



What Truly Matters

Making the Most of Life, Preparing for Death

Workbook



**Best Life
Best Death**

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Introductory Module



In this Introductory Module you will get an overview and hear why I think exploring the subject of death is both important and enlivening. I will also explain the structure of the course and the action steps you'll be creating for yourself. Then I'll lay out the imaginary scenario that will start you on your way for this 7-module course.

“How we spend our days
is how we spend our lives.”

– Annie Dillard, *The Writing Life*






Introductory Module

WRITING

AS YOU GET STARTED, JOT DOWN A FEW WORDS ABOUT
HOW YOU FEEL AS YOU BEGIN THIS COURSE.

NEXT, SAY A LITTLE MORE ABOUT WHAT BRINGS YOU
TO THIS WORK AT THIS TIME?

WRITE ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH DEATH.
CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING PROMPTS.

-  *What was your first experience of death?*
-  *What was your most recent experience?*
-  *Which death has impacted you the most in your life so far?*

Always feel free to use more space!



Watch Video A

“The one to watch when you are ready to get started”

AFTER WATCHING THE VIDEO AND CONSIDERING WHAT YOU’VE EXPLORED IN WRITING SO FAR, WHAT ARE YOUR INTENTIONS FOR THIS COURSE?

Watch Video B (optional)

“The one where Diane tells how she got into this work”

Watch Video C

“The one about strong action steps and why they matter”

YOU WILL HAVE MORE SUCCESS IF YOU HAVE A SPECIFIC PLAN, SO CREATE YOUR FIRST ACTION STEP HERE, BASED ON THESE QUESTIONS:

#1 When do you plan to work on these materials?

#2 What is your deadline to finish this 7-module course?

WHICH PART OF MAKING SMART GOALS ARE YOU MOST RESISTANT TO? MAKING THEM SPECIFIC? MAYBE MAKING THEM TIME-BOUND? OTHER? (CONSIDER ACTIVELY USING YOUR CALENDAR)

Many of us struggle with being so concrete. Take a look at your resistance and push through! Creating specific and actionable goals is what will make this course come alive for you and have the biggest impact on your life.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

For each module, you will be answering reflection questions. Why is this important? Getting to know what *you* think about each of these areas is key to finding out what truly matters to you.

For each set of questions, notice:

1. *Where am I clear?*
2. *Where do I need more information?*
3. *What questions do I find myself wanting to avoid?*

→ *Despite your reluctance, answer each question to the best of your ability!*

You are here to clarify your thoughts and values,
gather ideas, and write things down
so they can be shared with your loved ones.

Let your curiosity lead the way!



LET'S SET THE SCENE!
FOR THIS PROCESS IMAGINE....

You are the age you are now.

*You have the health
that you have right now.*

*In 89 days, something will occur —
an accident or health event.*

*After that, you will suddenly
be unable to speak or share
what is important to you.*

*24 hours later, and 90 days from now,
you will pass from this earth.*

3 months... 90 days... 13 Mondays....

If this is all the time you have left:

- *What will truly matter most during these days?*
- *What 'loose ends' call for completion?*
- *What might you regret not getting to?*
- *Are you as prepared as you would like to be?*

These are the truly big questions of this course.



“Only a small fraction of us, 10 to 20 percent, will die without warning. The rest of us will have time to get to know what’s going to end our lives. As discomfiting as that can be, it does afford us time to live with this knowledge, get used to it, and respond. We do have some choice about how we orient ourselves toward the inevitable.”



– from *A Beginner’s Guide to the End: Practical Advice for Living Life and Facing Death*, by BJ Miller MD and Shoshana Berger

Next steps

- Explore additional resources that interest you. See website page for articles, videos, podcasts, and book suggestions!



Module 1

Our PHYSICAL Bodies and Physical ENVIRONMENT

In the Physical Module, you'll use the reflection questions in the workbook to think about your physical body and your physical environment. Whatever your biological age or stage of physical health, you'll be considering: what truly matters when you think about your body and the end of life?

“Death is not seen as an ending, but rather an opportunity for a person to take off these ragged clothes we call a body and walk naked.”

– Malidoma Patrice Somé



Module 1

WRITING

Which resource materials from the introductory module did you explore and what stood out for you? (Note that there are *loads* of things out there, and I've tried to collect the best of what is current. All of the resources I have shared pass two tests: relevance and user-friendliness.)

READ THIS QUOTE, THEN RESPOND IN WRITING.

"People who are willing to contemplate their aging, vulnerability, and mortality often live better lives in old age and illness, and experience better deaths, than those who don't." — Katy Butler, *The Art of Dying Well*

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Watch Video 1A

"The one where Diane talks about warm blankets, orchids and your death date"

Watch Video 1B

"The one with the visualization, Goodbye to hands"



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1 What does your physical body mean to you?

2 Where would you like to be during the last months, weeks, days of life? What would you like this physical environment to feel like?

3 How would you like to be cared for physically?

1. What things make you comfortable and at peace now?
2. What things make you uncomfortable and anxious now?

4 How do you want support when/if physical goals become difficult?
Who would you like to attend to you physically if you need help?



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

5 What do you want for the care of your body near the end of your life? What do you not want?

1. Types of relaxation/awareness assistance?
2. Pain and symptom management?
3. Treatments outside of conventional medical support?

