

SPIRITUALITY & LOSS A GOOD DEATH?

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hospicemalta
care | compassion | dignity



SPIRITUALITY & LOSS: A GOOD DEATH?

It is important to reflect calmly again and again that death is real and comes without warning.

(Sogyal Rinpoche)

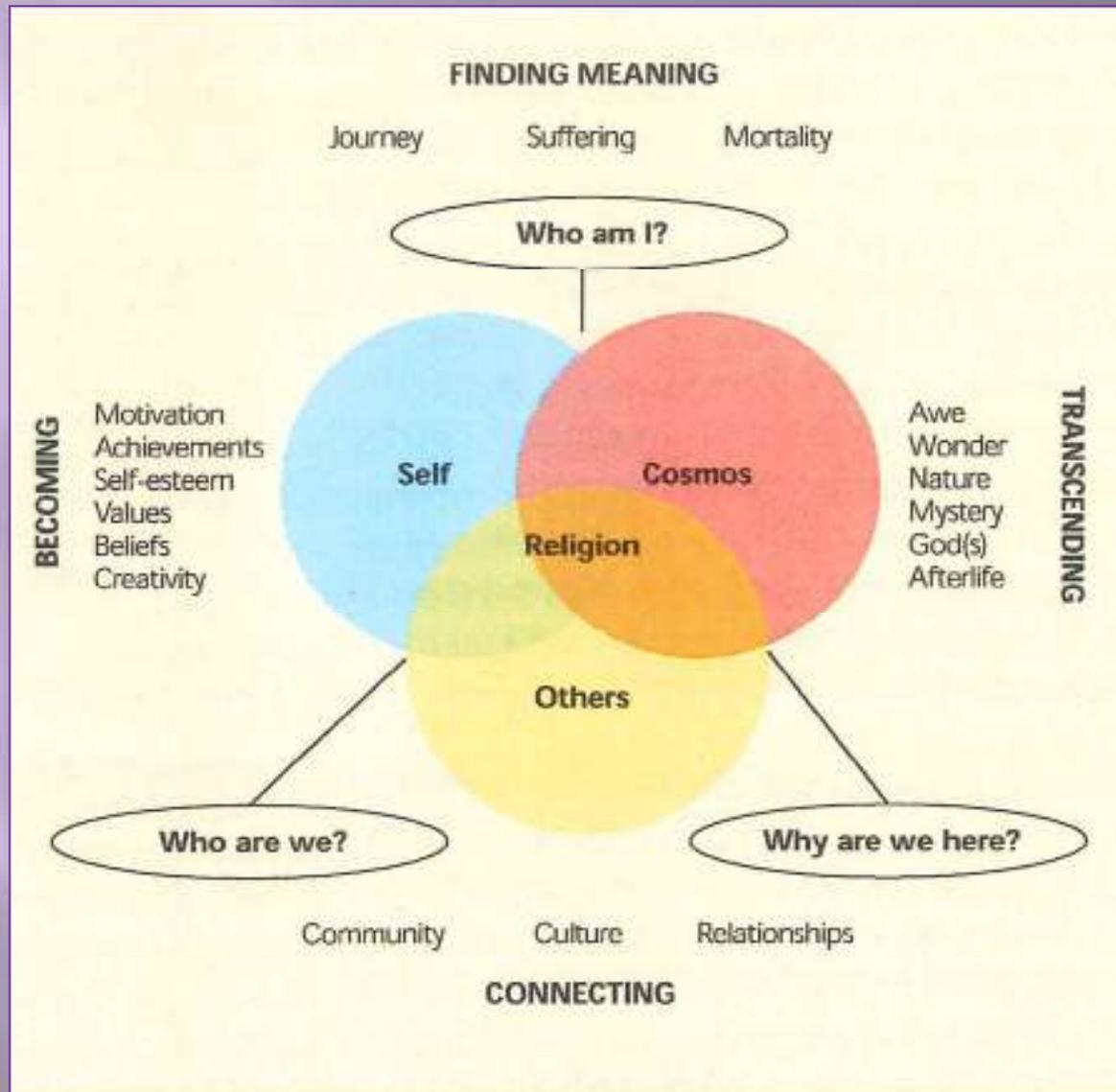
Death takes us out of time, into the unknown.

(Kennedy Thom)

Living in the face of dying. *(Simon Bailey)*

Paradoxically, the journey into death is sometimes considered to be the ultimate vehicle for spiritual discovery. *(Michael Wright)*





An Inclusive Model of the Spiritual Domain



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Meaning...

Life is a journey...

Without meaning our journey loses a sense of direction or purpose or vision or motivation.



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Spirituality is the human concern for things that matter...

for **meaning, value** and **relationship**.

But more significantly...

for **ultimate** meaning, value and relationship.



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When a person is trying to find meaning within a particular experience they will look in many directions, starting with those things that have helped them make sense of life events in the past. To questions like:

Why me?

Why now?



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On the other hand, religions relate to a person's need to put into practice and express underlying spirituality

- Christian** a spirituality of goodness, love and forgiveness
- Islam:** the extinction of the self
- Judaism:** appreciation of the divine through the mundane
- Hinduism:** an awareness of the link between one's real self and the cosmic self
- Buddhism:** the cultivation of certain ethical dispositions



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Stages of dying (Kubler-Ross)

denial

anger

bargaining

depression

acceptance/resignation



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Multiple loss the dying patient experiences

loss of security

loss of physical functions

loss of body image

loss of power or strength

loss of independence

loss of self-esteem

loss of the respect of others

loss of future



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When alongside those who are dying:

We need to be emotionally and psychologically comfortable with dying and with those who are in the process of becoming bereaved.

