



Death Cafe' Campfire Experience

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Course: *NSG 427 Bereavement & Loss Elective*

Course Description

This course provides the student with knowledge to assist the patient, family, and other healthcare professionals addressing issues related to bereavement and end of life care.

Course Objectives

1. Examine factors (i.e. legal, ethical, cultural, economic, and spiritual) that influence end of life care for patients and families.
2. Discuss the impact of a health professional's attitudes, values, feelings, and expectations about death in dealing with diverse beliefs and customs in end of life care.
3. Explore a holistic interdisciplinary approach to improve quality for patients and families facing end of life decisions.
4. Examine methods to assist patients, families, colleagues, and one's self to cope with suffering, grief, and loss experienced in end of life care.

Module Level Objectives

1. Define the importance of ongoing and therapeutic communication in end-of-life issues.
2. Identify factors that influence communication at the end of life.
3. Explore important factors in communicating bad news to patients and families.
4. Identify common pitfalls healthcare providers make when communicating about end-of-life issues.

Background

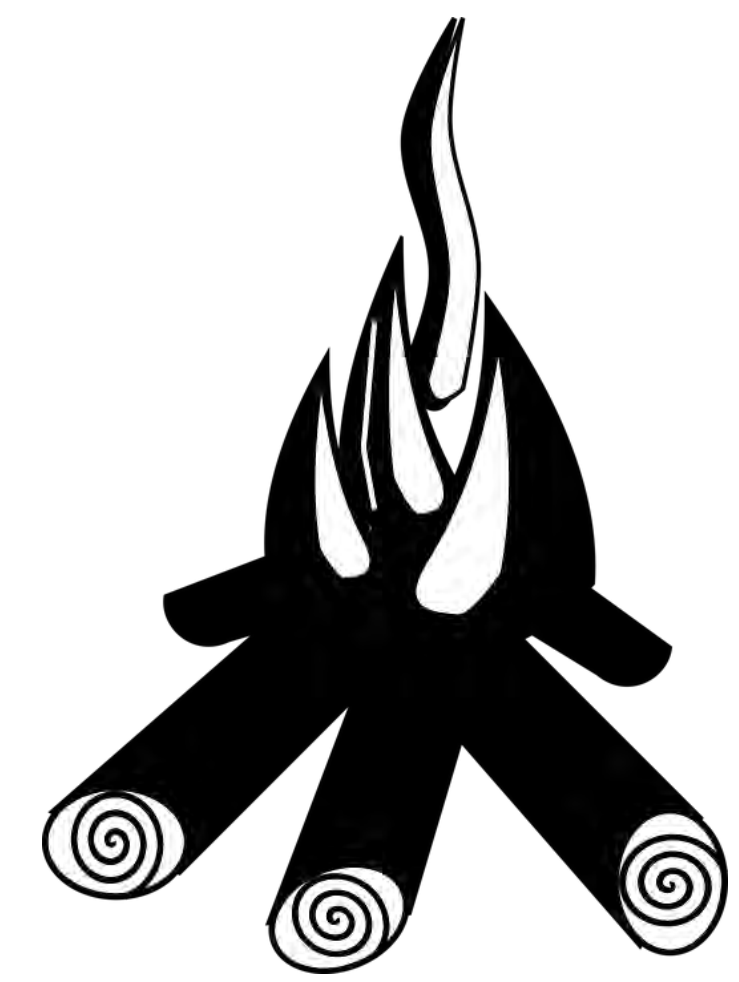
The Death Café' objective is '*to increase awareness of death with a view to helping people make the most of their (finite) lives*'.

Started in 2010, in East London. Death Cafés have spread quickly across Europe, North America and Australasia. As of today, there have been over 13,230 Death Cafes in 80 countries since September 2011. If 10 people came to each one that would be 132300 participants (Death Café, 2021).



Ground Rules

- ✓ *Listen when others are talking.*
- ✓ *Respect other's views and confidentiality.*



Summary of the Experience

All students enrolled in the course as well as students in another elective course were invited to the Oriental Gardens Fire Pit to participate in the Death Café Experience in the fall 2021.

After the welcome and invitation for Smore's and snacks the Death Café movement was introduced and discussed. A time of memorial was made where students lit candles in memory of those who have died. Students then broke into small groups around the campfire to have open discussion regarding death and dying. Use of the "One Slide Project" handout was provided with question prompts if needed. The experience concluded with a time of sharing and reflection as a larger group.

After the experience, the students completed the *Death Café Reflection Assignment* with the following writing prompts.

1. *What do we learn from death?*
2. *What do you say to a friend who is facing death?*
3. *Have you ever seen a person take their last breath? What impact did that have on you?*
4. *What emotions did you notice while participating in the death cafe'? Was this uncomfortable for you? Why do you think that is?*
5. *How important is it for nurses to have self-awareness of emotional triggers around death and dying?*
6. *Do you think that normalizing death as a part of life will help patients and families reach goal-concordant care?*

Sample of Student Reflections

"I most definitely think that normalizing death as a part of life will help patients and families reach goal concordant care."

"During the death café, I felt many emotions. I felt relief, peace, sadness etc. I appreciated talking to other students about their experiences and their views."

"It is very important for nurses to have self-awareness of emotional triggers around death and dying as it is something we will be around a lot in our career."

"I do believe that normalizing death as part of life will help both patients and families.."

"I really enjoyed the death cafe. It was nice getting out of the classroom and having an open environment to talk about death"

"I think that humans learn empathy for others through death."

References:

Death Café. (2021) . What is a Death Café. Retrieved from <https://deathcafe.com/what/>

End-of-Life Nursing Education Consortium (ELNEC). (2021). ELNEC undergraduate module 2: Communication in palliative care. Retrieved from <https://elnec.academy.reliaslearning.com/>.

Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI). (2021). The conversation project. Retrieved from <https://theconversationproject.org/nhdd/advance-care-planning/>