The Open University

Ageing Well Public Talk Series 2021/22

Series run Dr Jitka Vseteckova

School of Health, Wellbeing and Social Care
Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies
The Open University

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Series 2021/22 - Talk 2
What do we need to know and do to prepare for death and grief?

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About me

Mother

Grandmother

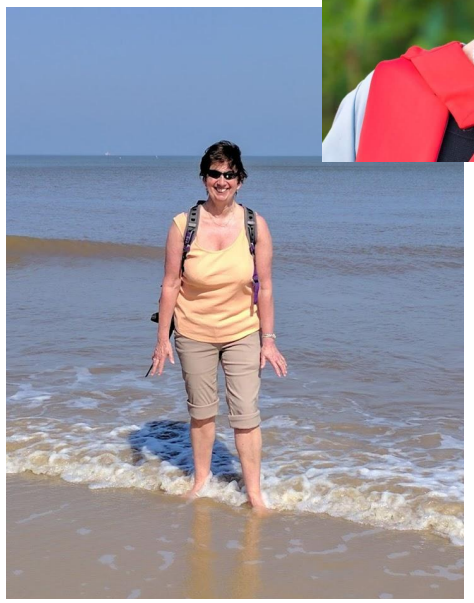
Dog lover, walker, reader, knitter!

CEO

Learning - Masters x2, PhD - still learning..

Specialist palliative care, community, hospice, education, family therapist ,

My interest - dying death grief - everyone’s business



Preparing

Why don’t we talk about or prepare for death?

Death has changed from an event which is supported by your faith leader to one which is managed by healthcare professionals including hospices

Preparing for birth

Birth

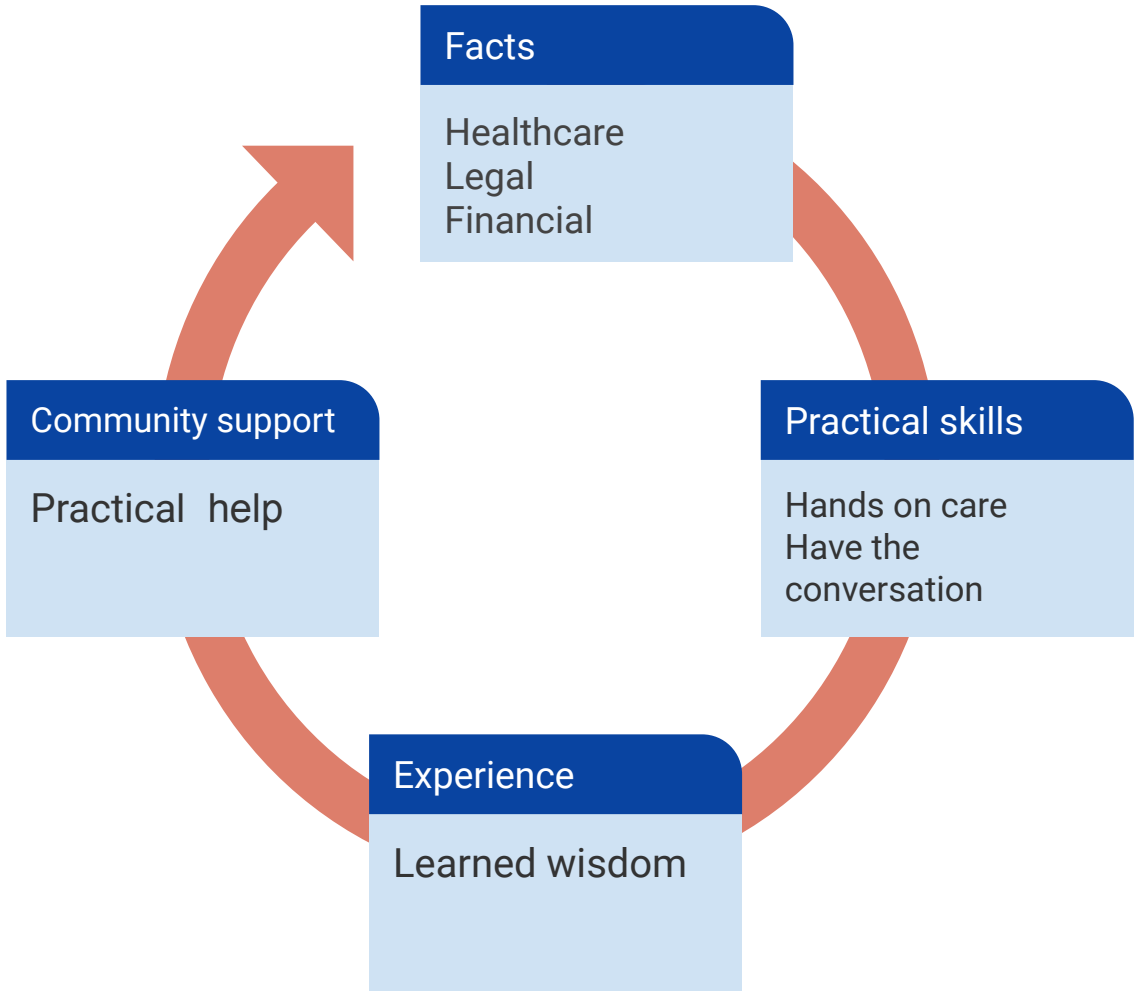
- Learning -
  - Understanding changes to your body, baby, birth stages
  - Professional roles, system
  - Books, video, classes, friends, mother
- Practical
  - Nursery, equipment, nappies, clothes, hospital bag, music, food
- Partner, support network
- Monitoring - midwife, obstetrician
- Decision plan and options

