

Personal Death Awareness Exercises
Palliative Care Center of the North Shore, Evanston Illinois

Exercise 1:

Draw a straight line of any length with a beginning and an end. Consider this line to be your total life span. Place a slash mark at any point along the line where you think you are today in your life's chronology. Complete the following fill-in-the-blanks statements:

I expect to live until age _____ .

I am now _____ .

When you compare your present age to the age at which you expect to die, how much of your life do you find you have already lived? Half? Two-thirds? One-quarter? Now look at the line you drew. How does your estimate of the time you have left to live on the life-span line compare to your numerical estimate?

How did it feel to commit yourself to a definite life span? Some people worry that they may "jinx" themselves by doing this. Old superstitions rise up and haunt them. Does this concern you? Were you uncomfortable? If not, why do you think you felt comfortable doing this? Take a minute and answer these questions.

Exercise 2:

The first death that I experienced was the death of:

I was _____ years old.

At that time, I felt:

I was most curious about:

The things that frightened me most were:

The feelings that I have now as I remember that death are:

The most intriguing thing about the funeral was:

I was most scared at the funeral by:

The first personal acquaintance of my own age who died was:

I remember thinking:

The death of _____ has been the most significant for me. It was significant because:

The most recent death I experienced was _____ when _____ died _____ years ago.

The most traumatic death I ever experienced was:

Reference:

Lynn J, Schuster J, Kabcenell A. Improving Care for the End of Life: A Sourcebook for Health Care Managers and Clinicians. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000.

At age _____, I personally came close to death when:

Exercise 3:

Do you view death as a beginning or an end?

Do you mourn or celebrate death or both?

Do you have tradition and ritual to serve you in the dying process?

Are feelings about death universal or are they unique to individuals and cultures?

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Developed by the Kidney End of Life Coalition