expectancy for Canadians has reached 80 years, up from 60 in 1925, and is on the rise. Many diseases and conditions that led to death can be fixed or managed for long periods now, including heart disease, diabetes and many cancers.

However, dying has become a medical experience. We now die in institutions – hospices, nursing homes, ICUs rather than at home in the multigenerational families that were the norm a generation or two ago. So although the quantity of life may have improved, many believe the quality has not.

Our reverence for independence doesn't account for things 'falling apart' in later life. Our youth-oriented culture reinforces hanging in as long as possible, not being a burden to our children and caregivers, and looking to medical technology to keep us functioning.

Despite all this, we are surprisingly happy in elderhood with the simple things in life!

DYING ACROSS CULTURES

The video we watched described the Indonesian village of Tana Toraja where the community lives in a culture of death. Although this may be an extreme example, there are other cultures where there is a much closer relationship to death.

Atul Gawande describes taking his family to the Ganges River in India to scatter his father's ashes in a ritual that has existed for centuries, connecting us to the larger whole of which we are part.

In some cultures, death comes not in old age but as a ravaging epidemic. The HIV/AIDS crisis has taken 39 million people, 70% of them in the sub-Saharan Africa. There, death has taken a whole generation.

Are there other examples you can think of in different cultures or periods in history?

HOW DOES DYING LOOK TODAY?

Here are some statistics to consider from The Conversation Project:

- 90% of people think it's important to talk about their wishes for end-of-life care. Less than 30% have discussed it.
- 60% of people say that NOT burdening their family with tough decisions is 'extremely important'. 56% have NOT communicated their end-of-life wishes.
- 70% of people say they prefer to die at home. 70% die in a hospital, nursing home, or long-term-care facility.
- 82% of people say it's important to put their wishes in writing. 23% have actually done it.

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What is most important for you to discuss with your loved ones about your own wishes for end-of-life care?
2. What might you do to lift the burden of tough decisions about end of life wishes from your family?
3. What can we learn from other time periods and other cultures?
4. Where would you prefer to die?
5. What might you put in writing about your end of life wishes?

6. Others?

USE IMPROV TO CREATE A STORY

Here is an opportunity to create an improv story about your 'And then one day...' wishes. Remember in improv, use what you're given and add your own wisdom. Go only as far as you feel comfortable, or perhaps a little further. Keep in mind confidentiality, safety and trust within your small group. Feelings and emotions may arise and are expected and OK. Your role is to be a deep listener and witness for others.

In groups of at least three, follow the outline for a story based on the guidelines below and take turns completing the sentences as you move around the circle.

Create as many stories as you can in 15 minutes. You can repeat "And because of that..." as many times as you need to in order to complete the story. You may want to begin by creating a story all together.

- Once upon a time I was...
- And every day I would...
- And then one day...
- And because of that...
- And because of that...
- And in the end...

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. What insights occurred to you through the stories?
2. What surprised you?
3. How were the stories similar and different?
4. What do they suggest you might think about or do?

Make any notes on reflections you want to remember.

NOW, WHAT IS YOUR STORY?

Our story is based on our beliefs and values about ourselves, others and the world. Beliefs are basically assumptions that we make about the world, concepts like everyone is created equal or human beings are essentially good. Our values stem from our beliefs.

Our values are things that we deem important and can include attributes like equality, honesty, education, effort, perseverance, loyalty, faithfulness, conservation of the environment and many, many other concepts. Values govern the way we behave, communicate and interact with others.

Both beliefs and values shape what we feel about our end of life care and wishes.

Take a moment to think about your beliefs and consequently what you value. List your three top priorities in each category. Use your improv skills to be creative and spontaneous. Then think about your top three wishes for your end of life care.

For example, you might believe people are fundamentally well-meaning and you value the expertise of professionals. You might therefore be glad to leave your end of life decisions in the hands of the medical staff who are looking after you.

Choose a partner, someone you have not worked with before, and discuss your choices. You will have 5 minutes each, listening for the chime when it's time to switch.

My Beliefs:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

My Values:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

My End of Life Care:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Notes: _____

Here is a poem by Mary Oliver where she speaks about life and loss.

In Blackwater Woods

Look, the trees
are turning
their own bodies into pillars
of light,
are giving off the rich
fragrance of cinnamon
and fulfillment,
the long tapers
of cattails
are bursting and floating away over
the blue shoulders
of the ponds,
and every pond,
no matter what its

name is, is
nameless now.
Every year
everything
I have ever learned
in my lifetime
leads back to this: the fires
and the black river of loss
whose other side
is salvation,
whose meaning
none of us will ever know.
To live in this world
you must be able
to do three things:
to love what is mortal;
to hold it
against your bones knowing
your own life depends on it;
and, when the time comes to let it go,
to let it go.

FOR FOLLOW UP

To take this session a bit further, consider having a conversation with one other person about your beliefs, values and how they influence your end of life wishes. Here are some additional resources to support you.

Article: Review the Conversation Starter Kit from The Conversation Project. It provides questions and hints for having a conversation with loved ones.

<http://theconversationproject.org/starter-kit/intro/>

Movie: *The Bucket List*, starring Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman coming to terms with their lives. Available to stream on Netflix.

Video: This time, the TED talk video is '*Before I die I want to...*'.

http://www.ted.com/playlists/241/new_ways_to_think_about_death

Make any notes after reading and viewing below so you have them for next week.