6 What physical issues do you live with now?

7 Think of your ancestors and your health right now. How will you most likely die?

8 You have 90 days to live: What are the most important actions you would like to take in relation to your physical body?



YOUR VISION, CURRENT REALITY AND ACTION STEPS FOR THE PHYSICAL DOMAIN

READ THE FOLLOWING TWO EXAMPLES OF VISIONS, CURRENT REALITIES, AND ACTION STEPS. NOTICE THE SPECIFIC DETAILS IN THE ACTION STEPS.

PHYSICAL DOMAIN EXAMPLE 1

Vision: “I would like to connect with nature, to spend some time walking or relaxing outdoors each day as much as I can for as long as I can.”

My current reality: “I am not outside very often, just a walk to the mailbox, or a little time on the back porch. I have not been to the mountains in a long time. I spend a lot of time in front of screens and this is a big distraction from what matters to me.”

➤ **Action Step:** I will go outside each day for at least 20 minutes, either to walk or to sit or garden in my backyard. I love the early mornings, so I will go out first thing. I will do this at least 3 mornings a week, starting tomorrow.

➤ **Action Step:** I will visit the the mountains one day this month with a friend, and I will email her today to see what day could work for her, so we can both get it on our calendars.

➤ **Action Step:** I will make plan for where to go for our day trip. I will go online in the next 3 days to look at restaurants and the driving route, after I hear back from my friend and we have chosen a date.

➤ **Action Step:** I will write a letter to put with my end of life paperwork (advance directives, will, etc.) explaining that I would like to be outside daily if possible, and by a window that can open to the fresh air. I will write this by the end of this week. I will also remind my son and daughter-in-law where my papers are, and how important this is to me.



PHYSICAL DOMAIN EXAMPLE 2

Vision: “I want to decrease my worry and anxiety. I’d like to feel that I can ‘surrender’ more than I usually do. I want to have massages more regularly and listen to music to be encouraged to relax and let go.”

My current reality: “I have some anxiety and deal with it via supplements and acupuncture, but I don’t think this will be enough during my final days. I have not had a massage in more than a year, and my music needs updating.”

➤ **Action Step:** I want to get more information about the treatment of pain, and the difference between Western medicine and alternative pain management. I will ask three friends for suggestions, by sending them emails today. I will also research alternatives online.

➤ **Action Step:** I will contact at least 3 massage therapists and learn if I can find one who will do home visits. I will ask the same friends for their ideas, and I will also search online to find names who offer this service. I will call and leave messages for a few massage therapists by the end of this week.

➤ **Action Step:** I will book the next available massage, and make a plan for when to regularly get a massage, at least once a month. I will book appointments for the next three months.

➤ **Action Step:** Music feels more complicated, but I’d really like to do this. I will ask my daughter for help in creating a playlist of music I wish to hear during my final days. She will be able to help me put it on a device that will be easier to use, teach me how to use it, and help me set up the ear buds that are still in the box. I will text her tomorrow to ask when we could set up a time to do this.

➤ **Action Step:** I will listen to this playlist when I am resting, as soon as we get it set up.



After reading these examples and considering your answers to the Reflection Questions for this domain, summarize your current reality and then your vision for your Physical Body and Environment. How might you create physical comfort, safety, and a healing environment to live as fully and freely as possible?

You may notice your mind saying, “Wait is this for *now* or for when I'm *dying*?” Let yourself be open to whichever feels right to answer. You are imagining that you will die in 90 days. How would you like to spend those days, and what would you like at the end of your life, if you were unable to speak for yourself? Whether that was for one day or much longer?

Physical Body and Environment

My vision:

My current reality:



Now make a list of the action steps you will take to get from your current reality to your vision. Be as detailed as possible. How close are you to what you desire? What's realistic? You won't be able to change everything... but what could make a difference in how this experience feels physically?

Physical Body and Environment

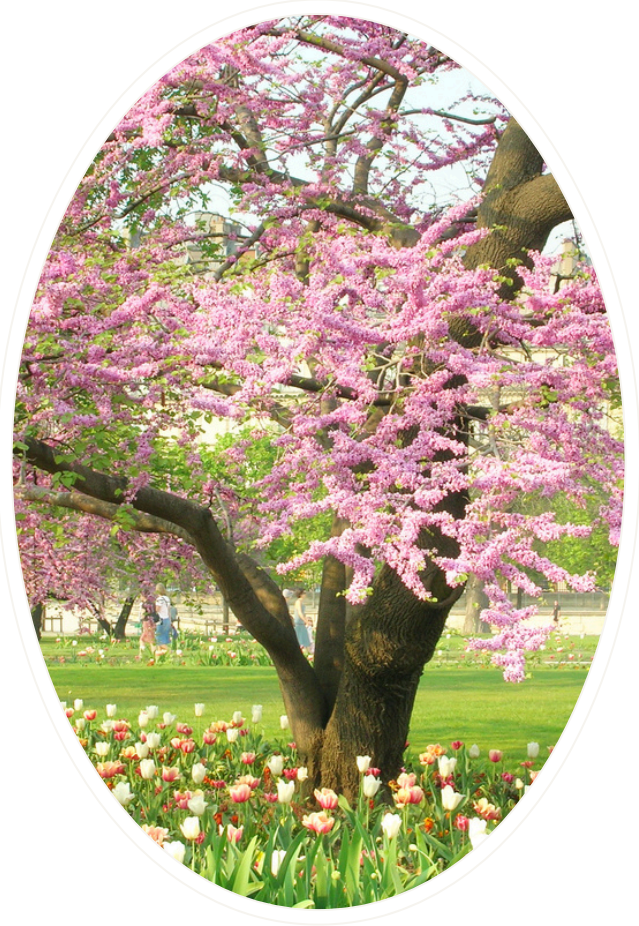
➤ Action Step:

➤ Action Step:

➤ Action Step:

➤ Action Step:

“I am of the nature to grow old. I am of the nature to be sick. I am of the nature to die. All that is dear to me and everyone I love are of the same nature to change. There is no way to escape being separated from them.”



