

Spiritual Care Community of Practice

Reinventing Ritual, Narrative Presence, and the Spiritual Nature of the Grief Journey



Facilitator:

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Presenters:

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Sheila Atkinson, RP, MDiv

Date: December 13, 2023

Territorial Honouring

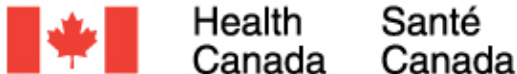


The Palliative Care ECHO Project

The Palliative Care ECHO Project is a 5-year national initiative to cultivate communities of practice and establish continuous professional development among health care providers across Canada who care for patients with life-limiting illness.

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The Palliative Care ECHO Project is supported by a financial contribution from Health Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Health Canada.



LEAP Core

- Interprofessional course that focuses on the essential competencies to provide a palliative care approach.
- Taught by local experts who are experienced palliative care clinicians and educators.
- Delivered online or in-person.
- Ideal for any health care professional (e.g., physician, nurse, pharmacist, social worker, etc.) who provides care for patients with life-threatening and progressive life-limiting illnesses.
- Accredited by the CFPC and Royal College.



Learn more about the course and topics covered by visiting

www.pallium.ca/course/leap-core

Overview of Sessions

Session #	Session Title	Date/ Time
Session 1	Introduction	June 28, 2023 from 1-2pm ET
Session 2	Supporting Existential Reflection and Meaning-Making Part 1	September 19, 2023 from 1-2pm ET
Session 3	Supporting Existential Reflection and Meaning-Making Part 2	October 25, 2023 from 1-2pm ET
Session 4	Spirituality of Grief and Bereavement	November 22, 2023 from 1-2pm ET
Session 5	Reinventing Ritual, Narrative Presence, and the Spiritual Nature of the Grief Journey	December 13, 2023 from 1-2pm ET

Welcome and Reminders

- Please introduce yourself in the chat!
- Your microphones are muted. There will be time during this session when you can unmute yourself for questions and discussion.
- You are welcome to use the chat function at any time to ask questions and add comments.
- Remember not to disclose any Personal Health Information (PHI) during the session.
- This session is being recorded and will be emailed to registrants within the next week.

Disclosure

Relationship with Financial Sponsors:

Pallium Canada

- Not-for-profit
- Funded by Health Canada

Disclosure

This program has received financial support from:

- Health Canada in the form of a contribution program
- Generates funds to support operations and R&D from Pallium Pocketbook sales and course registration Fees

Facilitator/ Presenters/Panelists:

Aliya Mamdeen: nothing to disclose

Sheila Atkinson: nothing to disclose

Oceanna Hall: nothing to disclose

Christine Enfield: nothing to disclose

Peter Barnes: nothing to disclose

Disclosure

Mitigating Potential Biases:

- The scientific planning committee had complete independent control over the development of course content

Introductions

Facilitator

Aliya Mamdeen

Program Delivery Officer, Pallium Canada

Presenters/Panelists:

Peter Barnes, D.Min, CCC, SEP

Psychospiritual Therapist

Spiritual Pathways, Private Practice. CASC/ACSS (certified)
CCPA (certified)

Oceanna Hall, M.Div., M.Ed., RCH

Spiritual Health Practitioner, Certified CASC Clinical
Specialist

End of Life, Palliative, MAiD and Bereavement
Spiritual Health Practitioner, Island Health Authority,
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Sheila Atkinson, RP, MDiv

Certified Spiritual Care Practitioner (CASC), Registered
Psychotherapist (CRPO),
Grief Support Coordinator, Pathways Grief Support
Program, Paediatric Advanced Care Team (PACT),
SickKids, Toronto, ON

Christine Enfield, M.Div.

Spiritual Health Practitioner, Tertiary Palliative Care Unit,
Covenant Health, Edmonton, Certified Spiritual Care
Practitioner (CASC/ACSS)

Session Learning Objectives

Upon completing the session, participants will be able to:

- Understand the place of ritual and ceremony in Palliative Care and Bereavement
- Listen for spiritual themes and provide narrative presence at End of Life
- Explore the spiritual nature of the grief journey

Reinventing Ritual, Narrative Presence, and the Spiritual Nature of the Grief Journey



The Spiritual Nature of the Grief Journey



Spirituality in Palliative Care and Bereavement

- We are all spiritual beings
- Death and loss and grief are spiritual experiences, often create a spiritual crisis
- People who are faced with loss often ask deep questions - for many this is the first time they have reflected on spiritual or existential questions.

Definition of Spirituality

“Spirituality is the aspect of humanity that refers to the way individuals seek and express meaning and purpose and the way they experience their connectedness to the moment, to self, to others, to nature, and to the significant or sacred.”

Geneva International Definition 2013

Supporting Existential Reflection and Meaning Making

- We support existential reflection and meaning making through words and listening.
- We can also support existential reflection and meaning making by helping people to create small symbolic acts that express and affirm their experience.

Reinventing Ritual



Ritual: Definition

A ritual is a sequence of activities involving gestures, words, actions, or revered objects.