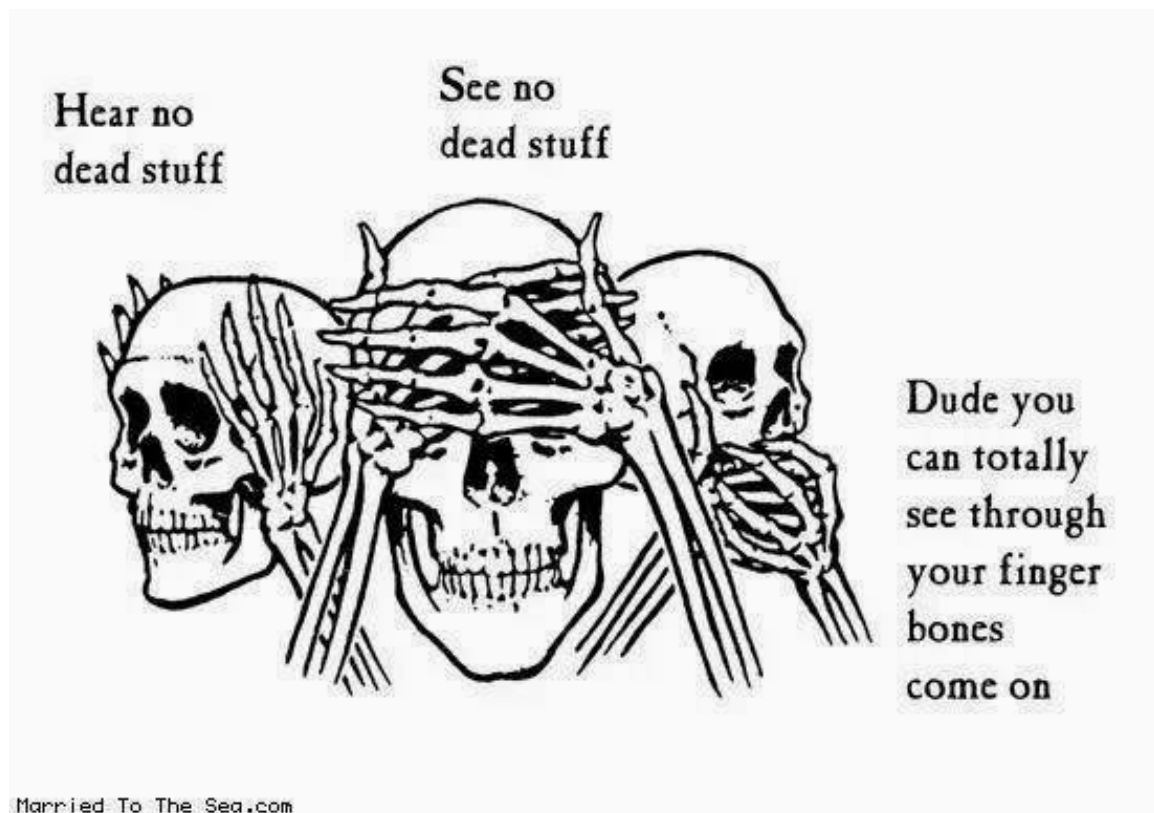
CLOSING

To close the session for this week, please answer the following question:

If you got to write the story of the world, what is one thing you would change about the way we die today?

“For human beings, life is meaningful because it is a story... And in stories, endings matter.”

Being Mortal, Atul Gawande



SESSION THREE:

LIVING WELL, DYING WELL

INTRODUCTION

Let's begin by bringing our attention into the room, into this circle, here now. You might close your eyes, put your feet flat on the floor, settle into your chair, put your hands on your thighs... and take three deep breaths. As you breathe, please bring your awareness down into your belly as it expands and contracts with each breath. You will notice that just bringing your attention down into your body tends to help you relax, to release any tensions you have brought with you. You might soften your eyes, relax your jaw, drop your shoulders. Do whatever you need to in order to feel present and centered here now.

As you open your eyes and come into our shared space, let's take a moment to honour where we are in our lives and capacities, to feel the joys and sorrows we bring with us, the fears and hopes. Let's acknowledge them and put them aside for the next couple of hours.

CHECK-IN

Please check in by answering this question: What is one idea, insight, reflection, emotion you've had since our last session?

"The truth is, dying is a developmental phase in our life cycle."

Living Fully Dying Well, E Bastian & T. Staley, p. 9

CONTEMPLATING OUR PRIORITIES MEDITATION

Our artful journey this time is a guided meditation in which we can explore our priorities given that death may come at any moment. In order to die feeling we have lived our lives fully, we must focus on the things that are important to us now.

Let's begin with a poem from Dawna Markova as she writes about the way she wants to live her life.

Wide Open

I will not die an unlived life.
I will not live in fear
of falling or catching fire.
I choose to inhabit my days,
to allow my living to open me,
to make me less afraid,
more accessible,
to loosen my heart
until it becomes a wing,
a torch, a promise.
I choose to risk my significance;
to live so that which came to me as seed
goes to the next as blossom
and that which came to me as blossom,
goes on as fruit.

There are three parts to this exercise. First, I will read a meditation adapted from Joan Halifax's book *Being with Dying*. Simply relax and follow

my words wherever they lead you. You will have a few minutes in silence to journal about what arises for you. Then we will debrief as a group.