- from a Buddhist practice in *Advice for Future Corpses and Those Who Love Them: A Practical Perspective on Death and Dying* by Sallie Tillsdale

Next steps

- Explore some of the resources in this section on the web page. If you haven't already done so, consider watching one of the Ted Talks.
- As you move through the course, consider: What specific topics would you like to learn more about?



Each of us has a name
given by the seasons
and given by our blindness
Each of us has a name
given by the sea
and given by
our death.

- from "Each of Us Has A Name" by Zelda,
translated by Marcia Lee Falk

Module 2

Our SPIRITUAL Beliefs and Practices

In the Spiritual Module, you'll have space and time to consider your beliefs and practices. You might already know what is true for you, or you might explore new angles of what spirit means to you. Once again, the reflection questions in the workbook will guide your exploration. And as always, I'll be asking: Have you shared your thoughts on this aspect of life with those who matter to you?



Watch Video 2A

“The one where Diane talks about chaplains, cherry blossoms and extra-ordinary events”

Module 2

WRITING

WHAT ARE YOUR SPIRITUAL BELIEFS AND PRACTICES?

HAVE YOUR BELIEFS CHANGED IN THE COURSE OF YOUR LIFE?

HAVE YOU SHARED YOUR THOUGHTS ON THIS ASPECT OF LIFE WITH THOSE WHO MATTER TO YOU? WHY OR WHY NOT?



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Once again, imagine that you are your age and health right now, and you have only 3 months to live. Notice what arises from your life history and family background in regards to the Spiritual domain. How were you raised? What is your lineage, and what is current for you in regard to your spiritual life?

1 What does spirit mean to you? How do you define spirit?

2 You have 90 days to live: What spiritual or religious practices would be important for you to do or to have others support you in doing during this time?

3 What are your beliefs about the afterlife?

4 How could you be supported in relation to these beliefs?



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 5** What are the most important things someone who is caring for you at the end of your life should know about your spiritual life?

- 6** You have 90 days to live: What are the most important actions you would like to take in relation to your spiritual life?



YOUR VISION, CURRENT REALITY AND ACTION STEPS FOR THE SPIRITUAL DOMAIN

READ THE FOLLOWING TWO EXAMPLES OF VISIONS, CURRENT REALITIES, AND ACTION STEPS. NOTICE THE SPECIFIC DETAILS IN THE ACTION STEPS AND THE TIME ELEMENT IN THE EXAMPLES BELOW. FOR EACH OF YOUR ACTION STEPS, MAKE A PLAN FOR *WHEN*.

SPIRITUAL DOMAIN EXAMPLE 1

Vision: “There are certain readings that I would love to hear out loud. I can imagine my friend C. reading to help me rest deeply and surrender in my final days.”

My current reality: “My friend C. lives far away and yet I would like to hear her reading passages or poetry, as she has a beautiful, strong voice. I haven’t told her I want this. I’m not currently reading much myself. My eyes bother me, so I prefer to listen.”

➤ **Action Step:** I will tell C. that I would like this at the end of my life. I can do this in an email this evening.

➤ **Action Step:** I will ask her if she will call me and read to me on the phone. If this feels good and the timing feels right, I will see if there's a way to do this regularly or have her make a recording for me.

➤ **Action Step:** I will print out copies of some of my favorite short passages in a beautiful, large font, and I will read one of them to myself each day before I go to sleep, starting today.

➤ **Action Step:** I will also have my grandson help me to find an audio recording of poetry or other favorite writings to listen to as I relax.



SPIRITUAL DOMAIN EXAMPLE 2

My vision: “I want to experience being totally present, being in the moment versus thinking or worrying about the future. I want to develop my sense of awareness.”

My current reality: “I think and worry a lot. My mind races and goes off on tangents. I have tried to meditate, but I think I need more guidance. I don’t have any method or a teacher to support me. I have bought some beginner meditation books, but I get bored reading them and don’t end up trying what they suggest.”

➤ **Action Step:** Today, I will email two friends who have some experience with this and ask if they have suggestions of guided audio meditations to try.

➤ **Action Step:** I will ask these same friends if they have any meditation teachers or groups in town that they recommend.

➤ **Action Step:** By Friday I will go online, listen to some samples through iTunes, and see if any guided meditations appeal to me.

➤ **Action Step:** I will pick one of the books I bought last year about meditation and mindfulness and read the parts that are most interesting to me. I will try this on Saturday morning over my coffee, this coming weekend, instead of reading the news. (That alone should help my worries.)