We can risk being acceptable only when the other person senses that we have confronted our own fears about dying.

We must recognise that to deny any emotional connection with the dying person is to increase the psychological pain of his/her illness.



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To be fully alongside the person who is dying, I need to have asked myself the following questions:

- Who would *I* like to be at *my* side, to hold *me* as *I'm* dying?
- Who do *I* think would really miss *me*?
- What impression would *I* leave behind?
- What single word would give meaning to *my* life?
- What have *I* to put right before *I* die?



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And, again, to be fully alongside the person who is dying, I need to have asked myself:

- What relationship have I to put right before I die?
- Who have I to say thanks to before I die?
- From whom should I seek forgiveness?
- To Whom should I offer forgiveness?
- What would I like to achieve before I die?
- What kind of service would I ?
- Whom would I specifically ask?
- Whom would I not invite and why?



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If I am going to open a discussion about dying, the following questions might be helpful:

- Would you like to tell me about your illness?
- How ill do you believe you are?
- What have the doctors/nurses/other care team members/your family said about your illness
- What ideas or thoughts have you about those conversations?
- What do you feel or believe about illness?
- What do your partner/wife/husband/parents or other members of your family believe?
- What do you believe they know?



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People express themselves in different ways, but these are some common areas of concern:

- ❖ fear of loneliness, hopelessness, uncertainty, powerlessness, the unknown, insecurity, non-existence, rejection;
- ❖ fear of losing physical strength, energy, weight, body image, appearance, independence, physical and mental control, eyesight;
- ❖ fear of losing partner, family, friends, social environment, home, work - ultimately, life itself.



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Caring for the dying person includes caring for the partner, the family, and friends ~ encouraging them to:

accept the person behind the illness;

accept the medical/nursing/social/spiritual care in accordance with the person's wishes;

accept the person's wish on whether or not to continue with aggressive treatment or to let nature take its course;

accept the funeral service arrangements made by the deceased or the person(s) closest to him or her;



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Caring for the dying person includes caring for the partner, the family, and friends ~ encouraging them to:

remember that the young person's service is for celebrating his or her life - perhaps it will not be traditional;

accept the fact, however painful, of the dying person's goodbye;

accept the fact that many wish to die in silence, often alone, knowing that they are surrounded by love - or perhaps with only the most important person in his or her life present;

accept that the time of death is that person's 'now' for flowing into the beyond. It is important not to hold the person from going in his or her own time.



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A Charter of Rights for the Dying Person

- To be treated as a unique human being.
- To be treated as an equal.
- To be treated as an adult, not as a child.
- To participate in all decisions concerning my care.
- To be cared for by those qualified to do so.
- To be involved in my own care.
- To have all questions answered directly and truthfully.



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A Charter of Rights for the Dying Person

- To have the right to express emotions.
- To expect the carer to be a non-judgemental listener
- To be encouraged through the upholding of hope.
- To discuss, or not discuss, as I may choose, religion, spiritual or other experiences of dying.
- To die in the place of their own choosing.
- To have the body respected in accordance with their own wishes.
- To be treated with the dignity of love and hope.



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The different way people grieve can depend on:

The age of the person who has died, considered against their life-expectancy.

The existence of multiple stresses between family members and the deceased.

The social and economic changes resulting from the death.

The support available from social and other networks.

The nature of the relationship - whether secure or ambivalent, dependent or co-dependent.



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When with a dying person, we need to be aware of the transformational possibilities within the experience of dying. With such an awareness, we will then be able to:

- be a caring presence at whatever level is possible;
- listen attentively as an equal;
- touch gently, when appropriate;
- avoid all psychological or religious jargon;
- find out where the person is hurting;
- contact the dying person's faith practitioner when requested.



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What to be aware of when providing spiritual care:

- be** aware of the need to be an attentive listener who hears the whole person.
- be** prepared to honour the dignity of every person.
- be** able to offer the empathy of acceptance and hope.
- be** able to understand the 'Why?' arising from the anger and pain of the person who is being bereaved of the self.
- be** able to face objectively the ethical and moral questioning which may arise.
- be** aware of the issues of your own eventual bereavement and dying and be welcoming of it in due course.



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Dying as a rite of passage, involves three phases:

Separation begins when the ill person accepts the fact that he/she is now involved with a life challenging (terminal) illness. Also, those who are alongside are forced to recognise the beginning of a separation process, culminating in the person's death.

Transition means moving into the beyond for the person who has died and a disconnection for those who will mourn and grieve their loss.

Incorporation occurs when the bereaved partner, family and friends accept the end of their former relationship roles to the deceased and are able to reconnect with society.



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Life is full of rituals

Daily rituals - the morning constitutional, the journey to/from work, jogging or going to the gym, watching a regular TV programme.

Weekly rituals - sporting events, music or theatre, evening classes, religious worship.

Seasonal rituals - Christmas, Ede, Rosh Hashanah, holidays, spring and summer festivals.

Religious rituals - baptism, confirmation, bar or bat mitzvah, marriage, religious profession, ordination, consecration, funerals, memorial services.



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Death is the final stage of growth in this life.

There is not total death.

Only the bodies dies.

The self or spirit, or whatever you wish to label it, is eternal.

You may interpret this in any way that makes you comfortable.

(Elizabeth Kubler-Ross)



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Grazzi