Knowledge

Increasing our knowledge will enable us to take action to care for the dying and bereaved.

Practical checklist

- Equipment - bed, mattress, sheets, commode,
- Food - person and carer
- Support network
- Music, pictures
- Drugs - oral / injection / family trained
- Who's who list and tel numbers
- Information and clear guidance - what to expect
- Helpline numbers



Noonan, Horsfall, Leonard & Rosenberg (2016) Developing death literacy, Progress in Palliative Care, 24:1, 31-35, DOI: 10.1080/09699260.2015.1103498

Myths about talking or not talking...

Tempts fate

Too upsetting

The professionals will let me know if I need to talk about it

I want to protect my family / children from being upset

National myth that we don’t talk about it

Treatment

At all costs?

Better outcomes?

Resuscitation

Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation CPR

It’s won’t always be ‘successful’

Right to refuse but not to demand (in UK)

Success rates vary from 17.5% down to less than 1% (survival to discharge from hospital). A lot of it depends on how ‘well’ you are in the moments just prior to your heart and breathing stopping.

Useful link: http://talkcpr.wales/

Questions to discuss with professionals

Your understanding of your illness?

Your fears and worries for the future?

Your goals if time is short?

What treatment or risks would be unacceptable to you?

What haven’t you asked they think you need to know?

Plans

Advance Care Plans are used to record your treatment and care wishes.

Advance Decision (Living Will) allows you to write down any treatments that you don’t want to have in the future, in case you later become unable to make or communicate decisions for yourself.

Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) allows you to give someone you trust the legal power to make decisions on your behalf in case you later become unable to make decisions for yourself either (either health or finances)

Before I die I want to spend my time……

Last days

45% of us in England this will be our last view

23 % of us in England might be at home

Where we die depends on the conversations we have and the plans we put in place

How do we prepare?

Financial / legal

- Pension
- Care costs
- Lasting Power of Attorney - Financial and Health
- Last Will and Testament
- Care - Advance Directive
- Digital - online, passwords

Wishes

- Funeral
- Bequests
- Care
- Momentos
- Letters
- Your legacy

If you do not make any plans for your digital estate, there may be items withheld from your loved ones or claimed by the online service provider. An executor using a password to access an account after a death may be guilty of a criminal offence under the Computer Misuse Act which was passed in 1990.

What is the dying process like?

