

Gathering for Death

This Gathering has suggestions for introducing sections. The “will you go next?” questions give the next person an opportunity to be ready. The Silence and Round 2 of Sharing use a clock.

Words of the Day

As people arrive, ask them to write the Words of the Day and put them in the basket.

I view my death as ...

Opening

Chalice Lighting *“We’ll begin with the chalice lighting.” Ask for a volunteer.*

Come in with all your vulnerabilities and strengths, fears and anxieties, loves and hopes. For here you need not hide, nor pretend, nor be anything other than who you are and are called to be. Come into this place where we can touch and be touched, heal and be healed, forgive and be forgiven. Come into this place, where the ordinary is sanctified, the human is celebrated, the compassionate is expected. Come into this place. Together we make it a holy place.

Rebecca A. Edmiston-Lange

The Basket *“Now we’ll read the Words of the Day. I’ll start, and pass it along to the right (left).”*

Being Together

Sharing of Joys and Concerns *“Now we’ll share joys and concerns. I’ll begin and we’ll go around the circle. Will you go next?”*

Silence, holding ourselves and each other in silent support *“Now a few minutes of silence.”*

Shared Readings

“I’ll start the first Shared Reading. Will you go next?”

At the end of life, it gets really simple: “Am I loved? Did I love well?”

Frank Ostaseski, Buddhist teacher and co-founder of the Zen Hospice Project

For what is it to die but to stand naked in the wind and to melt into the sun? *Kahlil Gibran*

I am not ready to die,
But I am learning to trust death
As I have trusted life.

May Sarton

We know that all is impermanent; we know that everything wears out. Although we can buy this truth intellectually, emotionally we have a deep-rooted aversion to it. *Pema Chödrön*

The dying process begins the minute we are born, but it accelerates during dinner parties. *Carol Matthau*

It is difficult to accept death in this society because it is unfamiliar. In spite of the fact that it happens all the time, we never see it. *Elisabeth Kübler-Ross*

I tend to think of death as being like changing your clothes when they are old and worn out, rather than as some final end. *Dalai Lama*

There is only one law in the universe that never changes – that all things change, and that all things are impermanent. *Sogyal Rinpoche*

Earth brings us into life and nourishes us. Earth takes us back again. Birth and death are present in every moment. *Thich Nhat Hanh*

By daily dying I have come to be. *Theodore Roethke*

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

Round 1: Deep Sharing. “Now we will share reflections on death and the preparation.” Then say “I’ll go first” or, if you’re not ready, “Who is ready to go first?”

Round 2: Responses and Comments. After all have shared or passed, check the time left. Say “We have about ___ minutes for a 2nd round.” Begin your response or ask “Who would like to start?”

Closing

Closing Circle “Now we’ll go around the circle and say a word or sentence about what we are taking away from the session. I’ll go first, and would you be willing to go next?”

Chalice “Now we will extinguish the chalice.” Read in unison, or ask for a volunteer.

We extinguish this flame and we remember the warmth of our community, the light of our wisdom, the generosity of our sharing. We keep these in our heart until we meet again.

Song/Chime Ask for a volunteer.

Announcements

The Covenant

I commit myself: *italicized elements are proposed changes, not yet approved*

- to come to meetings when I possibly can, knowing that my presence is important to the group
- to let the *group* know if I will be absent or need to quit
- to share with the *group* the responsibility for good process by watching how much time I take to speak, noticing what is going on for others, *and considering problems as they occur*
- to do the reading and thinking about the topic ahead of time
- to not gossip about what is shared in the group, and tell only my own story to others
- to honor the safety of the group by listening to what others share with an open heart
- to refrain from cross-talk, judging, giving advice, or advocating a specific view
- to share as deeply as I can when it is my turn and to stay on the “I-message.”