After reflecting on your answers to the questions for this domain and these examples, summarize your current reality and then your vision for how your Spiritual Beliefs and Practices might best be supported at the end of your life. What do you hope for? Who could help you with this? What might be helpful to have in writing?

Then make a list of the action steps you will take to get from your current reality to your vision. Be as detailed as possible. How close are you to what you desire? What makes sense as an action step that is truly do-able for you? Be detailed to help make these action steps easy to complete.

Spiritual Life, Beliefs and Practices

My vision:

My current reality:



Spiritual Life, Beliefs and Practices

➤ Action Step:

➤ Action Step:

➤ Action Step:

➤ Action Step:



Watch Video 2B

“The one where Diane shares ‘Practice for Death’”

WRITING

DID YOU UNCOVER ANYTHING NEW IN YOUR REFLECTIONS ON THIS DOMAIN?

IS THERE ANYTHING THAT WOULD BE IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO SHARE WITH LOVED ONES? WHEN AND HOW MIGHT YOU DO THAT?

CHECK YOUR ACTION STEPS SO FAR. ESPECIALLY, ARE THEY SPECIFIC ENOUGH AND DO THEY HAVE A TIME FRAME ATTACHED? IS THERE ONE YOU COULD DO TODAY?



“The truth is, once you learn how to die, you learn how to live.”

- Mitch Album, Tuesday with Maury



Next steps

- Check out the resources online. What types of these appeal to you? See how you like to learn, and follow that impulse.
- If you haven't already done so, complete one of the action steps you made in Module 1 or 2.



“When death finds you,
may it find you *alive*.”

– African proverb

Module 3

Our EMOTIONAL Life and RELATIONSHIPS

In this Module about our Emotional Lives and Relationships, you'll be swimming in your (undoubtedly) rich and complex emotional life. This is a big arena for we humans! You don't have to solve everything, and sometimes “lack of resolution” is exactly where things land. But whether you are intrigued by gratitude or forgiveness, see if you can enter this realm with an attitude of curiosity and possibility.



Watch Video 3A

“The one where we discuss what truly matters and think about our loose ends”

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Notice what comes up in this domain and how full our emotional lives are! You do not have to tackle everything, but notice what are the most important places in your heart and in your day-to-day life in this domain. You can also consider the long-term arc of relationships and how time takes on new meaning when there is not a lot of it left.

1 What do emotions mean to you?

2 What do your relationships mean to you?

3 Describe your emotional life and your emotional nature. Include any challenges you have with anger, grief, joy, sadness, anxiety, or other feelings. (Extra pages encouraged as needed.)



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 4** Identify a personal relationship associated with each of the emotions above. (Anger, grief, joy, sadness, anxiety, or other feelings.)

- 5** What regrets do you have in relation to your emotional and relational life?

- 6** You have 90 days to live: What relationships in your life right now need healing and/or completion and/or connection? Which one would you focus on?

- 7** You have 90 days to live: What are the most important actions you would like to take in relation to your emotional/relational life?



Watch Video 3B

“The one with the visualization called In the Others’ Shoes”

Listen to Audio

“The one with the Gratitude meditation by Rhea Mader”

YOUR VISION, CURRENT REALITY AND ACTION STEPS FOR THE EMOTIONAL & RELATIONSHIP DOMAIN

EMOTIONAL AND RELATIONSHIP DOMAIN EXAMPLE 1

Vision: “I would like to connect more strongly with my sister, G. I want her to know I forgive her for anything in the past, and that I hope she can forgive me. I want her to visit me before I die.”

My current reality: “My sister G doesn’t call me, text me, or reach out in any way. It is a one-sided relationship that only works if I pursue it. She lives nearby but has avoided me for some time. I don’t understand what happened, but the reality of my health changing causes me to want to look at the limited time I have left. I don’t need to know what happened, unless she feels she needs to share something. I just want to connect before it is too late.”

➤ **Action Step:** I will pray and ask that a way opens for us to be able to be in each other’s lives. I will pray for this every evening and morning, beginning this week.

➤ **Action Step:** I will reach out to a mutual friend, by calling him tomorrow morning. I will ask for his thoughts and see if he has any ideas on bridging this gap.

➤ **Action Step:** I will also ask a family member for help, probably our sister K. I will write her a long email, by Sunday night, asking her to reach out to G on my behalf and explain the change in my health.

➤ **Action Step:** After talking with our friend and K, I will set up a meeting with G. I would like to have this happen in person, on neutral ground, in the next 3 weeks, but it might have to just be at my place. It is really important to me that she knows my current health reality.



EMOTIONAL AND RELATIONSHIP DOMAIN EXAMPLE 2

Vision: “I want to apologize to my son D for being such a stern father. I do love him, but I have never told him. It is difficult for me to express this to him or anyone. I want to be at peace with this relationship, and I want him to be present in these final months of my life.”

My current reality: “My son D and I are estranged, probably mostly because of my opinion of his parenting, which I expressed maybe too often over the past few years. We sometimes argue about politics, but we’ve come to see that we can’t change the other. His mother and I are divorced, and I want this precious time to be less conflicted than some years have been for all of us. ”

➤ **Action Step:** I will write a note to D, in case I can’t say it without reading it. To practice, I will read the note aloud in my room several times as if he were there. I will begin the note tomorrow, and I will finish it by next Wednesday. I have a plan to see D two days later and I want some time to practice. This all feels surprisingly hard, but I am committed to speaking words that may matter to him.

