

**JCECC International Conference on Community End-of-Life
Care: Sustainable Development and New Frontier**

***Community-based Group
Creative Arts Therapy for
Cancer Patients Under Palliative Care***

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Abstract

BACKGROUND:

Addressing death issues with patients with non-verbal, creative means support the process of discussing good death in a non-threatening environment.

OBJECTIVES:

To pilot a 6-session theme-based creative intervention designed to address a good death with patients referred to palliative service in a community setting.

To evaluate the role of the arts and how it relates to therapeutic goals on stress release, connecting with spiritual self and promoting self-acceptance.

PRACTICES

Spiritual needs, death anxiety, the afterlife, having open and honest communication with family and loved ones. Formal evaluation: patient satisfaction forms, the Distress Thermometer, the Chinese Version of Short Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Wellness Scale, and the Chinese Death Anxiety Inventory (pre-post basis).

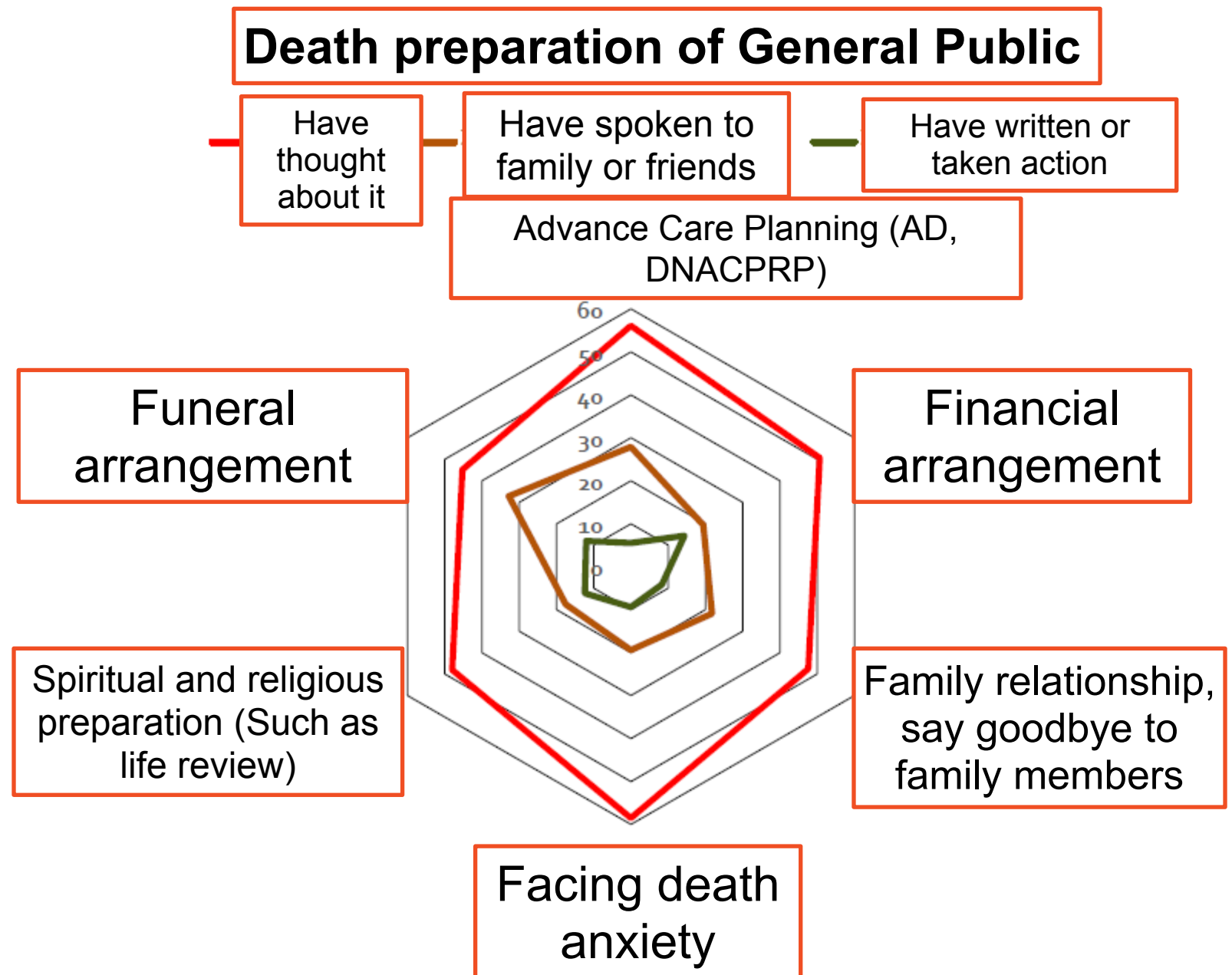
The therapeutic effects and the role of creative means were reflected in thematic structure by participants and creative arts therapists. The group with the same themes repeated 5 times in 3 years.