Let's begin by centering, settling in our seats, becoming aware of our breath, eyes closed, feet on the floor. Take several breaths as you scan through your body for any signs of tension – your eyes soft, your jaw dropped, your shoulders relaxed, your arms gently on your lap or your thighs, your belly rising and falling as you breathe, your legs at ease, your feet grounded on the earth. Feel your presence in your body, in the circle here in the room, and know that you are safe and peaceful.

Guided Meditation:

Death may come at any time. We may need to remind ourselves of our priorities in light of the fact that we don't know when our moment to die will come. Now, we have the opportunity to really set our priorities.

Let the posture settle. Breathe deep into the body.

Imagine you are an old person on your deathbed. Probably you have more wrinkles on your face, more stiffness in your limbs. Imagine your body is tired and frail, but you are smiling as you reflect on your life. Ask yourself:

- What would you like to have created by this stage of your life?
- What was most sustaining for you through your life?
- As you look around, what do you see and who is with you?
- What might you need to let go of now to create a sense of peace and joy as you die?

Now imagine you will die in one year. You will probably not look very different from the way you do right now.

- How might you spend your time left, with the thought you will lose your life in a year?
- How can you be tomorrow to realize the best death possible?

Imagine you will die in one month.

- What would you change in your daily life?
- What might you do so you won't leave so many problems behind?
- What relationships need to be addressed?
- From whom do you need to ask forgiveness?
- Who do you need to forgive?
- What qualities in yourself do you want to nurture at this time?
- What can you do tomorrow to support a peaceful death?

Now imagine you will die next week.

- Who do you want around you, to share these last moments of your life?
- Who do you need to talk to about how you want to die and what should happen with your body?
- To whom do you want to express your deepest love and gratitude this week?

You go to bed tonight as usual. As you are falling asleep, you realize you are going to die.

- What has been the biggest gift you have received in this life?
- With whom do you want to share your love for the last time?

Now take this love and thankfulness and go back to your breath. Gather this meditation in your heart and mind and experience its essence.

Journaling:

In silence, write anything you want to remember or want to share with another.

As you think about your experience with the guided meditation, please consider these questions:

- How was that exercise for you?
- What insights did you receive about your priorities?
- What surprised you?
- What actions might you take to live more fully?

Group Discussion:

As you listen to the different experiences, make any additional notes to return to later.

**“So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness
the dancing.”**

T. S. Eliot

ONE EXAMPLE: THE DHARMA BOX

One example you might act on as you consider your priorities for living fully is the dharma box, a Buddhist tradition of preparing for dying. The dharma box is a physical box in which you put everything you would like others to know and to do about your end of life priorities. It becomes a holding environment for your dying and can include any number of items associated with your end of life, such as:

- Where you prefer to be and who you would like to have present
- Ritual items, poems and music, photos and art, candles, flowers, a favourite scarf or wrap you would like to wear
- Gifts for family and friends, of jewelry or treasures you want to pass on
- Legal documents and personal/financial information, a final message, instructions for family and friends
- Your wishes for your body – burial, cremation, donation – and instructions for a memorial celebration
- Letters of appreciation, your obituary and eulogy.

YOUR LIFE STORY IN SIX WORDS

Someone once challenged Ernest Hemingway to write a story in six words. He is famous for his poignant response: "For Sale: Baby shoes, never worn." Smith Books has built on this challenge in the Six Word Memoir Project where beginning in 2006 they asked people to tell their life story in six words. You can see some of the results on their website (<http://www.smithmag.net/sixwordbook/about/>) and in their books, on t-shirts, in the media and so on. Their simple question: "Can you tell your life story in six words?"

Here are a few more examples drawn from Larry Smith's book *Not Quite What I was Planning*:

From the disappointed: "Coulda, shoulda, woulda: a regretful life," to the really satisfied: "I travelled each and every highway."

Some could become new sayings, like: "Time heals all wounds? Not quite." Or how about? "Thought long and hard. Got migraine."

Many are from people who are summing up a life well lived. From: "I'm not afraid of anything anymore," to: "I wouldn't change it a bit."

Take a moment to think about your six-word life story, drawing on our meditations. How would you sum up the most important aspects of your life? Write at least one six-word life story to share with the group for our check out.

FOR FOLLOW UP

Here are a few items for you to consider:

- Take action on your Dharma Box
- Sign up for Nic Askew's weekly portraits and watch one that appeals to you – nicaskew.com
- Look at the 'ObitKit' for ideas – www.obitkit.com
- Visit NHS Choices for personal planning and resources for completing and registering your end of life wishes in Britain.

Interview: Rabbi Zalman and Dr. Kanniganti speak about the hero's journey and mortality – 22 minutes - <https://vimeo.com/82503198>

Movie: *Extremis*, a 23 minute look at an ICU, available to stream on Netflix.

Video: This time the TED talk video is *Prepare for a good end of life*:
http://www.ted.com/playlists/241/new_ways_to_think_about_death

Make any notes after viewing below so you have them for next week.

CLOSING

To close the session for this week, please read your six-word life story.

“I feel the horizon of dying may seem really small when we are going through it, but it wraps around the Milky Way and takes us home to the boundlessness that we really are.”

Being with Dying, Joan Halifax, p. 138

SESSION FOUR: THE AFTERLIFE AND GRIEVING

INTRODUCTION

Let's begin by bringing our attention into the room, into this circle, here now. You might close your eyes, put your feet flat on the floor, settle into your chair, put your hands on your thighs... and take three deep breaths. As you breathe, please bring your awareness down into your belly as it expands and contracts with each breath. You will notice that just bringing your attention down into your body tends to help you relax, to release any tensions you have brought with you. You might soften your eyes, relax your jaw, drop your shoulders. Do whatever you need to in order to feel present and centered here now.