- Can happen anywhere
- People can still hear
- Saying last goodbye
- Last words
- Being present

'Dying is not as bad as you think'
BBC Ideas
https://youtu.be/CruBRZh8quc

Funerals and myths

There is no legal requirement to use the services of a funeral director

Buy coffins online

Funerals at home

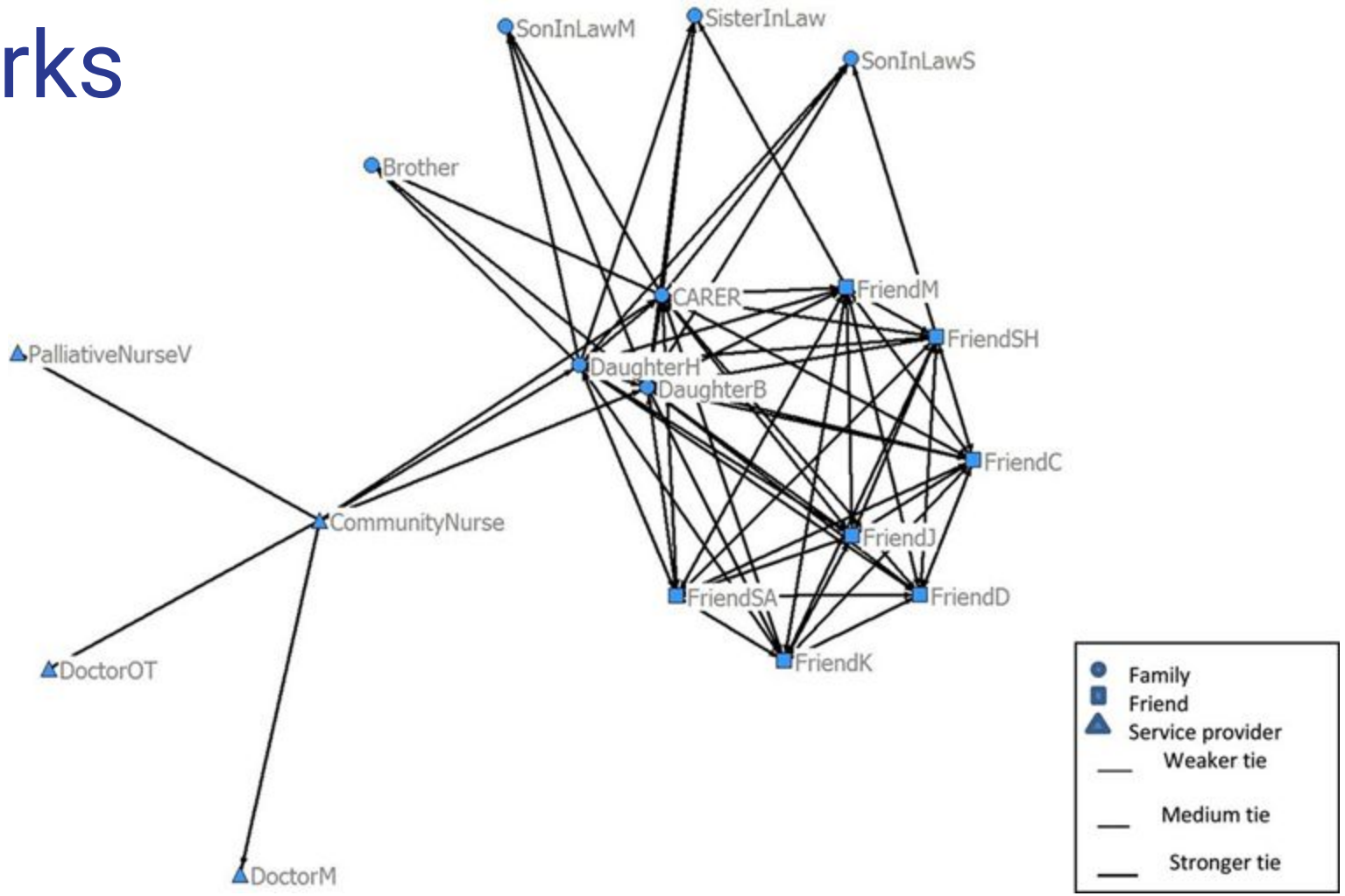
You may bury a dead person on your own land (there are some restrictions)

The only legal requirement in the UK for funerals is that the death must be certified and registered, and the body must be disposed of.

