

Partners in Caring

End-of-life seminar for faith leaders

Opening Reflection

Opening Guided Meditation Remembering Exercise

Meditation Leader:

(Note to leaders: This meditation should be read at a measured pace that allows time for participants to fully settle into their hearts so they can feel safe to explore the memory the meditation evokes.)

Settle into your chair.

- Be comfortable
- Take a couple of deep breaths
- Close your eyes
- Breathe deeply
- Let your mind settle

Let your heart take you to a safe, comfortable place—a place where you know that you are completely safe.

- Maybe at the ocean
- In your favorite chair or in your bed
- In the lap of your mother
- In the arms of a lover
- In a tree house or on a mountain trail

Now from this place of safety and peace, allow the memory of an important death in your life come into your awareness.

Let it come gently and settle in.

(Pause)

It can be any kind of death.

- A friend
- A parishioner
- A spouse
- A parent
- A child
- A pet

Just let it enter gently and settle in.

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(Pause)

Now explore it more fully.

Remember how old you were.

- Where you were when you learned of the death?
- Who was with you?

And remember how you felt.

- Were you afraid?
- Angry?
- Bewildered?
- Anxious?
- Surprised?
- Overwhelmed?
- Or were you awed?
- Deeply moved?
- Stunned?
- Inspired?

Let the feelings enter your consciousness.
Just be with them.

(Pause)

Now very gently, pull your awareness back a bit.
Consider how this death has echoed in your life.

- What impact has it made?
- Has it changed you?
- Has it affected your sense of how the universe works?
- Has it influenced your faith?
- Has it changed your sense of yourself?
- Has it changed how you live in the world?
- The choices you make about how you spend your time and energy?

(Pause)

Now, please take a few deep breaths, open your eyes and breathe deeply again. We're going to talk about these death experiences in your small groups for a bit.

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Small Group Facilitator:

Questions for Discussion

- 1) How did you feel during this exercise?
- 2) Were you surprised by what came up?
- 3) Do you think about this death very often?
- 4) Does it arise when you work with those who are dying?
- 5) How does it impact your ability to work with those who are dying?
- 6) Is there anything you would like to do about this?

Meditation Leader:

Take Home Messages

- 1) We all have loss; it's a part of our humanness.
- 2) We need to acknowledge that our own personal experiences of death will deeply affect how we work with those who are dying.
- 3) We need to find healthy and skillful ways to process our own experiences of death so they don't impede our ability to care for our congregants.
- 4) We need to be able to get out of our way so we can be safe doing this work.

Now as we close, I'd like to invite you to close your eyes for a moment and return to that place of safety that lives in your heart.

Let the feelings that came up for you in this exercise just float to the surface. There's no need to hold on to them. Just let them float lightly in your consciousness. Just notice them. And then gently let them go.

So now, when you're ready, open your eyes and come back into this space, alert, awake, and safe.