As you open your eyes and come into our shared space, let's take a moment to become aware of how tender our hearts can be when confronting death and grieving. Let's acknowledge the courage required to face life's losses.

CHECK-IN

Let's check in by answering this question around the circle: What is one reflection you have from being in this course so far? How are you doing?

"Death is not extinguishing the light, it is only putting out the lamp because dawn has come."

Rabindranath Tagore

THOUGHTS ABOUT THE AFTERLIFE

In this section, we will share some perspectives on the afterlife through deep listening and speaking from the heart. We will have a reflective time and express ourselves through poetry.

We know throughout history the acceptance of life after death was expressed in art and architecture in examples such as the Egyptian pyramids, the Mayan temples, the Chinese terra cotta warriors, the Indian Taj Mahal, and the Haida mortuary poles. The Tibetan 'Book of the Dead' had detailed instructions for death and reincarnation. And the European 'Ars Moriendi' shaped life for centuries with death ever-present in literature, art and music. It was said that death was the 'great equalizer' bringing rich and poor together in a final dance of death and rebirth.

In modern times, the reliance on science has brought a radical shift to the material, tangible and measurable aspects of dying. If we can't see it or measure it, the afterlife must not exist. Our technological determinism has trumped spirituality, so that religious belief is now something we outgrow. "God is dead" is the slogan of the modernists. We have atheism, fundamentalism, nihilism as alternatives. So there is little support for an afterlife; it is preferable to deny it. If we don't recognize it or talk about it, perhaps we can avoid the topic altogether.

However, there has more recently been a rebirth of spirituality and interest in what's next in consciousness studies, brain science, evolutionary and cosmological research that links us to the universe beyond space and time. Near-death experiences tell us of unity, transcendence and numinosity after death. There has been a burgeoning interest in meditation, yoga and other means of quieting our chaotic minds and busy lives to connect us to the spiritual realm in life as well as death.

What are your thoughts about the afterlife? Please share one or two word associations you make when you hear the word 'afterlife'.

A REFLECTIVE EXERCISE

This reading comes from David Whyte's *Consolations* and the chapter is titled *Solace*. As it is read, moving around the circle, relax into your chair and attend to your breathing. As you listen to the words, feel what arises in your body and heart. When we complete the reading, we will have a walking meditation in silence where you will align your steps with your breath, either alone or with a partner.

When we finish, please in silence reflect on your feelings and write a three-line Haiku (roughly 5 – 7 – 5 syllables) to express your thoughts. Haiku poems date from 9th century Japan to the present day. Haiku is more than a type of poem; it is a way of looking at the physical world and seeing something deeper, like the very nature of existence. Here is an example from Basho Matsuo in the 1600s:

An old silent pond..
A frog jumps into the pond,
Splash! Silence again.

Solace

"Solace is the art of asking the beautiful question, of ourselves, of our world or of one another, in fiercely difficult and un-beautiful moments. Solace is what we must look for when the mind cannot bear the pain, the loss or the suffering that eventually touches every life and every endeavor; when longing does not come to fruition in a form we can recognize, when people we know and love disappear, when hope must take a different form than the one we have shaped for it.

Solace is the beautiful, imaginative home we made where disappointment can go to be rehabilitated. When life does not in any way add up, we must turn to the part of us that has never wanted a life of simple calculation. Solace is found in allowing the body's innate wisdom to come to the fore, the part of us that already knows it is mortal and must take its leave like everything else, and leading us, when the mind cannot bear what it is seeing or hearing, to the birdsong in the tree above our heads, even as we are being told of a death, each note an essence of morning and of mourning; of the current of a life moving on, but somehow, also, and most beautifully, carrying, bearing, and even celebrating the life we have just lost.

A life we could not see or appreciate until it was taken from us. To be consoled is to be invited onto the terrible ground of beauty upon which our inevitable disappearance stands, to a voice that does not soothe falsely, but touches the epicenter of our pain or articulates the essence of our loss, and then emancipates us into both life and death as an equal birthright.

Solace is not an evasion, nor a cure for our suffering, nor a made up state of mind. Solace is a direct seeing and participation; a celebration of the beautiful coming and going, appearance and disappearance of which we have always been a part. Solace is not meant to be an answer but an invitation, through the door of pain and difficulty to the depth of suffering and simultaneous beauty in the world that the strategic mind by itself cannot grasp nor make sense of.

To look for solace is to learn to ask fiercer and more exquisitely pointed questions, questions that reshape our identities and our bodies and our relation to others. Standing in loss but not overwhelmed by it, we become useful and generous and compassionate and even amusing companions for others. But solace also asks us very direct and forceful questions.

Firstly, how will you bear the inevitable that is coming to you? And how will you endure it through the years? And above all, how will you shape a life equal to and as beautiful and as astonishing as a world that can birth you, bring you into the light and then just as you are beginning to understand it, take you away?" (p.217 - 219)

Walking Meditation:

Walking meditation is a practice where we bring the mind, breath, and body together.

Please stand and come into a relaxed posture, knees slightly bent, pelvis tilted forward, eyes softened and open. We can fold our hands together at the waist, and let the body settle in the same way we do in sitting meditation. The shoulders are soft, the face relaxed, the spine straight and alive, and the breath deep in the body.

