Weaving the Final Threads of Life

Joan Olson, MA, BCC

NACC National Conference
St. Louis, MO
May 17, 2014
Learning Objectives

• Describe the difference between palliative care and hospice care

• Explain some of the spiritual tasks at the end of life

• Articulate your wishes, hopes and fears as you contemplate your own death
Palliative Care

- What is it?
- How is it used?
- Who gets it?
What is it?

Provides relief from symptoms
Integrates psychological and spiritual aspects of care
Uses a team approach to address the needs of patients and families
Offers support for patients and their families
Is used in conjunction with other therapies that intend to prolong life
Intends to neither hasten nor postpone death
How is it used?

• In the clinic to address ongoing symptom management, goals of care, advance care planning

• In the hospital to address ongoing symptom management, to determine goals of care, advance care planning and to provide emotional, psychological and spiritual support
Who gets it?

Anyone with a complex, serious, life-limiting illness is appropriate for palliative care
Spiritual Care within Palliative Care

“Good quality care occurs when patients are able to express what is holy to them, gives them meaning and helps them transcend their suffering, even if not necessarily relieving it.”

Christina Puchalski
Making Health Care Whole
The Lady and the Reaper
Hospice Care

• What is it?
• How is it used?
• Who gets it?
What is it?

- Six Months or less
- Pain and symptom management
- Holistic care
- Patient and family as unit
- Self-determined life closure
- Medicare benefit
How is it used?

- Two doctors must agree on prognosis
- Home care, residential hospice or facility
- Support for families to give them confidence in the care of their loved one
- Additional care and support at facility
Who gets it?

- Anyone with an illness whose prognosis is less than six months
- Must continue to show decline
- Barriers to receiving hospice
The Four Gifts

- Thank you
- I’m sorry
- I love you
- Goodbye
It takes two to speak the truth – one to speak and another to hear.

*Henry David Thoreau*
Spiritual Pain
from The Sacred Art of Living and Dying

- Meaning Pain
- Forgiveness Pain
- Relatedness Pain
- Hopelessness Pain
Meaning Pain

That which promotes motivation and happiness

Making sense of illness and death

What hopes/fears do I have for the next life?

from The Sacred Art of Living and Dying
Forgiveness Pain

The ‘common cold’ of spiritual pain

Lack of forgiveness of ourselves and others can make us sick

Willingness to let go for our own sake

from The Sacred Art of Living and Dying
Relatedness Pain

How are my relationships with those I care about?

How is my relationship with God?

from The Sacred Art of Living and Dying
Hopelessness Pain

Hope = Our human capacity to imagine what could be life-giving

Failure to thrive

‘Terminal illness’ of spiritual pain

from The Sacred Art of Living and Dying
Remedies for Meaning Pain

Communion with nature
Logotherapy
Life Review
Dreams/Journaling
Asking Sacred Questions

from The Sacred Art of Living and Dying
Remedies for Forgiveness Pain

Prayer of Gratitude
Confession
Release Rituals
Twelve Step Processes

from The Sacred Art of Living and Dying
Remedies for Relatedness Pain

Grief Therapy
Mingling of Breaths
Metta: Lovingkindness Meditation
Examen

from The Sacred Art of Living and Dying
Remedies for Hopelessness Pain

Energy Therapies
Music Therapy
Anointing/Massage/Aroma
Sacred Ritual

from The Sacred Art of Living and Dying
Spiritual Health Assessment

Healing Through Self Awareness

Based on ‘Healing the Four Dimensions of Spiritual Pain’
In the classical Sacred Art of Living and Dying tradition
It’s about how you live!
Die before you die, so that when you die, you do not die.

*Egyptian Book of the Dead*
If you want to die happily, learn to live.

If you want to live happily, learn to die.

*Latin Proverb*
You are healed of a suffering only by experiencing it to the full.

Marcel Proust
Be at peace with your own soul. Enter eagerly into the treasure house that is inside you. The ladder leading to the Kingdom is hidden within your soul. Dive into yourself, and in your soul you will discover the stairs by which to ascend.

*Isaac of Ninevah.*
Exercises