

Lesson 4 Notes

The Possibilities Are Endless! As death doulas, we learn about many different aspects of preparing and moving through bereavement, loss, death, and dying. It is good to follow our heart and pursue the areas we are most passionate about. The focus areas may change from time to time as one thing leads to another, and our interests shift. Everything we learn serves a purpose and we continue to build upon the foundation as we travel different pathways within our scope of doula practice.

Facing Death Is Sacred Work. It is common in our world for people to avoid death and feel anxious thinking and talking about it. As doulas, we are fortunate to be able to support and guide people as they are moving through change. It is an honor and a joy to help ease pain and suffering while at the same time taking care of ourselves.

Self-Love and Self-Care. When doing this work, we must find ways to enjoy our time and take breaks. Whether it's finding a hobby like hiking or gardening, managing stress with exercise or social events, being willing to say no or change your mind about something, or speaking with yourself with greater kindness, it is important to practice self-love and self-care every day!

Day-to-Day Life. We tend to be busy living in the material world so that we miss the essential, existential, experiential, spiritual aspect. As humans, we are consumed with working, going, coming, doing, eating, drinking, etc. And when someone is ill, it becomes a treadmill of medicating, cleaning, diapering, drinking, puking, pooping, peeing, crying, hurting. The physical aspect tends to dominate our lives. It seems to be the most obvious, immediate, undeniable aspect. But there is more.

Spiritual Aspect. What about our spiritual needs? How do we address the need to be at peace with our life and with our death? Does the serenity prayer help? The serenity to accept the things we cannot change, change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference? I've heard these prayers and slogans all my life and somehow, they were only words. How do I begin to really apply spiritual principles to my daily life?

Facts of Life and Death. I was born, so I am going to die. I am nothing special, just an ordinary person. There have been millions before me and there will be millions after me. I suffered through hard times in physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual realms. I've done some things well and I've done some things badly. I've had some successes and some failures. I've accumulated stuff and I've let stuff go. I've been good and kind and I've failed in my relationships. The question I ask myself now is, "Do I want to be part of the problem or part of the solution?"

What is the Solution? The solution is to acknowledge that I may have only days or even minutes left. The solution is to understand deep in my soul that I must live an ethical life, I must serve others with kindness and compassion, I must admit my misdeeds, and where I have done harm in the past, I must apply the antidote to those harmful actions.

Antidote Example. I was harsh and angry with someone in the past. I said unkind words to hurt their feelings and yelled at them. Now that I have greater understanding, I must take special care not to say mean things or be harsh with anyone. This means practicing patience with myself and others. It means being aware that everyone carries a burden, and I don't want to make things worse for anyone.

Planting Seeds of Peace. If you want the world to be a beautiful place, spread seeds of kindness. Your thoughts, words, and actions are seeds, sprouts, and fruits. Be mindful of what you are planting and nurturing. Give your efforts a nurturing environment. Have good will towards others. Leave your anger and resentment behind. Trust that small acts of kindness grow into ripe fruits of compassion. Give

people the benefit of the doubt. Say something nice to help others feel better. Smile. Keep good relationships with your friends and family. Plant good seeds. You will get good results.

We Are Fortunate. We're the lucky ones. We get to provide education and support around grief, death, trauma, and loss. We get to practice and persevere. The world needs us!

Resource List. In a separate file, you have a resource list. It includes a variety of resources, including organizations and individuals with websites and videos. It also has some fun things at the end!

Sujatha Baliga. (<https://www.sujathabaliga.com>) Sujatha is an attorney and peace activist in California who devotes her life to transcending harm, restorative justice, and forgiveness. This YouTube clip shares a short story from the video "Healing Justice", a World Trust Film. Enjoy!
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ih_IQ2MOpU)

Listening Partners. Our society is made up of people who were taught that "rugged individualism" is a virtue. While it is good to work well independently and not be too needy, sometimes it's good to find a partner you can work with for mutual support and encouragement. Here's how we suggest you set up a listening partnership. In one short sentence, say what it is you want. Find someone who wants the same thing. Meet with that person to talk about it. Help them get what they want. Meet regularly to share how it's going. Every night, review your good deeds and rejoice in the positive events of the day.

We Each View the World Differently. I bought this thing at the store that was labeled "bird feeder" and I hung it outside my window. A bird was feeding from it, and I was satisfied it was a "bird feeder". A few minutes later, there was a squirrel feeding from it and I realized I had been wrong. It was a "squirrel feeder". If we approach people, things, and events in life with curiosity and an open mind, we become aware that we don't know it all. We each perceive the world through a different lens.

We All Live Under the Same Beautiful Moon. For what good reason should we fuss and fight?

Everything is Temporary. Yesterday is gone and tomorrow is yet to come. Now is the only moment we have. We don't know how much time we have. Let's do the best we can with the time we have.

Quiet Time and Introspection. There are times when we just need to be alone and quiet for rest, meditation, relaxation, prayer, and creativity. Remember to give yourself quiet time when you need it.

Feel the Magic. Sometimes the darkness is so vast, and we don't perceive any light. However, if we look closely, we may experience magic in the darkness, in letting go.

Dalai Lama Quote. "Man sacrifices his health in order to make money. Then he sacrifices money to recuperate his health. And then he is so anxious about the future that he does not enjoy the present; the result being that he does not live in the present or the future; he lives as if he is never going to die, and then dies having never really lived."
(<https://www.awakenthegreatnesswithin.com/50-inspirational-dalai-lama-quotes-on-life-and-success>)

"No Regrets". This exercise can be done as a closing circle to a class, meeting, or gathering where people have shared. In groups of three, take turns sharing. Each one tells the others something you are grateful for or appreciate about each of them. You may not have a chance to say it later, so enjoy looking in their eyes and sharing something good. This will help you to have "no regrets".

This is the end of Lesson 3. Please go to Lesson 3 Homework and the Post-Questionnaire.

Thank you for your participation! We hope to see you soon!