And then we take a step.

We begin by inhaling and gently stepping with our left foot. When the foot touches the ground, we might be on our exhale. We just let our attention sink with the breath into the foot, and feel solid and present as we complete our exhalation. In the gap before the next inhalation, we might pause and allow a feeling of letting go.

On our next inhalation, we step with the right foot. We can pay close attention to the sensation of our heel touching the floor, then the ball of our foot, and then our toes. This is the practice of **one breath, one step**.

We can walk slower or faster as long as the structure of the walking is normal. For example, if we are doing a very slow walking meditation, we just lift the heel off the floor but keep the ball of the foot rooted until we have completed our breath cycle.

You might try taking two steps on the inhale and three steps on the exhale. Find the number of steps to a breath that works for you.

Vietnamese teacher Thich Nhat Hanh encourages his students to use verses with walking meditation. You might repeat “One breath, one step.” You might also make up an appropriate verse, such as, “I am grateful (one step) for my life (one step).”

Take a meditative walk. Please remain in silence to allow your reflections to integrate. You may sit whenever you feel complete.

Take a moment to integrate your experience and then write your haiku here:

PARTNER SHARING

Find a partner, preferably someone you have not worked with before, and share your views on the afterlife and the loss that comes with it. Take 5 minutes each and listen for the bell to know when to switch. Remember to listen openly and deeply; this is sacred ground.

GRIEF AND CHANGE FOR THOSE LEFT BEHIND

In the reading, David Whyte suggests solace is an invitation to shape our lives knowing that change and loss comes to every life and will come to each of us. So how do we manage our grief? How do we move through it and learn from it so we live fuller lives?

Alan Wolfelt talks about the five myths of grief and mourning. He says these myths may seem harmless but can inhibit our healing after loss. Let's explore these five myths to see which ones we may believe to be true.

Myth #1: Grief and mourning are the same experience.

Grief and mourning are actually two different experiences. Grief describes the internal thoughts and feelings we have when someone dear to us dies. Mourning is the external expression of our grief with others. We need both to recover from loss. In our culture, we tend to grieve on our own, thinking we should "carry on" rather than expressing our grief outwardly.

Myth #2: There is a predictable orderly progression to grief.

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross studied dying and popularized the idea of stages of grief. However they were never intended to be taken literally or interpreted as sequential. In fact, the grief process is unique to each individual and not as simple as moving through a number of stages. Grief is neither neat nor orderly.

Myth #3: Move away from grief and mourning rather than toward it.

In our culture, we tend to deny or repress our grief, believing that we should "get over it" and get on with life. Social mores encourage us to overcome grief rather than to express it. We are given too short a time to mourn our loss and return to normal, resulting in internal anxiety and confusion rather than healing.

Myth #4: Tears are a sign of weakness

Tears are nature's way of releasing inner tension. They make us feel better, emotionally and physically. However, we are often encouraged to "dry our tears" - they are seen as a weakness. This is sometimes due to a sense of helplessness on the part of family, friends and caregivers. Crying is the work of mourning and needs to be allowed.

Myth #5: The goal is to “get over” your grief

We do not recover or get over our grief. The loss of a loved one changes us forever. Rather, we slowly become reconciled to the absence of the person and are able to integrate the new reality into our lives. Over time, the intensity of the loss softens and we accept it as part of life. We are able to move forward with renewed confidence in the future.

The grief and mourning process can be applied to the loss of a loved one, or to any major trauma or life change such as the loss of a job, the end of a relationship, the onset of a disease, etc. We can even suffer ‘anticipatory grief’ for our own dying or the imagined losses that may be in our future. Like death, grief unites us all.

A REFLECTION ON GRIEF

Take out photos of someone you were close to who has died. Feel the sadness and grief of the loss. Bring up old events and memories associated with that person. Share them with someone who also loved the person. Feel the pain of the grief. Sit with it silently without any distractions. Feel the bittersweet quality of grief. Do not try to understand or analyze it in any way. Just feel grief for what it is, and let it be.

Let’s read Gwen Flowers’ take on her experience with grief over the loss of a loved one:

Grief

I had my own notion of grief
I thought it was a sad time
That followed the death of someone you love.
And you had to push through it
To get to the other side.
But I’m learning there is no other side

There is no pushing through,
But rather, there is absorption,
Adjustment, acceptance.
And grief is not something that you complete.
But rather you endure.
Grief is not a task to finish,
And move on,
But an element of yourself—
An alteration of your being.
A new way of seeing,
A new definition of self.

FOR FOLLOW UP

Here are a few items for you to consider:

As a conversation starter, have a look at: www.deathoverdinner.org

Article: No Regrets: Living with dying, at:

<http://www.dailygood.org/story/965/no-regrets-living-with-dying-kitty-edwards/>

Movie: *I'll Be Me*, the story of Glen Campbell's good bye tour during his battle with Alzheimer's, available on Netflix.

Video: This time the TED talk video is *We need a heroic narrative for death*:

http://www.ted.com/playlists/241/new_ways_to_think_about_death

Make any notes after viewing below so you have them for next week.

SHARING INTO THE CIRCLE AS WE END

Please share your poetry, your insights, your surprises, your questions, your takeaways from this session.

“Your consciousness is not your consciousness. It is the manifestation of the longing of the cosmos for itself. It comes to you through you but not from you.”

