

Navigating Life's Final Chapters

Facing Mortality while Living with Advanced Cancer

"I cannot escape death, but at least I can escape the fear of it."

- Epictetus, Greek Philosopher

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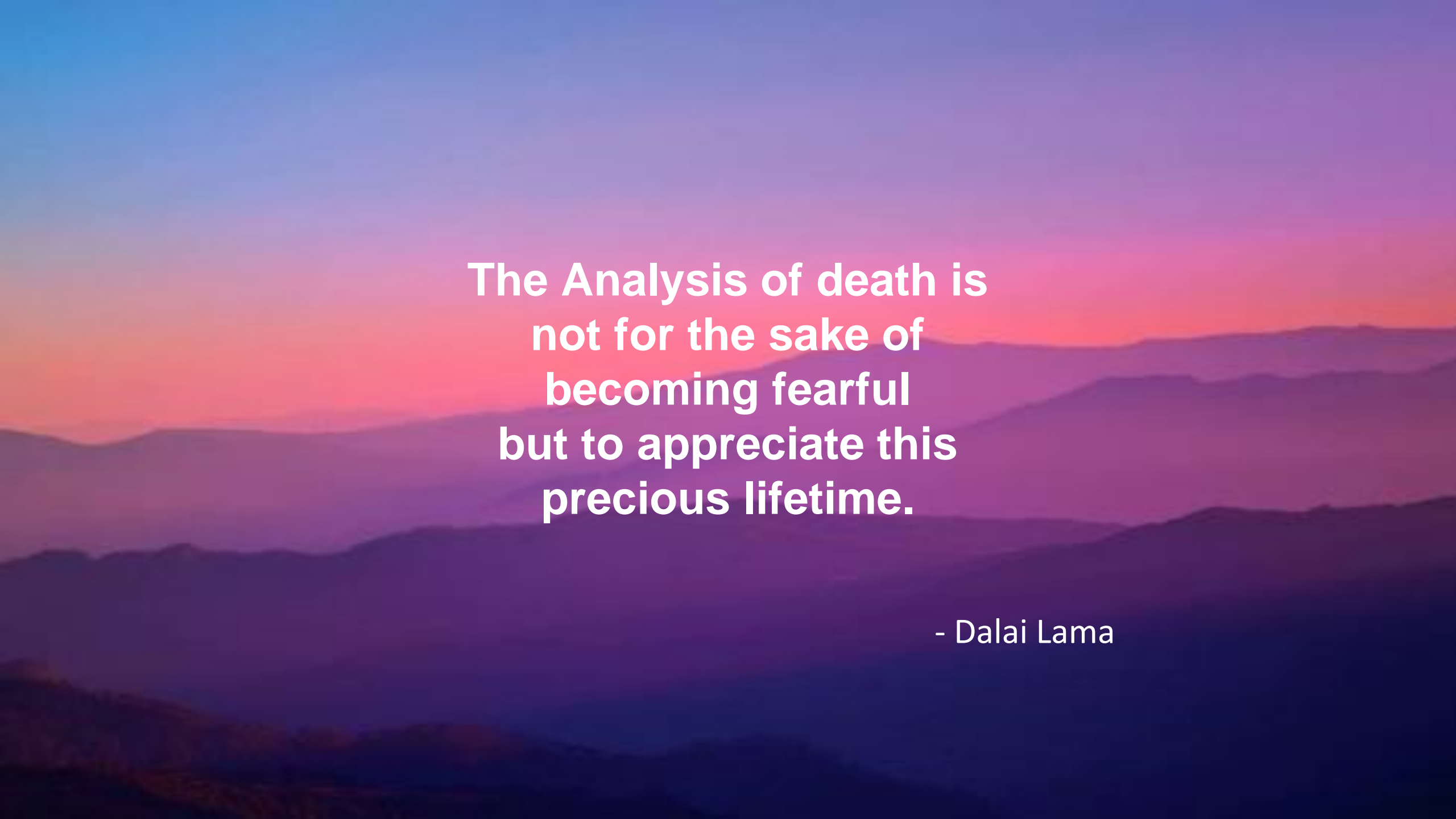
Thinking and talking about death and mortality is difficult



And, it is important

A Mindful Moment





**The Analysis of death is
not for the sake of
becoming fearful
but to appreciate this
precious lifetime.**

- Dalai Lama

ANTICIPATORY GRIEF

Common Thoughts & Emotions

- Fluctuate between feelings of distress and feelings of normalcy
- Can be very stressful
- Sleep disruptions and trouble concentrating
- Includes intense sadness & anxiety - easily triggered
- Fear, irritability, anger, guilt, confusion
- Living with uncertainty
- Loneliness/Isolation/Lack of motivation
- Remember/acknowledge other losses
- Imagine what death will be like