➤ **Action Step:** I will call on a family member to listen to my apology and see how it lands. I will call my cousin Q next Thursday to read the note to her. I trust her input.

➤ **Action Step:** I will ask D to join me in the living room when he comes to pick me up. I will tell him that I love him and how proud I am of all he has done, including his parenting, despite the things I said that contributed to this difficult time. If I am too timid, I will read him the note. If I can’t manage to read it, I will hand it to him.

➤ **Action Step:** I will ask D to be there at the end of my life.



After writing your thoughts and reading these examples, summarize your current reality and then your vision for your Emotional Life and Relationships. What stands out? Where are the most important loose ends? Some things never get resolved, and that's okay too... but are there any places asking for a small step? Or a large one?

Make a list of the action steps you will take to get from your current reality to your vision. Be as detailed as possible with the "when" and the "who." Are there any places where you could take a small step?

Emotional Life and Relationships

My vision:

My current reality:



Emotional Life and Relationships

➤ Action Step:

➤ Action Step:

➤ Action Step:

➤ Action Step:



WRITING

WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST LOOSE END IN THIS DOMAIN? IF YOU HAVE FEWER THAN 90 DAYS REMAINING, IS THERE ANYTHING TO BE DONE? OR ANYTHING TO LEAVE FOR AFTER YOU ARE GONE?

CHECK YOUR ACTION STEPS. IF YOU COULDN'T DO IT ALL, BUT YOU COULD DO THE MOST IMPORTANT THING, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

The Guest House

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.
A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.
Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.
The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.
Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

~ Rumi, *Translated by Coleman Barks*



Next steps

- Check out the online resources.
- I think it is important for this Emotional Life and Relationships Domain to get real about time. What could you actually get done in the time remaining of your 90 days? Assuming you actually (hopefully!) live past this three month expiration date, what will be the most important action steps in this realm to truly enact?

“Helping, fixing and serving are ways of seeing life. When you help, you see life as weak; when you fix, you see life as broken; and when you serve, you see life as whole.”

– Rachel Reman from *Zen Hospice*



Module 4

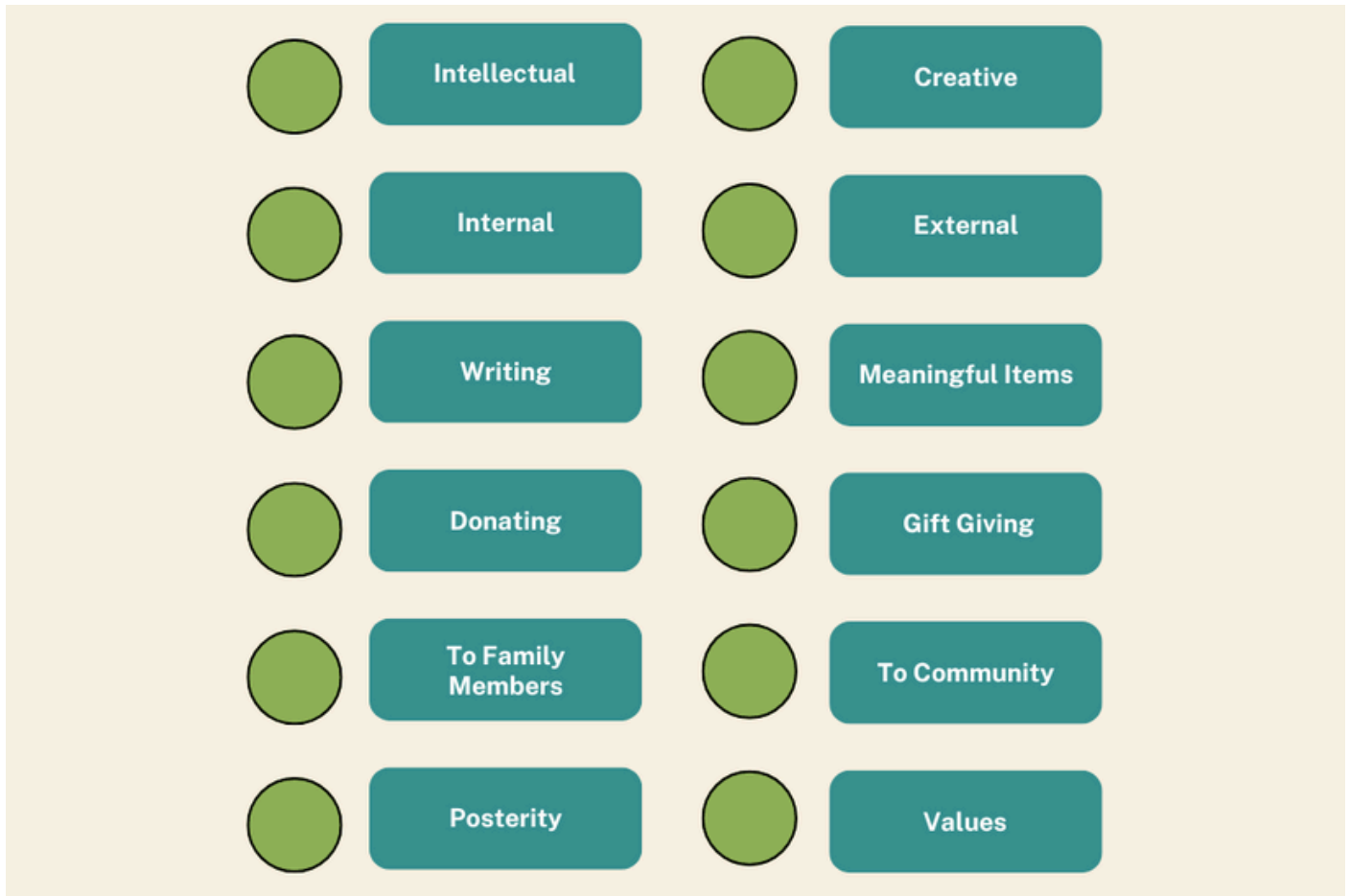
Our LEGACY and what MEANING we leave behind