Sometimes includes ceremonial elements like music, certain location, silence.

Ritual and Connection

Groups often use rituals in order to feel closer with others who are in the same group. When rituals are performed together, they can create a sense of community. This ability to create a sense of togetherness may be one of the most important parts of ritual.

Huston Smith

Reinventing Ritual

- Ritual is a natural instinct of humans from early times. A close one died, people piled stones or created monuments to mark the person, the place, the connection... developed elaborate rituals.
- We live in a time where there is less adherence to prescribed cultural or religious practices and therefore there is a loss of ritual, as we used to know it.
- Huge opportunity for us to reclaim, reinvent and recreate ritual and ceremony in new ways that reflect contemporary and often more secular spiritual meanings.

A few Benefits of Ritual

- Provides a sense of predictability in face of uncertainty and anxiety (order in chaos).
- Creates a stronger sense of connection with a loved one who has died.
- Creates a sense of control.
- Creates an experience of connectedness and community with others.
- Facilitates perspective, release, growth and movement in experience of dying or grieving.

How do I know what is right for them?

- Explore, reflect with them.
- Open creative possibilities.
- Ask them to help you understand their meanings.
- What holds everything together for you/your family? (love at the center of family, shared beliefs, shared values, nature, laughter, ...).
- Are there some important words that you need to have someone say when your person dies? (words of love, words of gratitude, words of sending, words of committing them into safe keeping, words of sending them on the journey to a next place).

Examples of Creative Ritual

- End of Life education with pediatric oncology nurses, reflective practices for processing grief.
- Parent Grief Group on Zoom - Closing reflection, shining our lights.
- Reflective words or reading at end of staff debrief/voicing space sessions.

Narrative Presence



Narrative is at the heart

- We listen to the story.
- We reflect the story back.
- But if we only reflect it back, sometimes people get stuck in the darkness.
- I'd like to share a few thoughts on how we can engage in their narrative, weaving some of the mindfulness attributes into our therapeutic work.

Judging/ Non-Judging

- Grieving parents can be hard on themselves
- “I should, I shouldn’t, I didn’t, I can’t, I’m not, I will never be able to...”
- Invite curiosity about alternate narrative, changing the words...

Alternate Narrative/ Changing the words

When you say,
“I will never be happy again”

What would it sound like to say,
“Right now, I can't imagine waking up without crying.”

Kindness & the Present Moment

- Attention to the words can soften the intensity of self-judgment
- Shift attention to the present moment.
- Create possibility of something different or changed at another time.

**A reclaiming ritual
to release fear, isolation and
loneliness
after the pandemic.**

Oceanna Hall, B.Sc., M.Ed., M.Div., RCH
Clinical Specialist End of Life, Palliative Care, MAiD Support

During the pandemic, technology tried to fill the gap of lost human contact in all areas of our lives from birth to death.

- iPads in the birthing, palliative care and end of life rooms.
- Medical procedures in gowns, gloves & masks.
- Little if any contact between family & friends.
- Cessation of socialization at schools, clubs, sports, religious services, play dates & outings.
- Stopped celebrating cultural, family and personal milestones like weddings/funerals/celebrations of life.

Current mental health research shows there are indications our new North American post-pandemic normal, being experienced by all ages, is fear, isolation and loneliness.

Meanwhile we have almost lost the cross-cultural human experience of communal ritual.

I believe that ritual is one way to create a revival of spiritual and healing modalities that have been part of the human experience for as long as we can trace our history as a species.

A TYPE OF RITUAL

- Releasing the energy of pandemic fear.
 - Ritual steps
 - A clear intention to willingly and gladly choose to release this energy that you feel is unhealthy to your body, mind or spirit.
 - Symbolic transference - create or find an object that symbolizes what you are ready to release (personally I tend to choose objects from nature that can be released back into nature without harm to our environment).
 - Ask the object if it is willing to be the carrier of this energy to be released.
 - You will symbolically transfer the negative energy you are ready to release into this object
 - Could be a simple statement on a piece of paper/leaf/tree bark to burn or bury.
 - The symbol should be uniquely meaningful to the individual creating the ceremony.
 - Act of transference - concentrate placing the energy that needs to be released into the object
 - This can be done by holding the object and visualizing the energy being transferred
 - Some people like to use their breath and blow the energy to be released into the object or write it on a piece of paper/leaf/tree bark and attach it onto the object of transference
 - Physical act of releasing.
 - When you are ready to release the energy you can burn it with fire, throw it into a body of water if biodegradable, release it into the air, or bury it in the earth, if biodegradable (or a combination of any/all of the above).

Discussion, Reflection, Questions

- What insight or learning are you taking from today, or other sessions in this series?
- Is there a wisdom you will hold onto?
- Is there something new you will include in support of clients and families?

Session Wrap Up

- Please fill out our feedback survey, a link has been added into the chat.
- A recording of this session will be emailed to registrants within the next week.
- Thank you for your participation!

Thank You



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