Results: The mean DT reduced from 5 to 3.86 (n=16); the overall score of C-SWEMWBS increased from 23.1 to 25.9 (n=16), shows the achievement of key therapeutic goals.

IMPLICATIONS: Participants reflected they felt safe to address death and dying issues with creative means and felt at ease and empowered. The imaginative space and relaxing nature of arts should be further applied and researched.

Good death elements (Hong Kong 2017)

More than **60%** of participants have thought about their Good Death elements but less than 10% of them have written or taken action.



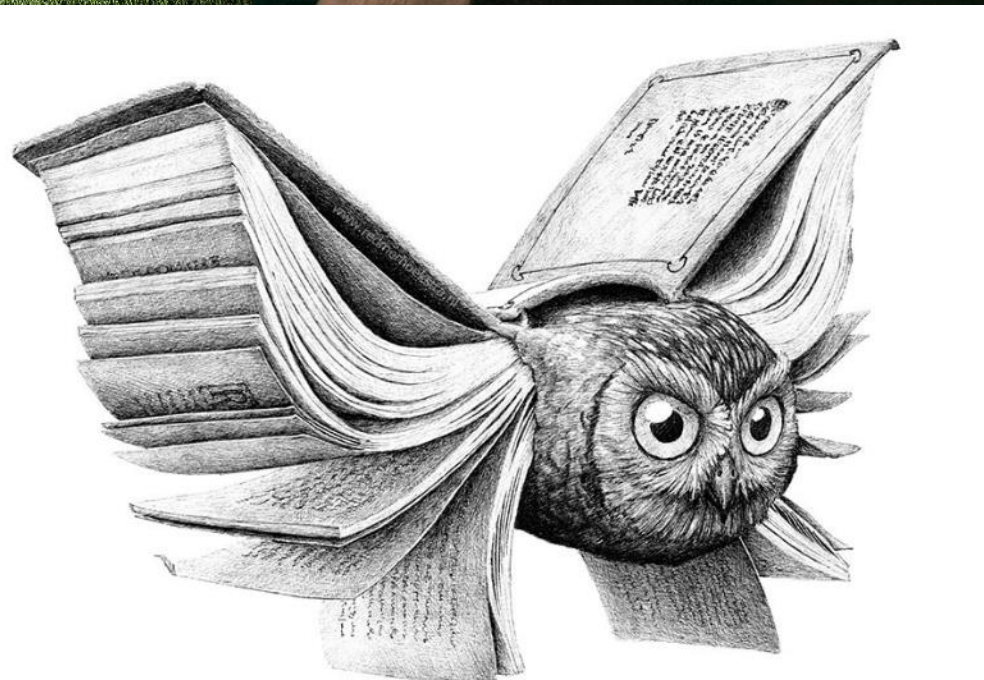
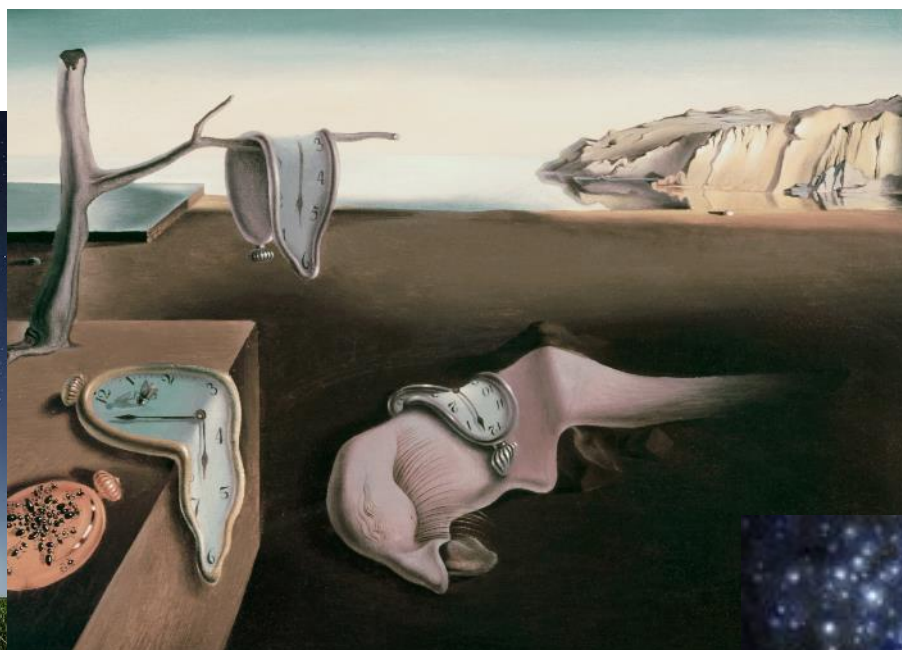
Ritualistic nature of art