ANTICIPATORY GRIEF

Allows us to

- **Confront fears** and feelings, rather than avoid them – and seek support
- **Closure:** Deal with unfinished business – practical, logistical, and emotional
- **Settle differences:** Clarify misunderstandings or express what should have been said. Attempt to heal relationships.
- **Let go:** Say good-byes
- **Connect:** Memories & “continuing bonds”.
- ***Another way to express love.***
- **Prepare & plan:** Anticipate problems that need to be solved & address future hopes and needs – legacy work

All types of grief open a portal about what matters most and invites us to bravely examine our fears about it.



DYING

Evaluating beliefs

What we have learned about dying

Holding a spiritual perspective

Healing our suffering

Facing our greatest fears

**Acknowledging our feelings when someone else
we care about dies**

Communicating our wishes

Teaching others through your experience

Life review

WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT LIFE, SELF & DEATH

Death is a failure. *It's not fair!*

It's not OK to be angry at God.

I'll be in a better place.

Positive yielding vs. do everything to stay alive

We can beat death with enough effort .

Suffering is necessary to atone for my sins.

It's not okay to talk about death because:

- it will make it happen sooner
- it means we have given up

When my soul leaves my body, I'll be set free.

I've had a good life. It's just my time.

If birth is a miracle, could death be a miracle, too?



*What beliefs have affected your experience?
How did you formulate these beliefs?
Whose voice is speaking?*

PREFERENCES AND PLAN

WHAT	PREPARATION	WHO	CHOICE	WHERE
<p>“What will it be like?”</p> <p>Explore choices: <i>Conversation Project</i></p> <p>Communicate preferences & needs</p>	<p>Advance Directives: <i>Living Will</i> <i>MPOA*</i>, <i>MOST</i>, <i>Five Wishes form</i> Will / Estate Planning</p> <p>Legacy Projects</p> <p>Funeral planning</p> <p>Obituary</p>	<p>Family</p> <p>Friends</p> <p>Caregivers</p> <p>Palliative Care</p> <p>Hospice</p> <p>Death Doula</p>	<p>Providers</p> <p>Pain management</p> <p>Spiritual Ritual</p> <p>Favorite things</p> <p>Roles</p> <p>Medical Aid in Dying / CO EOL Option</p> <p>Memorial / Eulogy</p> <p>Body Donation</p>	<p>Where do you want to be?</p> <p>Home/Room</p> <p>Family’s home</p> <p>Other Location</p> <p>*Hospice limitations</p>

“When we can talk about our feelings, they become less overwhelming, less upsetting, and less scary. The people we trust with that important talk can help us know that we are not alone.”

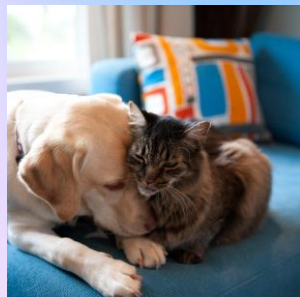
- Fred Rogers

WHO CAN HELP



LOVED ONES

Spouse/Partner
Family, Pet(s)
Close Friends



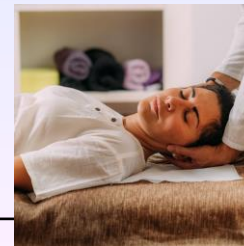
MEDICAL TEAM

Doctor, Nurse,
Social Worker, Counselor



SPIRITUAL ADVISORS

Priest, Rabbi, Deacon, Minister,
Chaplain, Healing Practitioner



OTHERS

Friends – Old & New
Peers, Colleagues
Chance Encounters
Therapists/Counselors
Hospice / Death Doulas





LIVING

Today, you are alive!

How do you want to live until you die?

What drives your desire to live?

Advocate for yourself and your needs

What are your priorities?

- **How does your life reflect and honor them?**
- **Where's the gap?**
- ***Growth Mindset*: Learn new insights and strategies for healing and growth**

*We cannot control the matter or timing of our death,
but we can choose how we approach it.*

WHY WE LIVE

To experience everything:

- **Love, learning, joy, awe, creativity, connection, appreciation**
- **Learning to live in between these experiences**
 - Life lessons and reality checks
 - Each a building block of your character, knowledge, and emotional resilience guiding you through tough times.