In the Legacy and Meaning Module, we explore the meaning of our lives – a big topic! You'll think about what truly matters to you to leave behind for others who remain. The reflection questions will help you think about the many layers that comprise legacy thinking. You may find yourself thinking about:

- Internal + External
- Intellectual + Creative
- Meaningful Items + Values
- Writing + Donating
- Gift Giving - To Family Members + to Community



You may find yourself considering multiple levels and layers of legacy creation.



Watch Video 4A

“The one where Diane encourages us to be creative and personal”

Watch Video 4B (optional)

“The one where Diane describes projects others have come up with”



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

In this domain, notice what intrigues you and what you feel drawn to explore further. Notice questions that are challenging and re-word them to feel relevant to your situation and circumstances. Consider what you have already done in your life and what you still want to get done, large or small.

1 What has given your life meaning?

2 What are some of the most important moments in your life? Describe the pivotal times that made you who you are.

3 How do you want to be remembered? If there was one thing you wanted people to know and remember about you, what would it be?

4 What would your friends say about you?



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 5** What has been most important for you on your internal journey? Your external journey?

- 6** If your life was a story, and you viewed it from afar, what have been some of the themes of this life story?

- 7** What are you most proud of, or what do you think your most important contribution has been?

- 8** If you could pass on any wisdom, what would it be?



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

9 Are there creative projects you would like to complete before you die?

10 Is there anything, material or emotional, that you would like to leave to others?

11 What are your favorite passions?

12 Is there anything you need to do to feel complete in your life?



YOUR VISION, CURRENT REALITY AND ACTION STEPS FOR THE LEGACY AND MEANING DOMAIN

LEGACY AND MEANING DOMAIN EXAMPLE 1

My vision: “As I am less physically strong, I want someone to sit with me, looking at photos and helping me remember things I’ve done in my life that were wonderful for me and others. Plus, I want my grandkids to each have a photo album of the family.”

My current reality: “So many of my photos are in boxes in the closet from the move. I still remember who people are in the photos, but those names are not written down with the photos, and some of them no one else will recognize.”

➤ ➤ **Action Step:** I am still able to do most of this on my own, but I haven't had the motivation and I find it overwhelming. I will ask my neighbor to help me set up a folding table in the living room, and carry the first two boxes in. I will text her today and ask her to help me for 30 minutes this weekend.

➤ **Action Step:** My best time of day is first thing in the morning, so after breakfast, I will spend 45 minutes on sorting photos each day, starting on the day that we get the table set up. I will keep only the very best pictures! And I will write names on the back. (I need to find out what kind of pen to use?)

➤ **Action Step:** I will make four piles: 1) Toss out, 2) Put in photo albums for me, 3) Give to J, 4) Give to L. My goal will be to work on this for 3 weeks.

➤ **Action Step:** In 3 weeks, I will put packages of photos in the mail to J and L. Maybe I will get them into albums first if I feel up to it. (Maybe R or F could help with this part?)

➤ **Action Step:** After I mail those photos off, I will sort my photos into categories. I will ask friends to help me order albums online and put photos into them. (Note - this action step needs more specific plans - I will make a new list for this action step after my initial sorting is done. Maybe I want to get a few frames?)



LEGACY AND MEANING DOMAIN EXAMPLE 2

My vision: “I want to know that my grandchildren each have a special keepsake from me. I want them to know the story behind the thing they are to receive.”

My current reality: “My grandchildren don’t know of my illness, and some are too young to understand. I have things like jewelry, ceramic art, wooden boxes, paintings, and lovely tchotchkes. I love these things, even though they are not necessarily of monetary value. Each one has a story behind it.”

➤ **Action Step:** I will sort through my things and determine a gift for each grandchild. I have 4 grandchildren. I will begin this work next Tuesday, when I have a free afternoon, but I think that will only be a start.

➤ **Action Step:** As I decide, I will type a note about the history of each item — how it came to me and what it has meant to me. I will write it in the form of a letter, with the date. I will print and sign each one, and put it in a beautiful envelope with their name on it.

➤ **Action Step:** I will let my kids know that this is my wish. We will schedule some family visits over the next two months so that I can see each of my grandkids and give them these items and the letters. (More details will need to be decided as I get into the project.)

➤ **Action Step:** I will have a camera on hand so that we can photograph these family visits. I will ask G to help me make a scrapbook of the photos for my birthday in 3 months. I do know that I would like some photos of this to capture their reactions.