Creating and endorsing an object as 'Art' is primitive;

Spiritual rituals involve different forms of art;

Art therapy's root of creating art as a ritual and endorsing or empowering symbolic objects.





Surrealism and its potential exploring intangible issues

Traditional Chinese culture/ After life myth



<https://youtu.be/MleywjUgFBU>

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Supermarket of the Dead. Proposition III

Fire offerings in China and the Cult of Globalised Consumption

One of the most ancient forms of Chinese spirituality proves to be a living tradition, still widely practised everywhere in Chinese culture. Paper replicas of money and goods are ritually

Exhibition Site

Residenzschloss ▶

DATES

14/03/2015–14/06/2015

Why we choose those themes?

- 88% of patients with advanced cancer reported religion and spirituality to be personally important in adjusting to their illness in the U.S. (Balboni et.al., 2007)
- 60% have thought about spiritual needs in Hong Kong (2017). Survey to explore a 'Good death' from Sau Po Centre on Ageing, The University of Hong Kong.

Definition of Spirituality:

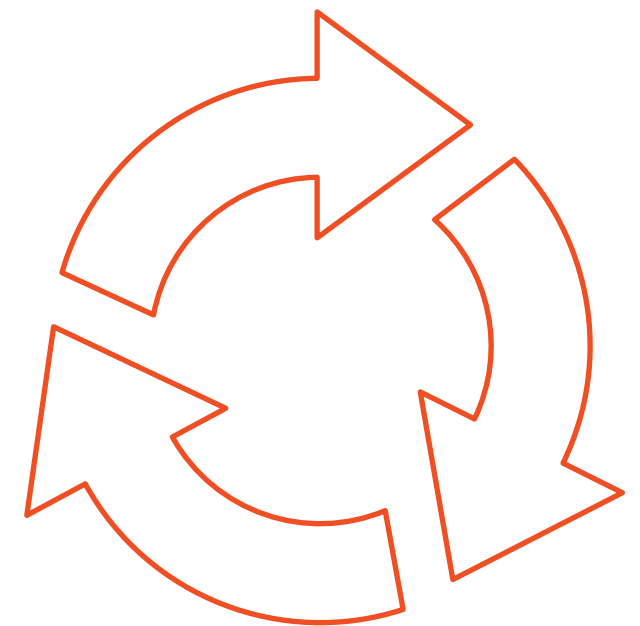
- Related to religion and religious belief but NOT equal to religion.
- Over 70 definitions in U.S.
- Generally, a religious concern centered on a specific faith congregation or community and is attached to an agreed-upon set of doctrines. (Lattannzi-Licht, Mahoney, Miller, 1998).
- Spirituality is the aspect of humanity that refers to the ways that individuals seek and express meaning and purpose and the way they experience their **connectedness** to the moment, to the self, to others, to nature, and to the significant or sacred. (Puchalski, Ferrell, Virani, Otis Green, Baird, Bull, Chochinov, Handzo, Nelson-Becker, Prince-Paul, Pugulese, & Sulmasy, 2009, p. 887)