Yes, and even the opposite of that:

- Sadness, grief, loss, pain
- Life isn't about avoiding suffering
- **Learn what it means to be human**
- **To be of service and part of something bigger**

What makes your life worth living?

LIVING a MEANINGFUL LIFE

VALUES & PRIORITIES

WHAT IS *REALLY* IMPORTANT & MATTERS MOST NOW

PERSONAL

- Relationships/Family
- Forgiveness
- Happiness
- Humor/Laughter/Joy
- Self-care/compassion
- Stress relief
- Meditation
- Good books
- Good food
- Hobbies

SOCIAL / EXPERIENCE

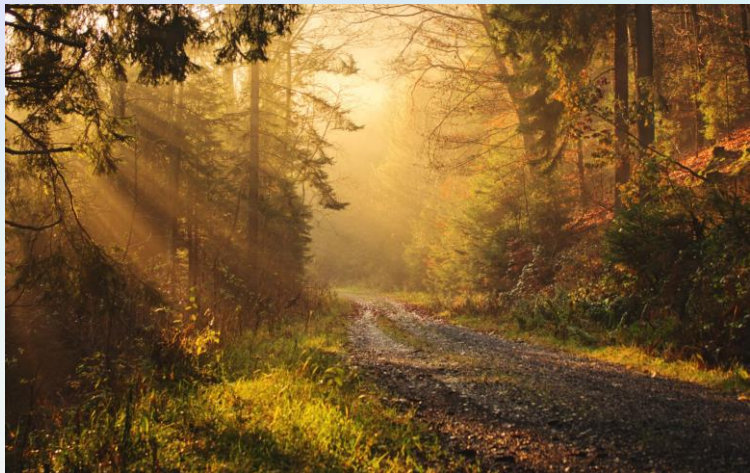
- Favorite places & things
 - Nature
 - Travel
 - Adventures
 - Generosity
 - Celebrations
 - Opportunities for joy, gratitude, and awe
 - Leaving a legacy
-

CAREER

- Who are you beyond your career/ or job?
- What is your work now?
- Commitment to Excellence
- Shared Leadership
- Contributions, how you (your work) mattered
- Relationships with co-workers



I forgive people but
that doesn't mean I accept
their behavior or trust
them. I forgive them for me,
so I can let go and move
on with my life.





**From the moment you were born,
your death has walked beside you.
Though it seldom shows its face,
you still feel its empty touch
when fear invades your life,
or what you love is lost
or inner damage is incurred...**

Yet when destiny draws you
into these spaces of poverty,
and your heart stays generous
until some door opens into the light,
you are quietly befriending your death;
so that you will have no need to fear

That the silent presence of your death
would call your life to attention,
wake you up to how scarce your time is
and to the urgency to become free
and equal to the call of your destiny.

**That you would gather yourself
and decide carefully
how you now can live
the life you would love
to look back on
from your deathbed.**