After reading these examples for the Legacy and Meaning domain and considering your answers to the Reflection Questions, summarize your current reality and your vision. How will you take steps to create what you hope to leave behind? What do you feel you would like to complete in this realm? What truly matters to you here?

Make a list of the action steps you will take to get from your current reality to your vision. Lay out the details that will help make it real.

Legacy and Meaning

My vision:

My current reality:



Legacy and Meaning

➤ Action Step:

➤ Action Step:

➤ Action Step:

➤ Action Step:



WRITING

WHAT MATTERS MOST TO YOU TO LEAVE BEHIND WHEN YOU ARE GONE? HOW WILL YOU DO THIS?

HAVE YOU TOLD THE STORIES YOU WANT TO SHARE? WHAT'S THE EASIEST WAY TO DO SO?



CONSIDER THE POWER OF A VIDEO. ALMOST EVERYONE THINKS “OOO ICK, NOT VIDEO” - YET IT IS A SIMPLE AND POWERFUL WAY TO SHARE YOURSELF AND SHARE YOUR STORIES. IF YOU WERE TO MAKE SOME VIDEOS, WRITE A LIST OF WHAT THEY WOULD BE ABOUT.

CHECK YOUR ACTION STEPS. IF YOU COULDN'T DO IT ALL, BUT YOU COULD DO THE MOST IMPORTANT THING, WHAT WOULD IT BE?



“Death comes to every individual. There is an amazing democracy about death. It is not an aristocracy for some of the people, but a democracy for all of the people. Kings die and beggars die; rich men die and poor men die; old people die and young people die; death comes to the innocent and it comes to the guilty.”

– Dr Martin Luther King



Next steps

- This section of additional resources online has some unique ideas!

“Today, advanced medicine wards off death far better than it helps us prepare for peaceful ones. We feel the loss. Many of us hunger to restore a sense of ceremony, community, dignity, and yes, even beauty, to our final passage. We want more than pain control and a clean bed. We hope to die well.”

– Katy Butler, *The Art of Dying Well:
A Practical Guide to a Good End of Life*



Module 5

Our PRACTICAL NEEDS and AFTER DEATH CARE wishes

In the Practical and After Death Care Module, you'll be thinking hard about your practical paperwork – is it all up to date and in order? If not, you've already got an action step, right there. You'll also be thinking about what you'd like to have happen after you die. What matters to you at this stage? No, sorry, you cannot opt out and say, “Doesn't matter to me, I'll be dead!” Let's get to work!



Watch Video 5A

“The one where Diane finally talks about what we thought this course was going to be about - paperwork!”

Watch Video 5B

“The one with the visualization called ‘I Am the Patient’”

Watch Video 5C (optional)

“New and alternative body disposition methods”

Watch Video 5D (optional)

“You don't have to have your grandmother's funeral (unless you loved it)”

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

The options available for after death care are changing rapidly in the US, Canada and other countries, and what is possible will depend on your region. Do you know what your options are where you live? What do you think you want for after death care? What would you like more information about? What practical arrangements would you like to make ahead of time?

At a broad level: How do we honor the body after death? What sacred ceremonies and celebrations can you envision?

Most importantly: if you cannot speak for yourself, who will speak for you? This is a critical action step if you do not have this in place!



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1** Who do you entrust and designate to uphold your wishes? If you cannot speak for yourself, who will speak for you ?

- 2** Do you have specific belongings that you want to designate to someone so that there is no ambiguity after your passing?

- 3** What *don't* you want to happen to your body after death?

- 4** Do you have a Will, an Advance Directive, Healthy Care Proxy, Power of Attorney? (These go by various names, depending on your state)



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

5 What would you like the arrangements after you die to look like? What additional information would you like to learn to help you decide?

- Buried, cremated, other?
- Do you want a green method?
- Gift your organs or body to science?
- Service, ritual, celebration, or other ceremony?
- Obituary, written by whom?

6 Are there any cultural/spiritual/ritualistic practices that you would like honored?

7 Is there anything else that is important to you to put in place for your loved ones before your passing?

*Notice where you need more information, and ask yourself:
“How am I going to find out what I need to know?”
Reading, web search, site visit, conversations... “What works best for me?”*



YOUR VISION, CURRENT REALITY AND ACTION STEPS FOR THE PRACTICAL NEEDS AND AFTER DEATH CARE DOMAIN

PRACTICAL AND AFTER DEATH CARE EXAMPLE 1

Vision: “I want to have my dear friends be with me at my bedside. After I die, I want them to wash me and anoint me with oils and cover my body with flowers. I want them to sing me out of this world.”

My current reality: “My bedroom is too small for even a small gathering of friends. Some friends will love this, but some might not be so open to it.”

➤ **Action Step:** When I reach the point of being confined to my bed, we will arrange for a hospital bed, which will likely be more comfortable and practical in a number of ways. We will set that up in the living room, where there is space for friends to come and be with me comfortably. I will ask my son to talk with our hospice social worker about how and when to do this. I'll ask him to find out more information this week.

➤ **Action Step:** I will talk to my friends on this coming Sunday afternoon. We will make a list of the things I would like to have so they are on hand. We will discuss flowers, songs, scents, and who would like to be involved. I will ask their ideas on how to reach out to everyone, even those who might be more traditional and find this too unusual. I'd like to think about what they might do in another part of the house or yard.