Ritualistic nature of arts is a relevant means to explore spirituality

Group Structure

The group was held 5 times in 3 years
150 minutes on a weekly basis

- 20 minutes check-in
- 20 minutes music relaxation
- 10 minutes creative journaling
- 50 minutes art-making process
- 50 minutes sharing



Participants were diagnosed with terminal cancer conditions

Art materials

The multi-function room about 200 sq. ft.

A selection of materials were available for each session. These included:

- Drawing materials: charcoal, colour pencils, pastel, oil pastel, marker pens, crayons, gel pens.
- Painting materials: watercolour, acrylic, finger paint, ink, Chinese ink, poster colour, glitter paint.
- Paper: drawing paper, tissue paper, patterned paper, cardboard, sketch pads, all in assorted colour and size.
- Collage materials: feathers, felt, foam shapes, yarn, jewellery/beads, die cut flowers, small wooden shapes, small clothes, ribbon, shells.
- 3D materials: Clay, plaster, pipe cleaners, iron and bronze wire, paper pulp masks, light clay.



Group Sessions

| | Theme | Art form |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Session 1 | Discuss what Good death means to you | Personalised Art journal |
| Session 2 | Spirituality and faith | Being with art (3D object) |
| Session 3 | After life and ritual | Free form |
| Session 4 | Family and loved ones | Free form |
| Session 5 | Death anxiety | Free form |
| Session 6 | Review | Group artwork |

Some artwork by group members



Art journal

Spirituality and faith

After life



Family and loved ones

Death anxiety



<The tree of life>

Exploring beliefs about the **after life**

make sense of **suffering**

Provide Religious / spiritual
attachment object

cultivating **hope and faith**

Results

7 subscales: 'being optimistic', 'feeling relaxed', 'be able to have a close relationship', 'feeling useful', 'being able to deal with things', 'being able to think clearly, and 'being able to make my own decisions'.

C-SWEMWBS increased
from 23.1 to 25.9 (n=16)

The mean DT
reduced from 5 to
3.86 (n=16)

100% satisfied shown in the
patient satisfaction form

Distress Thermometer (DT) was applied on pre- and post-basis. DT is a single-item that was developed for measuring psychological distress (>4 clinical range)

- 1) to experience the power and joy of art;
- 2) enabled to search for a safe way to express thoughts and feelings;
- 3) felt the therapy group has strengthened their psychological or mental health well-being; and finally;
- 4) has reduced psychological stress.

Some written feedback from participants

I found it was helpful on reducing stress

Explored and expressed some very difficult feelings

In-depth emotional expression; peer support

Self-exploration and peaceful space

Developed positive perspectives on death; learnt more about emotions

Made sense of life (& death)



第五部份：

1. 你認為此活動對你有甚麼幫助：

感覺更放元之心態

非常能幫我處理情緒高低能支持我的脆弱！達到改善身心靈平衡及給與正能量！

懂得表達自己感受和同路人互相扶持
對自己的情緒多了；對死亡的看法較前正面。

重新認識自己

體會到每個人的經歷



癌症基金會
CANCERFUND
So no one faces cancer alone

Conclusion:

A theme-based structured creative arts therapy group can...

- Participants reflected that they felt safe to address death and dying issues with creative means
- felt at ease and empowered
- stress release
- connect with spiritual self
- promote self-acceptance

Conclusion:

Once diagnosed with irreversible terminal condition



Should begin to discuss death issues

Discuss death issues in a safe space



Allow ups and downs; manage anxiety mood with creative means

Follow up action after the group



Intensive individual support or family work

If we can open the window and look into the beauty of our lives, we are not waiting to die, we are sitting there and feeling at ease.

References

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