For Death by John O'Donohue



CULTIVATING PEACE

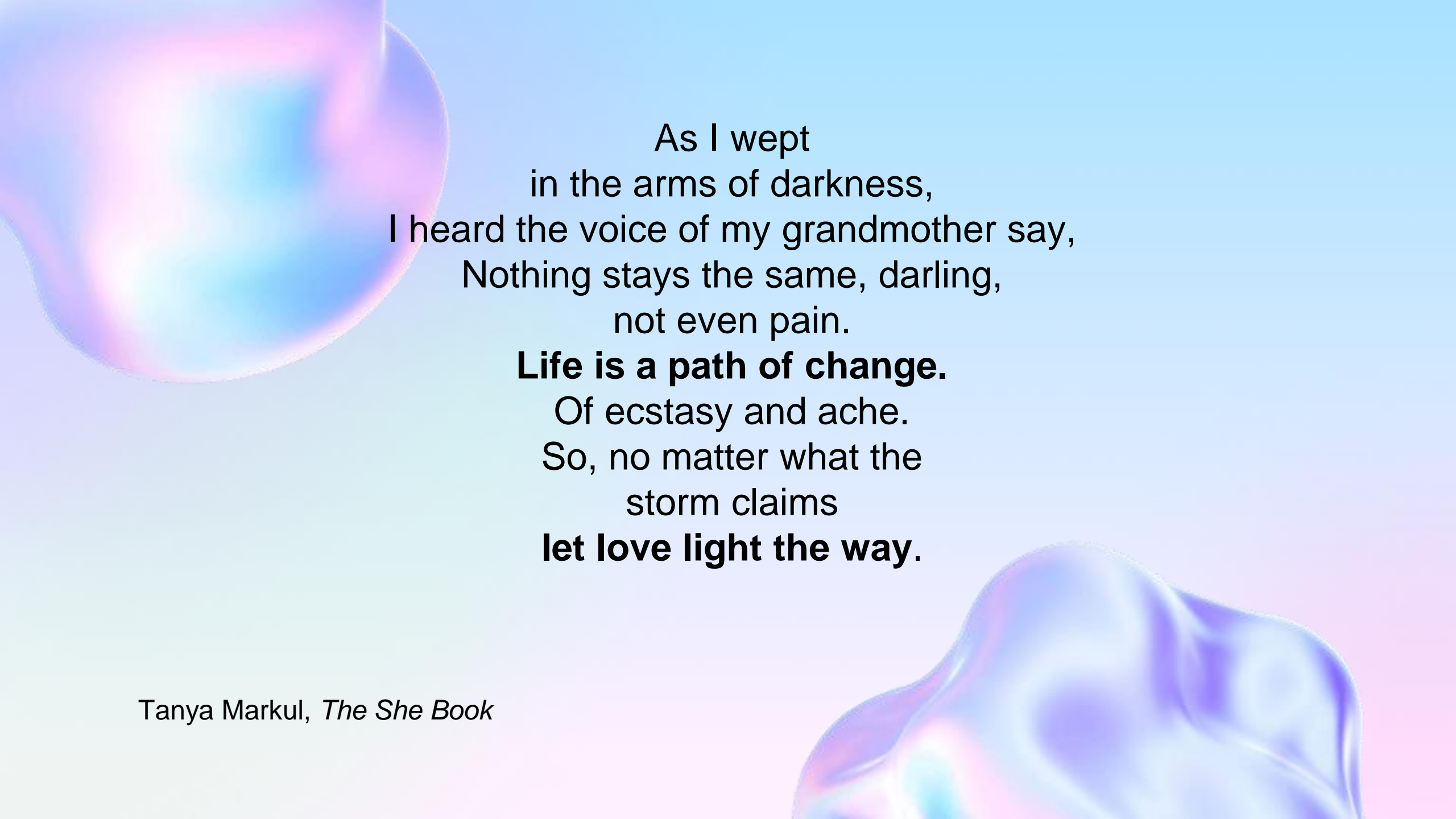
LIVE WITH INTENTION

- Be authentic – be true to yourself
- Open / Curious
- Self-compassion / Self-trust
- Be with people you like/love – spend meaningful time with them
- Reminisce: share stories & memories
- Remind yourself that you can do hard things
- Express Gratitude/Appreciation
- Release regret, shame, and resentment
- Live your bucket list

CONNECT WITH SPIRIT & SELF

- Connect to our essence and each other – Feel/be touched by another
- Awareness – listen patiently to yourself
- Insights about what wholeness and healing means
- Prayer / Meditation / Attention
- Be in nature / gardens
- Be present now
- Accept what is vs. resist
- Let go of what you can't control

Do one thing a day that brings you joy!



As I wept
in the arms of darkness,
I heard the voice of my grandmother say,
Nothing stays the same, darling,
not even pain.

Life is a path of change.

Of ecstasy and ache.
So, no matter what the
storm claims
let love light the way.

Tanya Markul, *The She Book*

SUMMARY

Dying is a part of life, and it is still hard to talk about.

- And so is grief.

State your preferences and do what you can to honor them. Make a plan.

Live fully while you are living; do what matters most.

Heal your emotional suffering; it *is* possible to make peace with it.

Do/say what is necessary to help you say good-bye with grace. (Love, gratitude/appreciation, & forgiveness)

Explore strategies that offer comfort and relief from your pain, suffering and sadness.

Thoughtfully cultivate peace. Know you're loved.

THANK YOU!