The Immortal Mind, Irvin Laszlo

SESSION FIVE: THE PRACTICALITIES

INTRODUCTION

Let's begin by bringing our attention into the room, into this circle, here now. You might close your eyes, put your feet flat on the floor, settle into your chair, put your hands on your thighs... and take three deep breaths. As you breathe, please bring your awareness down into your belly as it expands and contracts with each breath. You will notice that just bringing your attention down into your body tends to help you relax, to release any tensions you have brought with you. You might soften your eyes, relax your jaw, drop your shoulders. Do whatever you need to in order to feel present and centered here now.

As you open your eyes and come into our shared space, let's take a moment to become aware of our courage in being here, in showing up with our hearts open to all that living and dying have to offer.

CHECK-IN

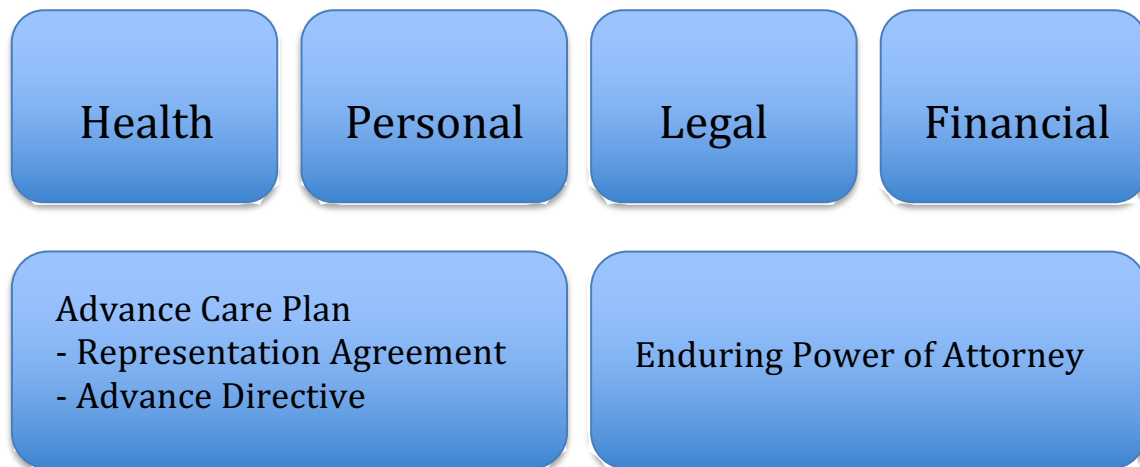
Let's check in by answering this question around the circle: What is one question you have with regard to the practicalities of dying?

"Planting the seeds of kindness, love, compassion, and joy helps us ride the waves of change without drowning."

Being with Dying, Joan Halifax, p. 44

WE'RE RESURRECTED

So far, we've died, experienced the afterlife, grieved our losses, and now we're back! This session, with our new understandings and perspectives, we need to get down to work. We will discuss practical preparations for dying in the way you wish.



As shown above, there are four areas in which personal planning is required. End of Life or Personal Planning involves making arrangements in case you need help managing your affairs during your lifetime due to an illness, injury, or disability. Personal planning differs from estate planning, which is about making arrangements for after your death and is covered in your will.

Here, we are mostly concerned with having the legal documents required in case at some future point we become mentally incapable of making decisions on our own. A Representation Agreement assigns someone to make decisions on your behalf. An Advance Directive sets out your wishes in health and personal care areas. For legal and financial matters, an Enduring Power of Attorney is needed. You can find these documents online for your particular province or region.

Completing your arrangements is not difficult but will require time and attention to detail. For example, you will need to know who you wish to represent you and be sure they understand and are willing to act on your behalf. You will also need to decide specifically the kinds of treatments and care you want if you are not able to decide for yourself. It is much easier for your caregivers and reassuring for you if these decisions are made and communicated while you are fully able. Please spend some time becoming familiar with the various personal planning documents and then completing them.

You may wish to partner up with another person to support each other through the process or get a coach who knows the territory to walk it with you.

PUTTING OUR AFFAIRS IN ORDER

Here are the four recommended documents for healthy adults. A notary is required for the first two documents and may be helpful with the Advance Directive as well to be sure you have the appropriate level of detail.

- A Will
- An Enduring Power of Attorney
- A Representation Agreement
- An Advance Directive

It is advisable to create a sheet listing all your personal documents and where they can be found. Today, many of our documents are stored on our computers – be sure you have a list of passwords so your representatives can access what is stored on your computer.

Remember the Dharma Box? It is a great place to store all your information in one place with any additional documents and wishes for your end of life

care. It is also often recommended to have your Representation Agreement and your Advance Directive in your freezer for easy access.

Record any questions you want to ask or follow up items before we move on.

Heidi Stephenson wrote this poem as she reflected on her experience of a lengthy surgery and recovery from a brain tumor (dyingmatters.org).

Before My Last Breath

I will breathe in...

The stillness of the heron, the calm of the nesting swan.

I will breathe out...

This frenzied, human world, the yoke of responsibility.

I will breathe in...

The blessing of the speedwell, the shy hope of the forget-me-not.

I will breathe out...

The could haves and the should haves, the need to leave a legacy.

I will breathe in...

The warm, muddy nose in my lap, these random acts of generosity.

I will breathe out...

Doubt and confusion, all thoughts of what might have been.

I will breathe in...

