Leaving Legacies: Spiritual Meaning-Making at the End of Life (Part 1): Reminiscence and Life Review
James Magee, PhD and Cathy O’Keefe, MEd
Hosted by Ken Doka, PhD, MDiv

This webinar reviews the theory and techniques behind life review and reminiscence therapies focusing on the ways that such a technique can assist meaning-making at the end of life. The webinar also discusses strategies that can be utilized in cases where life reviews may be problematic or psychologically threatening.

**Learning Objectives:** At the conclusion of this webinar, participants will be able to:
1. Differentiate life review from reminiscence;
2. Discuss life review and reminiscence as instruments of meaning-making and offer a rationale for the therapeutic benefit of such procedures at the end of life;
3. Identify seven therapeutic benefits of life review and reminiscence;
4. Identify potential dangers in life review and reminiscence;
5. Discuss at least six different strategies for life review and reminiscence.

**Agenda:**
1. Meaning-Making at the End of Life
   a. Role of Meaning-Making at the End of Life
   b. The Spiritual Needs of Individuals Who Are Dying
2. Life Review and Reminiscence: Underlying Theory
   a. Differences between Life Review and Reminiscence
   b. Value of Life Review and Reminiscence
      i. Meaning-Making
      ii. Enhances Mood
      iii. Establishes Time and Role Parity
      iv. Maintains a Continuity of Identity
      v. Offers Therapeutic Insight
      vi. Reinforces Self-Esteem
      vii. Bolsters Community
   c. Dangers of Life Review and Reminiscence
      i. Reliving Trauma
      ii. Personality Counter-Indications
      iii. Relational Counter-Indications
3. Doing Life Review and Reminiscence
   a. Techniques for Life Review and Reminiscence
      i. Photographs and Memorabilia
      ii. Music
      iii. Creative Expressions
      iv. Genealogies and Genograms
      v. Pilgrimages and Reunions
      vi. Age Lines
   b. Employing All Senses
4. Conclusion
Introduction

Definitions | Issues | Value of Life Review Process
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Hands-on Activities | Training for Staff

Spiritual Needs of Individuals Who are Dying

What is meant by “reminiscing?”

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Professor of Gerontology, College of New Rochelle
Senior Consultant, Hospice Foundation of America
Licensed Mental Health Counselor

James Magee, PhD
Professor-emeritus of Counseling and Gerontology, College of New Rochelle
Has conducted life review groups for many years
Author of Paradox for Life Review: A Guide for Enhancing Older Adults’ Self Esteem and other publications

Catherine O’Keefe, MEd
Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist
Professor, University of South Alabama
Conducts pro bono work in video legacy building
Spiritual Needs of Individuals Who are Dying

What are prompts for reminiscing?

Plasticity of reminiscences

Differences Between Reminiscence and Life Review

Reminiscence

- Establishes time and role parity
- Maintains a continuity of identity
- Bolsters community

Life Review

- Heightens self-esteem
- Eases self-acceptance
- Releases compassion

Life Review

Origins

Enhancing self-esteem

Characteristics of robust self-esteem
**Self**
- Paradoxical Characteristics
- Maturational Selves
- Poetic Paradoxes
- Metaphorical Paradoxes
- Lyrical Paradoxes

**Family Scripted Self**
- Toxic Issues
- Triangles
- Aerial Paradox: Five generations and their slogans

**Metaphysical Self**
- Humanist Definition
- Religious Definition
- Paradox of engaged detachment

**Introduction**
Our stories:
- Make us unique
- Give our lives meaning
- Define who we are and were

**Two Approaches to Life Review**

**Daily process of actively listening**
- Process their own stories
- Sort through memories
- Move toward inner peace

**Two Approaches to Life Review**

**A more organized approach**
- Resources available
- “Writing Your Spiritual Autobiography”
- “Creating Oral Histories”
What Should We Know About Life Review/Legacy Building?

Life Review/Legacy Building

When life is coming to a natural end, patients tend to turn to those around them for the opportunity to process a range of memories.

- Staff Needs:
  - Ongoing Training and Continuing Education
  - Ethical Mandates

Passing down of a life story has a long history and many forms:

- Historically accurate versions
  - Verbal storytelling
  - Photo albums
  - Social networking via web pages and Facebook

- Historically revised versions
  - Writing for posterity
  - Testimonies
  - Journaling
  - Audio and video taping

Passing down of a life story has a long history and many forms:

- Artifacts that have been gathered by family, friends or communities
  - Placement of special items of meaning
    - Leaving of items via a will
    - Enshrinement of artifacts
    - Naming children

- Personal narrative as a documentation of self
  - Recording information, needs, preferences
  - Allows the future patient to have a voice later on
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<th>How can we offer life review and legacy building?</th>
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<td>Select the best people for the task</td>
<td>Communicate effectively with patients and families</td>
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<td>Gain access to resources</td>
<td>Owning one's story, acknowledging the value of a loved one's life and gathering the artifacts</td>
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**Hospice Foundation of America**

Visit us online  
www.hospicefoundation.org  
Or call toll-free  
1-800-854-3402

**For Additional Information:**

*Spirituality and End-of-Life Care book available*
- www.hospicefoundation.org
- Edited by Kenneth J. Doka and Amy Tucci
- Includes chapters by Gary Fink, Barry Kinzbrunner, Betty Ferrell and Christina Puchalski

www.hospicefoundation.org/infocenter

HFA's Hospice Information Center, funded in part by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), provides free online resources and education for professionals and consumers

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