LET'S EXPLORE
YOUR QUESTIONS

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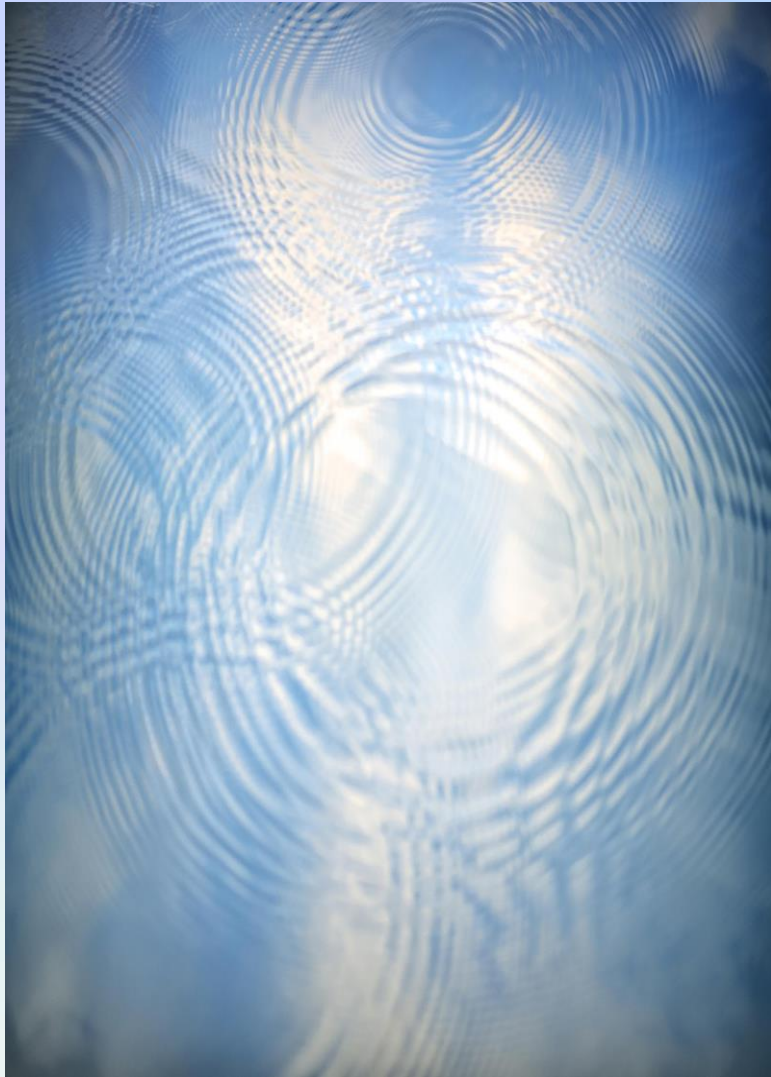
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Presentation slides will be provided to you after this webinar.
Please complete the program evaluation using this link:

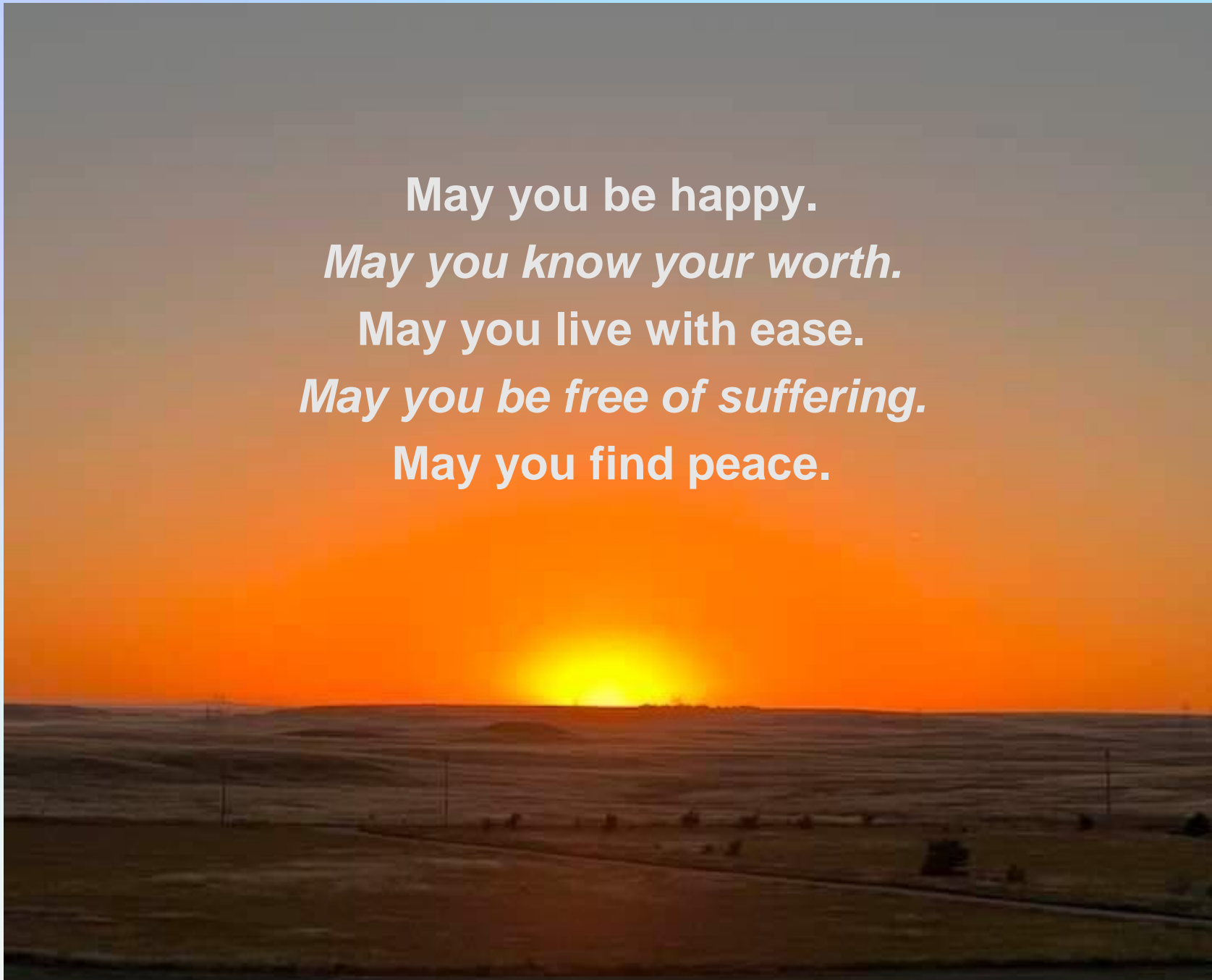
[NLFC Evaluation](#)