The healing of the beech grove, my delicate friendship with the hart.

I will breathe out...

The sadness of parting, my ancient fear of the dark.

I will breathe in...

The beckoning light, the freedom of the field.

I will breathe out...

Regrets about not doing more, serving more, bearing more witness.

I will breathe in...

The relief of truth, told and heard, the forgiveness of my family.

I will breathe out...

The frozen ice of cut-offs now long gone; of cold spells out of reach.

I will breathe out...

GO WISH CARDSORT

One of the most difficult aspects of getting our affairs in order is knowing what we really want, what we value and how we want to be treated. This exercise will help with thinking through some of those choices.

Complete the 'GO WISH' sort and choose your top ten priority wishes. Then, with these in mind, imagine the moment of your death and draw a picture of what you would like to see. Consider time, place, kind of death, with whom, their feelings and actions, your feelings and sense of self.

Please also pay attention to how you feel in your body and mind as you make your drawing. And remember, this is intended to be an impression – it's NOT a drawing contest.

GO WISH SORT

Wishes for My Care	Very Important	Top Ten
1. To be free from pain		
2. To be free from anxiety		
3. Not being short of breath		
4. To be kept clean		
5. To have human touch		
6. To have my financial affairs in order		
7. To have my family prepared for my death		
8. To die in a quiet room		
9. To know how my body will change		
10. To feel that my life is complete		
11. To say goodbye to important people in my life and be prepared to go		
12. To remember personal accomplishments		
13. Take care of unfinished business with family/friends		
14. To prevent arguments or misunderstandings by making sure my family knows what I want		
15. An advocate who knows my values and priorities		
16. To be treated the way I want		
17. To maintain my dignity		
18. To keep my sense of humour		
19. To trust a doctor who knows me as a whole person		
20. To have close friends near, maybe reading to me		
21. Not dying alone		
22. To have someone who will listen to me		
23. To be totally alive while I'm dying		
24. To have a nurse I feel comfortable with		
25. To be mentally aware of all dimensions		
26. To have my funeral arrangements made		

Wishes for My Care	Very Important	Top Ten
27. Not being a burden to my family		
28. To share my dying to help others to be spiritually realized		
29. To be at peace		
30. To pray		
31. Not being connected to machines		
32. To be able to talk about what scares me		
33. To meet with clergy or chaplain		
34. To be able to talk about what death means		
35. To have my family with me		
36. To be surrounded by beauty – nature, flowers, music		
37. Other...		

PARTNER SHARING

In pairs or threes, share your drawing and its meanings. You may also refer to your top ten wishes and how they influenced your thoughts. When you have finished describing your drawing, ask these questions of each other:

- What is one thing you might do to move toward your vision?
- What is similar and different about the drawings and the experiences as you share?

GROUP DISCUSSION

Please share with the whole group your feelings as you completed this exercise, and any insights or questions you have at this point.

The heart of the matter is to think about what you want while you can, to write it down as specifically as possible, and to share it with your loved ones so they are relieved of the burden of choosing for you.



FOR FOLLOW UP

Please consider taking some time to study the personal planning resources at:

http://www.dyingwithdignity.ca/download_your_advance_care_planning_kit and to make a list of 'to do's' to complete your documents. If you haven't already had conversations with your loved ones, make a plan to begin that process with a 'what by when' accountability. Share that commitment with at least one other person so they can hold you accountable. You can refer back to The Conversation Starter Kit at <http://theconversationproject.org/starter-kit/intro/> if you need to.

Our next session will be the last one and we shall create a vision board to answer the question: How then shall we live? There is an example shown above. You may want to include any notes, poems, etc. from our work you have created.

Article: *What Good is Thinking About Death?* by Julie Beck in Atlantic explores the benefits of engaging with dying rather than denying it.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2015/05/what-good-is-thinking-about-death/394151/>

Movie: *Quartet*, starring Maggie Smith about aging and identity. Available on Netflix.

Video: This time, the TED talk video is 'Let's talk about dying':
http://www.ted.com/playlists/241/new_ways_to_think_about_death

Make any notes after reading and viewing below so you have them for next week.

CLOSING

To close this session, please answer the following question: What is one practical step you will take as a result of being here?

"You matter because you are you, and you matter until the last moment of your life."

Dame Cicely Saunders
Founder of the Hospice Movement

SESSION SIX:

A PLAN FOR LIVING AND DYING

INTRODUCTION

Let's begin by bringing our attention into the room, into this circle, here now. You might close your eyes, put your feet flat on the floor, settle into your chair, put your hands on your thighs... and take three deep breaths. As you breathe, please bring your awareness down into your belly as it expands and contracts with each breath. You will notice that just bringing your attention down into your body tends to help you relax, to release any tensions you have brought with you. You might soften your eyes, relax your jaw, drop your shoulders. Do whatever you need to in order to feel present and centered here now.

As you open your eyes and come into our shared space, let's take a moment to acknowledge each other and the challenging journey we've been on together. This is difficult territory for the mind, and must be approached with a compassionate heart. I want to thank you for joining me and appreciate you for your courage and candor in our discussions.

CHECK-IN

Remind us (and yourself) of your original intention when we began our first session. Where are you now? What do you need to go forward?

"We're all just walking each other home."

The Grace in Aging, Kathleen Dowling Singh, p. 227

LOOKING BACK

Here is an overview of where we have been, looking at the headline for each of our sessions.