➤ **Action Step:** We will review my funeral arrangements. I think I need more information before I can add more details. I will look at a file I have been keeping of obituaries and memorial service biographies. I will call 2 friends who are comfortable talking about this, and see what other decisions we might make ahead of time. I will also bring this up with my two sons and let them know that I want to discuss this.



PRACTICAL AND AFTER DEATH CARE EXAMPLE 2

Vision: “After I am gone, or maybe even beforehand, I want people to enjoy a celebration of my life - eating, laughing, telling stories.”

My current reality: “Only my closest friends know that I am nearing the end date of my life, and my daughters don’t know who I would like to have included in my celebration of life or how to go about finding that information. I worry that my energy is decreasing, and I want to figure out what to do, soon.”

➤ **Action Step:** I will prepare a list of friends and give it to my daughters. I will do this in the next week. If I need help, I will ask one of my caregivers to do this with me. I will think about whether I want to send an email to reach some of those who are farther away.

➤ **Action Step:** I will talk on Monday with my three daughters about what we might do. Does it make sense to do something soon, while I am still alive? It sounds both wonderful and tiring! I want to talk to them about what they see as options. Are any of us up for a gathering? I feel both yes and no. Talking about it may help to decide. I’ve been avoiding bringing it up, but now I am ready.

➤ **Action Step:** I need to double check that all my kids can get into my phone and my computer. I want to make sure that the passwords have been shared so that they can all get to my address list and calendar. I will go through my phone with one of my kids and highlight key people. I will text them all tomorrow to see which one could do this with me and make a plan for when.



After answering the Reflection Questions for this domain and seeing these examples, summarize your current reality and then write your vision for your Practical Needs and After Death Care. What do you imagine? Who will help to carry this out? Perhaps you are creating an outline, with others filling in the details, and having ideas from you can guide them. You may consider prepaying the arrangements for your body or other costs.

Make a list of the action steps you will take to get from your current reality to your vision. If your vision is to leave things organized for those who follow... it's time to get busy and be specific about carrying out your plans.

Practical and After Death Care

My vision:

My current reality:



Practical and After Death Care

➤ Action Step:

➤ Action Step:

➤ Action Step:

➤ Action Step:



WRITING

HAVE YOU DESIGNATED A HEALTHCARE PROXY?

- Yes / No
- If not, *this is the most important thing* you need to get done!
- What seems to be stopping you? Read the article called “How to Choose a Healthcare Proxy” in the additional resources.
- Who is your person, or who are you considering, and what are some things you would like them to know?

HAVE YOU COMPLETED A WILL?

- Yes / No
- If not, read the article “How to Make a Will without a Lawyer” in the additional resources.
- Even very smart people put this off. If you have not created this document yet, write a pledge here to yourself to get it done. How will you do this? (Do it yourself (DIY) or attorney?) By when?



“Death is a good companion on the road to living well and dying without regret.”

- Frank Ostaseski, *The Five Invitations*

Next steps

- Review the resources online if you like.
- What is possible varies a lot from state to state. Do some research online or make some phone calls to find out what is possible for you.

Module 6

NEXT STEPS



This final module is called Next Steps for a reason – you are just getting started on a life-long journey of experiencing how the awareness of your mortality enriches how you live. Enjoy this module as a vital way to pull all of the pieces together. You are going to love what you create in this one... open it up and see!

WHAT TRULY MATTERS TO YOU?



Watch Video 6A
That's a wrap

Module 6

WRITING

NOW THAT YOU'VE FINISHED, JOT DOWN A FEW WORDS OR SENTENCES ABOUT HOW YOU FEEL AS YOU COMPLETE THIS WORK. COMPARE THESE THOUGHTS WITH HOW YOU FELT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE COURSE.

WHAT STANDS OUT FOR YOU FROM YOUR TIME WITH THESE MATERIALS? WHAT DO YOU WANT TO TAKE AWAY?



WRITING

AN IMPORTANT COMPONENT OF THIS WORK IS SHARING IT WITH OTHERS WHO MATTER TO YOU. WHO WILL YOU SHARE IT WITH? WHEN MIGHT YOU START THIS CONVERSATION?

TAKE A LOOK AT THE “WHAT TRULY MATTERS MAP” ON THE NEXT PAGE. USE THIS TO SUMMARIZE YOUR THOUGHTS AND YOUR ACTION STEPS FOR EACH DOMAIN. IT COULD BE A WAY TO SHARE YOUR THINKING WITH OTHERS, OR IT COULD BE YOUR TO-DO LIST AS YOU MOVE FORWARD.

What Truly Matters



CURRENT REALITY		ACTION STEPS				VISION	
Physical						Physical	
Spiritual						Spiritual	
Emotional						Emotional	
Legacy						Legacy	
Practical						Practical	

Congratulations!



You have reflected on what matters to you, created specific action steps in a variety of areas of your life, and made plans that you can share with others.

Don't just stand there with your hair turning gray,
soon enough the seas will sink your little island.

So while there is still the illusion of time,
set out for another shore.

No sense packing a bag.

You won't be able to lift it into your boat.

Give away all your collections.

Take only new seeds and an old stick.

Send out some prayers on the wind before you sail,

Don't be afraid.

Someone knows you're coming.

An extra fish has been salted.

By Sono, from *The Five Invitations* by Frank Ostaseski