Disposal means disposal by burial, cremation or any other means, and 'disposed of' has a corresponding meaning' - source Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1926.

London set to have its first DIY 'Coffin Club' where members decorate their own caskets and discuss death over tea **London Evening Standard**

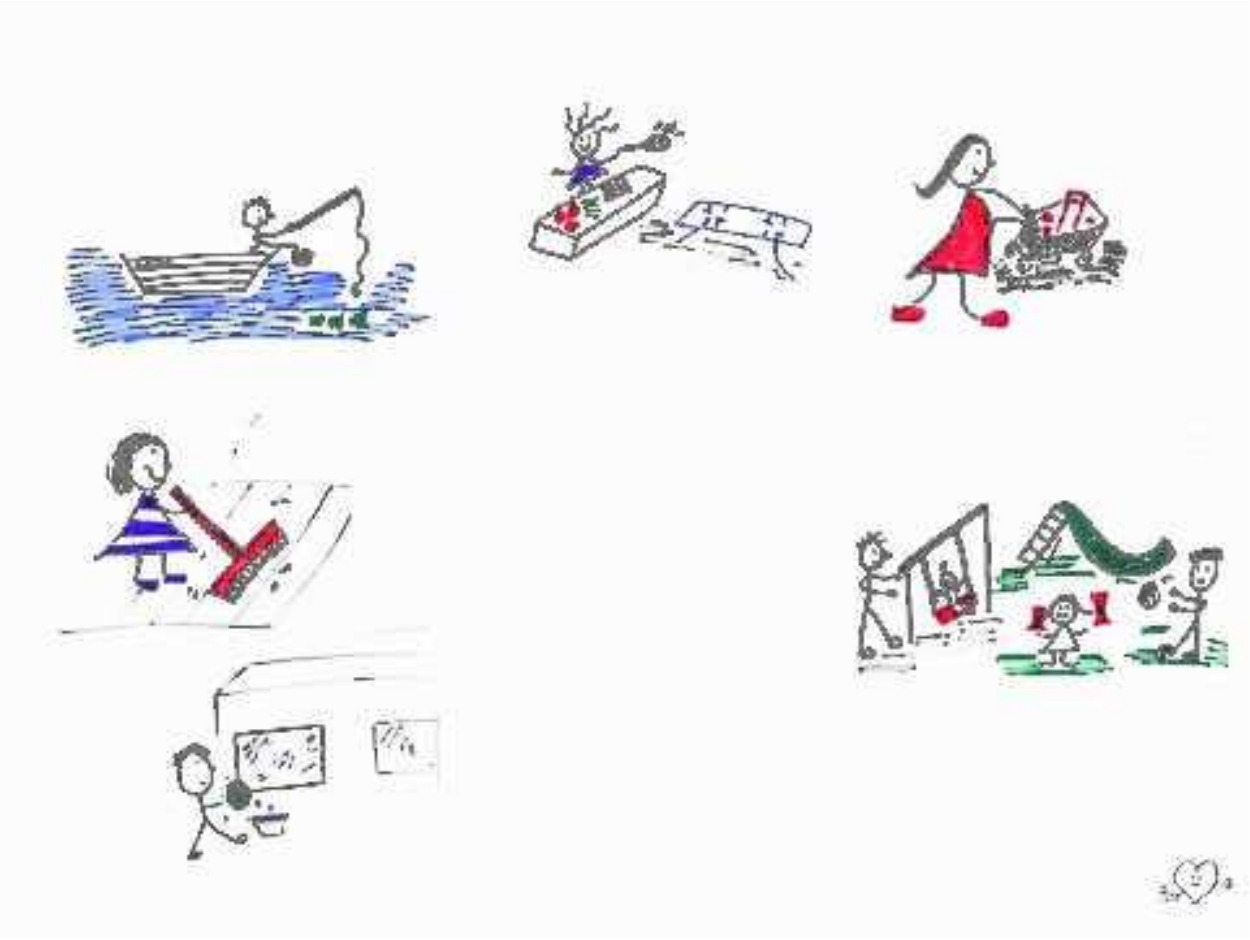
Support networks



Rosemary Leonard et al. BMJ Supportive and Palliative Care 2017

Horsfall, D., Yardley, A., Leonard, R., Noonan, K., & Rosenberg, J. P. (2015). End of Life at Home: Co-Creating an Ecology of Care