1. Beginning – the what and why; our intentions
2. Dying through the ages and today; our own views
3. Dying well; how it informs our life
4. Afterlife and Grieving; our perceptions about what's next; dealing with loss
5. The practicalities; preparing for the inevitable
6. And now, our living dying plan – how to live fully now.

With a partner, do a review of the sessions, talking through your reflections on them from this point in time. What do you remember about each session? What has remained with you as an insight about you or your loved ones?

You might also talk about the movies and videos we watched or the articles you read and how they struck you. Were these resources useful to you? What intentions do you have for the other follow up resources?

Take 15 minutes total for the discussion.

LOOKING FORWARD

Let's imagine we've been on a heroic journey. We set out on a quest to explore the art of dying because we felt something was missing in our understanding or experience. We have faced challenges along the way and been given some guidance and support. We are now arriving back home where we began, bringing with us the gift of seeing it with new eyes.

“The heroic journey describes nothing less than the experiential territory that an individual must traverse during times of profound transformation.”

The Ultimate Journey, Stan Grof, p 46

Take five minutes in silence to consider the following questions and make some notes.

What are my feelings now about ‘dying to live’?

How will I live now given what I have learned?

What strengths in myself and others will I need?

What preparations do I need to be making?

YOUR ANSWERS AS A STORYBOARD

On a piece of heavy paper, using whatever materials appeal to you, or none at all, express your unique vision, your new story of living and dying. You can cut pictures, words or phrases out of magazines. You can use felt pens to write or draw. You can attach some notes or sayings that appeal to you.

Just feel your way into it, without overthinking what it might look like. Remember, first guess, best guess... You have 20 minutes to create your storyboard.

SHARE YOUR STORYBOARD

As a group or with a partner, share what you have created as your storyboard. What new story are you telling?

As a listener, pay close attention to what is being said and be a supporter of the new vision. Please ask questions for clarification but no advice or judgement of what is presented to you.

Take five minutes each to tell your new stories and discuss them. Make any notes on your insights as you have talked through your storyboard.

ONGOING POSSIBILITIES

Here are some possibilities for continuing to reap the benefits of your work here during our sessions.

- Consider continuing to meet with a partner to support each other in changes you want to make.
- Create a daily practice, anything that grounds you in living fully and well.
- Do some reading based on the bibliography for the course.
- Choose a topic that is particularly interesting to you and do further research on it so you feel you have a good understanding of the subject. You can find resources on our website at www.dyingtolive.ca.
- Take some steps to complete your end of life planning.
- Have a reunion in six months to check in on your progress.
- Please give me feedback so we can improve for future sessions (you'll find a form at the back of this workbook).

ENDING: A LITTLE DEATH

Since we've been speaking of courage, here are a few words on the subject from poet David Whyte in his book *Consolations*:

"Courage is the measure of our heartfelt participation with life, with another, with a community, a work; a future. To be courageous is not necessarily to go anywhere or do anything except to make conscious those things we already feel deeply and then to live through the unending vulnerabilities of those consequences. To be courageous is to seat our feelings deeply in the body and in the world: to live up to and into the necessities of relationships that often already exist, with things we find we

already care deeply about: with a person, a future, a possibility in society, or with an unknown that begs us on and always has begged us on. To be courageous is to stay close to the way we are inside.

The French philosopher Camus used to tell himself quietly to *live to the point of tears*, not as a call for maudlin sentimentality, but as an invitation to the deep privilege of belonging and the way belonging affects us, shapes us and breaks our heart at a fundamental level. It is a fundamental dynamic of human incarnation to be moved by what we feel, as if surprised by the actuality and privilege of love and affection and its possible loss. Courage is what love looks like when tested by the simple everyday necessities of being alive.” p. 39 - 40

Let’s end our session by singing along with Barbara MacAfee and her wonderful chant, *When You Were Born, You Cried*.

<https://search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?p=barbara+mcafee+when+you+were+born&ei=UTF-8&hspart=mozilla&hsimp=yhs-001>.

CLOSING

As our final check-out, please let’s honour each other for sharing this journey. Each person states: “My name is _____. The group then responds: “Sister _____, thank you for your presence.”

“Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?”

New and Selected Poems, Mary Oliver

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Gail Sheehy, *Passages in Caregiving: Turning Chaos into Confidence.*

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Rodney Smith, *Lessons from the Dying.*

David Whyte, *Consolations: The solace, nourishment and underlying meaning of everyday words.*

Irvin Yalom, *Staring at the Sun: Overcoming the terror of death.*

THE AUTHOR

SUSAN WRIGHT is a semi-retired Canadian who spends the winter in Mexico. She is a teacher, coach, facilitator, writer and scholar. She is President of The Coaching Project specializing in human development through coaching and facilitation, leadership development and adult education. She has a Doctorate in Education and is a certified Conscious Aging facilitator. Her current interests include the social ecology of dying, the evolution of consciousness, dark night transitions in later life, and exploring complexity and depth through an integral lens. Susan is an artist, a granny and a world traveller.



COURSE EVALUATION

Please rate the following areas using the scale below:

E = Excellent **G** = Good **A** = Average **F** = Fair **P** = Poor

1. Your overall workshop experience
2. The degree to which the material was relevant and useful
3. Opportunities to ask questions and make comments
4. Presenter knowledge of the subject matter
5. Presenter ability to involve the participants

What did you like best about the workshop?

What do you think could be improved in this workshop?

Other comments:
