

Partners in Caring

End-of-life seminar for faith leaders

Role Play

Role Play Instructions:

The goal of the role play is to model an encounter between a spiritual care provider and a member of his/her congregation who has just learned that his death is nearing. It is best conducted in the center of the room, with the participants seated around the pair and with both players wearing microphones so that everyone can hear their exchange. The role play is designed to take about 20 minutes so that there is ample time for debriefing and Q&A after its conclusion.

This role play assumes that the congregant is known to the spiritual care provider.

Suggested questions:

- 1) So Alan, it's good to see you. It's been awhile since we've had a chance to speak privately. I'm wondering what's up?
(Here Alan shares that his doctors have told him his options for curative care have been exhausted.)
- 2) Does that feel accurate to you? Are you interested in exploring other options?
(Here he says the doctor's message aligns with how he's been feeling physically.)
- 3) That's a lot to take in, isn't it? So how are feeling about the news?
- 4) *(Affirm his feelings.)* I'm wondering how your family is handling this news?
(Perhaps they tell him they know he can win this battle.)
- 5) And how does that feel to you?
- 6) Have you shared with them how you're feeling about this?
(If not, you might encourage him to do so or offer to help him talk to them.)
- 7) So Alan, I want to ask you a couple of things about this. First off, I'm wondering if you've thought about how you'd like this to unfold.
(This introduces the very important message that he has choices and gets to how he envisions his death – where, with whom, awake or sedated, etc.)
- 8) I'm also wondering, how you want to spend the time you have? *(What's left unfinished?)*
- 9) And what would it take for you to feel as though your life is complete? That you've been able to tie up all the loose ends?
- 10) I'm also wondering if you've thought about who you want to support you as this unfolds?
- 11) And finally, I'm wondering what you're doing to take care of yourself?
(This might be meditating, praying, listening to music, spending time in his garden, and if he's doing the things you know make his heart sing. If not, remind him now's not the time to forgo those things.)
- 12) So I know our time has been short, and I expect you and I will continue our talks. But just for now, can you tell me what I might do for you in this moment?

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- 13) I'm sure this is raising faith questions for you, Alan, but our time now is very short. So I'd invite you to just be aware of what's coming up for you around your faith. Is it continuing to support and serve you as it has in the past, for example? And let's be sure to discuss this when we meet next.

In concluding, be sure to affirm his decision to come see you and make sure he understands you will be with him through his dying, that he's not going to do this alone.

(There are obviously many unasked questions. But this role play is merely setting the stage for all that will ensue.)