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Living, dying, remembering
‘The inner, the outer, and everything in between’ – Spirituality and the trouble with being human

Nigel Hartley
CEO Mountbatten
Hampshire and Isle of Wight

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What I want to share...

• Language
• Thoughts
• Irritations
• Dissatisfactions
• Experiences
• Examples

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It’s not always obvious...

Living, dying, remembering
We don’t always know...

The poet T.S. Eliot once got into a London taxi. ‘You’re T.S. Eliot,’ said the cabby. Eliot admitted it. ‘Do You know,’ said the cab driver, ‘I had Bertrand Russell (the philosopher) in my cab the other day, and I said to him: So, Lord Russell, what’s it all about? And do you know, he couldn’t tell me.’

...the $64,000 question
It’s not always personal...

Come, Come whoever you are
Wanderer, worshipper, lover of learning
Ours is not a caravan of despair
Come, even if you have broken your vow a thousand times
Come, come, yet again, come...

(Rumi – Sufi mystic and poet)
Hospices - Spiritual Pain

Cicely Saunders ‘Total Pain’ model:
• Physical
• Psychological
• Social
• Spiritual

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Components of Pain [WHO]

**Total pain**

**Cancer**
- Non cancer pathology
- Side effects of therapy
- Symptoms of debility
- Chronic fatigue

**PHYSICAL SOURCE**
- Loss of:
  - Social position,
  - Job,
  - Income
  - Role in family.
- Helplessness
- Disfigurement
- Insomnia

**DEPRESSION**
- Bureaucratic bungles
- Friends – let down
- Delays in diagnosis
- Unavailable doctors
- Therapeutic failure

**ANGER**
- Fear of pain; hospital, death
- Loss of dignity; control, bodily function
- Uncertainty – future
- Worry about family
- Guilt, sadness, spiritual unrest

**ANXIETY**
- Loss of:
  - Social position,
  - Job,
  - Income
  - Role in family.
- Helplessness
- Disfigurement
- Insomnia
Dame Cicely Saunders
Founder of the Modern Hospice Movement

‘...you matter because you are you and you matter until the last moment of your life...’

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Dame Cicely Saunders
Founder of the Modern Hospice Movement

Those who are dying are reached by the person who translates into the right depth of regard the lover’s explanation ‘I love you because you are you’.

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...For me it symbolises a relationship in which love maintains just the right distance. Look at the hand: it is present, delicate, radiating. It is the hand of tenderness. It is not the hand which grasps, which possesses, which imposes itself, which manipulates, no, it is the hand which welcomes and reassures, a hand which radiates warmth. A hand which is full of solicitude, and yet which stays at a slight distance, a distance of love...

Marie De Hennezel
...because all our lives are variations on just a few themes, and all our questions, our hopes and fears and joys and sorrows, so similar, I can enter imaginatively into your world and your vulnerability as you can enter into mine. And we can exercise...compassion, a compassion born of empathy.

Both words are synonyms for love, by which I don’t mean a romantic feeling but the readiness to give proper attention to whoever or whatever is before our eyes...

Very Reverend Michael Mayne
A wise old owl sat on an oak
The more he saw, the less he spoke
The less he spoke, the more he heard
Why aren’t we like that wise old bird?

Edward Hersey Richards
Paying attention and getting ourselves out of the way...

- Not giving a ‘good impression’
- Moments of ‘real connection’
- Potential and possibility
Getting ourselves out of the way...

1. Personal
2. CRAFT
3. Surprise
Example 1

Mary and me...

‘There is a legend about a bird which sings just once in its life, more sweetly than any other creature on the face of the earth. From the time it departs from the nest it searches for a thorn tree, and does not rest until it has found one. Then, singing among the savage branches, it pushes itself upon the longest, sharpest thorn. Dying, it rises above its own agony and suffering - one superlative song, existence the price. But the whole world stills to listen - and God, in his heaven, smiles…’

Colleen McCollough - *The Thorn Birds*

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Example 2

Paul and Marion...

‘Let me tell you this: if you meet a loner, no matter what they tell you, it's not because they enjoy solitude. It's because they have tried to blend into the world before, and people continue to disappoint them’.

Jodi Picoult
Example 3

The hospice choir...

…. When a person sings and cannot lift their voice, and another comes and sings with them, one who can lift their voice, then the first will be able to lift their voice too. That is the secret of the bond between spirit and spirit….

(Rabbi Pinhas of Koretz in Buber 1947, p.126)
Example 4

Fashion, beauty and dying...

Living, dying, remembering
When death comes
like the hungry bear in autumn;
when death comes and takes all the bright coins from his purse to buy me,
and snaps the purse shut;
when death comes like the measles-pox;
when death comes like an iceberg between the shoulder-blades,
I want to step through the door full of curiosity, wondering:
What’s it going to be like, that cottage of darkness?
And therefore I look upon everything
as a brotherhood and sisterhood,
and I look upon time as no more than an idea,
and I consider eternity another possibility,
and I think of each life as a flower, as common
as a field daisy, and as singular,
and each name a comfortable music in the mouth,
tending, as all music does, toward silence,
and each body a lion of courage, and something precious to the earth.
    When it’s over, I want to say: all my life
I was a bride married to amazement.
I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms.
When it’s over, I don’t want to wonder if I made of my life something particular, and real.
I don’t want to find myself sighing and frightened or full of argument.
I don’t want to end up simply having visited this world.

Mary Oliver
Contact

Nigel Hartley
CEO

Mountbatten
Halberry Lane, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 2ER
D. 01983 217310
E. nigel.Hartley@mountbatten.org.uk
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