Support of friends and family



Bill's Story Let's Talk Series https://youtu.be/_5tJGaWjRZk

Grief

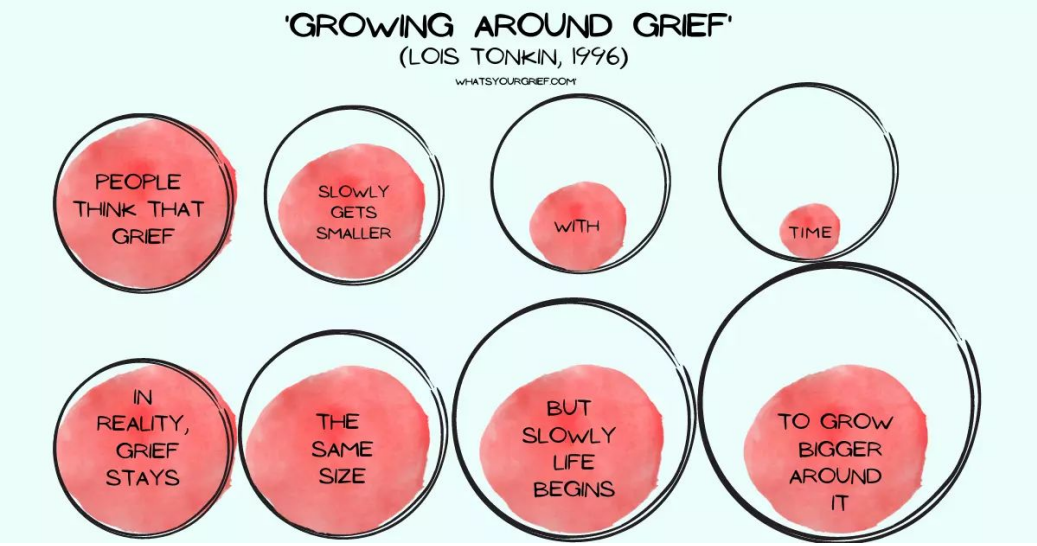
- Grief is different for everyone
- Grief is not time limited
- It can come and go

Useful links include:

https://whatsyourgrief.com/

https://www.cruse.org.uk/

https://www.griefchat.co.uk/



Ageing Well series of Public Talks - topics

The Open University

- ***Are we prepared to live longer?*** *(Jitka Vseteckova & Catherine Pestano)* ***September 22nd 2021***
- ***Advanced care planning*** *(Barbara Gale)* ***October 20th 2021***
- ***Ageing brain*** *(Jitka Vseteckova & Marco Calabria)* ***November 17th 2021***
- ***Learning languages and digital technologies in older age*** *(Ursula Stickler)* ***December 15th 2021***
- ***Disenfranchising grief and caring while ageing*** *(Kerry Jones)* ***January 19th 2022***
- ***Nutritional needs while ageing*** *(Jitka Vseteckova & Alan Hastings)* ***February 23rd 2022***
- ***Pharmacotherapy while ageing*** *(Jitka Vseteckova & Sonal Mehta)* ***March 23rd 2022***
- ***Mindfulness and ageing*** *(Abi Methley)* ***April 20th 2022***
- ***Move it and breathe*** *(Jitka Vseteckova & Declan Ryan)* ***May 18th 2022***
- ***Standing tall*** *(Jitka Vseteckova)* ***June 22nd 2022***
- ***The things we don't talk about – Intimacy and ageing*** *(Andreas Vossler)* ***July 20th 2022***

Useful resources:
https://ordo.open.ac.uk/collections/Ageing_Well_Public_Talks_2020-21/5122166
https://ordo.open.ac.uk/account/home#/collections/5493216

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE 'AGEING WELL PUBLIC TALK' SERIES