

Flagstaff Death Cafe' 2/22/14 ~Why they attended:

- Experienced recent loss
- Seeking community to talk about death
- Curious about this
- Was invited by a friend/family
- I've been here before; get a lot out of it!
- I gravitate toward this kind of discussion
- Interest in secular memorial plans
- Am inspired by this conversation
- Wondering what others are doing about end of life planning

Small Group #1

1. **General discussion on the Afterlife:**
 - a. No empirical evidence; No faith
 - b. Had visions/conversation in dreams, not sure if they are real or not
 - c. Room filled with dead friend's perfume, comforting
 - d. Sometimes not sure who it is that I am seeing or feeling.
2. **Getting over grief**
 - a. Several "no's" in group.
 - b. New grief replaces old grief.
 - c. It all adds together, experienced 6 fairly recent deaths.
 - d. Still grieving after 37 years
3. **Working on finding balance between appreciating Life I have and accepting that it can end at any time.**
 - a. Why must Death happen?
 - b. Does it?
 - c. Discussion of the Bible and what it says about this.
4. **Stages (5) of grieving or death/finality.**
 - a. Yes, but in varying degrees.
 - b. There are more stages experienced
 - c. There are additional stages experienced.
 - d. They don't go away.

Small Group #2 ~~

1. **Prepare for death/ 'letting them go'**
 - a. Hospice talk can be sort of shocking; addressing guilt
 - b. After caring for parents, I want to start thinking about this for myself; be better prepared
 - c. Share my thoughts w/my children so they don't agonize
 - d. The word 'allowing' someone to make their choices; allow them to go; it's ok
 - e. Sometimes people cannot let go when loved ones are present
 - f. Planning and good intentions are great (5 Wishes) but sometimes in the moment things change; can' be anticipated; find a place for grace
2. **Secular and/or religious funerals or memorials**
 - a. Funeral planning if some family Catholic and some atheist, half of them are going to feel left out of whichever way it's done.
 - b. It's about remembering the person; not sermonizing
 - c. Memorials/funerals not the place for evangelizing, but it happens; that's not comforting and can be quite painful
 - d. Really it's about those who are left
 - e. A participant question: how does an atheist wish a funeral would be? . . .Answer: opportunity to say goodbye, make peace; let folks eat, drink and be together for comfort
 - f. Music can bring people together if it is something that evokes, healing, love
3. **Atheist or religious, humans seek comfort when faced with loss; grief is something all humans can feel**
 - a. Allow community to be together in grief "it takes a village to raise a child, likewise to grieve a loss and begin to heal"
 - b. Grief can be both a personal, private experience, and also shared in families or communities; that is the healthy way to face loss
 - c. Grief is hell; everyone does it in their own way and sometimes not everyone on the same page
 - d. It takes time; the stages of grief can be described but some losses (like parent's loss of a child) will remain or abide, despite faith or beliefs that are supposed to 'help'
 - e. It's important to grieve; if it is staid, it can eat at you from inside out. Sharing the grief helps

to heal the grief

- f. Allow self to grieve and others too. Humans are clan-community based. Allow mourning.
- g. "Was proud to share memories about (parents); left with a good feeling; helped with my grief; there's more to do. . . The loss brought focus to the way we treat and talk to each other. I sometimes wish I could turn back the clock and be kinder in word and actions (to my parents who have passed). As well, I wish everyone in the world who has passed could hear the way we remember them. Wow, if they could have seen themselves through our eyes."

Small Group #3 ~~

- 1. A participant shared a "burning issue" . . . a friend living in Australia has a serious illness. Her dilemma is how to hold him in a healing light while simultaneously holding him in a good passage light
- 2. Death a spouse many years ago; how to heal with support or medication
- 3. Then, several topics revolved around:
 - a. Fear of death as taught by Christian churches
 - b. Does the church have the "truth" about what death is to be, or do we create our own?
 - c. In marriage, planning for our own memorial if spouse is completely opposed to view
 - d. Several mentions of The Five Wishes as a starting point for clear and explicit requests to partners and caregivers regarding end-of-life desires.
- 4. This group was extremely thoughtful, articulate and caring. Everyone was allowed to speak their full expression and we still got to five questions in the hour allotted. Would enjoy having coffee with each and every participant!

Final thoughts and words to describe our time together:



Our group had similar thought, helping others.

Shared a lot of supportive ideas, thought provoking.

Candid, present, listening, new thoughts, provoking.

Helpful, loving, continuum of grief.

Enjoyed listening.

Liked being in "first-timer's" group.

Thank you all.

Sang a song from the Threshold Choir.

Death such a huge part of life. Being present to the reality.

Thank you for being invited back, looking forward to the next DC

Always learn something at the Death Cafe

Go away with something new: this time, "community" - not being alone.

Felt rich, safe, and empowered.

The Death Cafe gets deeper, richer, more powerful. The uniqueness of community.

Authentic. Love Flagstaff. So grateful.

Magic. Safe place, talk from your heart.

Spoke from the heart in Portuguese.

Sense of safety-so much love and compassion.

Grateful. Safety from facilitators.

Lots of insight; finding a balance

Amazingly insightful; a blessing

Surprising and fun!