I pray that you will have the blessing
of being consoled and sure about your death.
May you know in your soul there is no need to be afraid.
When your time comes, may you have
every blessing and strength you need.
May there be a beautiful welcome for you in the home
you are going to. You are not going somewhere strange,
merely back to the home you have never left.
May you live with compassion and
transfigure everything negative within you and about you.
When you come to die, may it be after a long life.
May you be tranquil among those who care for you.
May your going be sheltered and your welcome assured.
May your soul smile in the embrace of your Anam Cara.

Entering Death, by John O'Donohue

May you be happy.
May you know your worth.
May you live with ease.
May you be free of suffering.
May you find peace.



HELPFUL RESOURCES

BOOKS/WORKBOOKS

- Byock (MD), Ira. *The Four Things that Matter Most: A Book about Living*. 2004.
- Kalanithi, P. & Verghese, A. *When Breath Becomes Air*. 2016.
- Levine, Stephen. *A Year to Live*
- O'Donohue, John. *To Bless the Space Between Us*. 2008
- Rosenbaum, Elana. *Here for Now: Living Well with Cancer through Mindfulness (MBSR)*
- Swiertz Newman, Liz. *A Widow's Business: A Practical Guide through the First Year after the Death of a Spouse*. 2015.
- Swiertz Newman, Liz. *Rest Assured: Preparing a Guide for Your Executor and Heirs*. 2017.

ONLINE RESOURCES

- [Advance Care Planning & Forms](#) (Colorado)
 - Includes a flowchart to help determine what documents are right for you
- [Colorado Advance Directives Consortium](#)
- [Colorado End of Life Options Act \(MAID\)](#)
- [End of Life conversations can be hard, but your loved ones will thank you](#). (article)
- [Five Wishes](#)
- [The Conversation Project](#) - Communicating wishes for care through the end of life
- [What's Your Grief](#) - support resource for anyone experiencing any type of loss, including the loss of a loved one

OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES

MEDICAL AID IN DYING

- [Colorado End of Life Options Act](#)
- [Compassion and Choices](#)
 - CO EOL Option

ORGAN, EYE, TISSUE & BODY DONATION*

- [American Transplant Foundation](#)
- [Donate Life Colorado](#)
- [Donor Alliance](#) (Colorado)
- [OncoLink](#) (Cancer patient donor info)
- [American Association for Anatomy](#)
 - Guidelines
- [Donating your body to Science in Colorado](#)
 - Registration and info packet

*As a general rule, cancer survivors are not eligible to be living donors. However, the transplant team may review, on a case-by-case basis, and determine that the donor is cancer-free, that the needed organs have not sustained damage from prior cancer treatment, etc
