The last Outfit: Can we prepare for DEATH?

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Structure of Presentation

- Death Attitude among Hong Kong Chinese
- Introduction of the Project Background
- Theoretical Background
- Introduction of the Experiential Exercises of the Project
- Findings of Pre-Post Effectiveness
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Death as a Taboo Topic

Thou shalt not see

Thou shalt not talk

Thou shalt not listen to

非禮勿視

非禮勿言

非禮勿聽

Thou shalt not see

Thou shalt not talk

Thou shalt not listen to
In contrast,

Longevity is a blessing
Euphemisms for Death

賣鹹鴨蛋  
Selling Salted Egg

香咗  
Become fragrant

瓜老襠  
Become Melon

歸西  
Going Westward

移咗民  
Migrated
Euphemisms for Death

“Doot”
嘟啲

“Ding”
叮啲

Going back to heaven
返咗天家

Bye-Bye
拜拜

Going down
落咗下邊
Avoiding the word 4

No 4th, 13th, 14th, & 24th floor
Observations in Training among Chinese Professionals in Hong Kong

- “It is so good, but ...”
- Disconnection of brain and heart
- Tearful eyes
- Follow-up sharing of personal experiences
What are the Death Attitudes Among Clinicians?

Would their death attitude affects their work with clients in death and dying related scenario?
But researches also inform us...

The Therapist's *Use of Self* *(Rowan & Jacobs, 2002)*

**Therapist as a moderator and mediator in therapeutic changes** *(Sexton, 2007)*
Researches inform us ...

Clinicians’ report discomfort in working with death and dying (Kirchberg & Neimeyer, 1991)

Death Anxiety and death attitudes affect the distress level and empathetic understanding (Servaty, Krejci, & Hayslip, 1996; Kirchberg, Neimeyer, & James, 1998)

Burnout (Ben-Zur & Michael, 2007), Compassionate Fatigue (Figley, 2002; Strom-Gottfried & Mowbray, 2006), Vicarious traumatization (McCann & Pearlman, 1990) and Professional grieving (Papadatou, 2000) are derivatives of work-related stress in helping professionals.
Oxygen Masks: Wear your own mask before you attend to the dependents
Importance of Care for the Clinicians
What kind of competence do we need in working with clients facing death and bereavement?
ENABLE is hoped to fill in the gap

- Emotional Competence
- Death anxiety
- Knowledge Competence
- Research
- Theories
- Skill Competence
- Assessment
- Intervention
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Empowerment
Network of
 Adjustment to
Bereavement and
Loss in
End-of-life
Ripple Effect

Project ENABLE

Primary ENABLING Programme

- Training & Manuals
- Life & Death Education

Professionals - ENABLERS

- Elderly and families

Secondary ENABLING Programme

- Experiential Workshop & Training
- Preventive or Remedial Support

- Dying patients, families and bereaved families

Life & Death Education

Primary ENABLING Programme
Secondary ENABLING Programme

3-day Training on Anticipatory Grief

4-day Training on Bereavement Counseling

8-day Training on Complicated Grief

3-Day Experiential Life Rejuvenating Workshops
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Death Anxiety

“...a cluster of death attitudes characterized by fear, threat, unease, discomfort and similar negative emotional reactions, as well as anxiety in the psychodynamic sense as a kind of diffuse fear that has no clear object.”

(Neimeyer, Moser, & Wittkowski, 2003).

Death Salience

- Past Regrets
- Future Regrets
- Meaningfulness of life
- Manageability of life

Death Anxiety

Death Salience

- Past Regrets
- Future Regrets
- Meaningfulness of life
- Manageability of life

Death Anxiety

Death Salience

Extent to which individuals contemplate their own mortality and death

Past Regrets

Future Regrets

Meaningfulness of life

Manageability of life

Death Anxiety

Past Regrets

perceived unfulfilled accomplishment of life goals caused by omission of something that should have been done, or commission of something that should have been avoided.

Death Salience

- Past Regrets
- Future Regrets
- Meaningfulness of life
- Manageability of life

Death Anxiety

Future Regrets

the perception of the negation of life goals that is caused by the realization of mortality in the future

Death Salience

- Past Regrets
- Future Regrets
- Meaningfulness of life
- Manageability of life

Death Anxiety

Meaningfulness of Life
Extent to which the life is worth living

- Death Salience
- Past Regrets
- Future Regrets
- Meaningfulness of life
- Manageability of life

Death Anxiety

Manageability of Life
perception of adequacy of resources in meeting life challenges
Kirchberg, Neimeyer and James’ Model

Death Anxiety

- Level of Distress
- Level of Easiness
- Empathetic Responses
Integrated Model

Death Salience

- Past Regrets
- Future Regrets
- Meaningfulness of life
- Manageability of life

Death Anxiety

Level of Distress

- Level of Easiness

Empathetic Responses

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Emotional Competence

Overall Objective:

- Reduce Death Anxiety through alternating:
  - Death Salience
  - Past Regrets
  - Future Regrets
  - Manageability of Life
  - Meaningfulness of Life
Design

General Encounter With Death (Ghost Stories & visual Stimulation)

Past Regrets (My Life Line)

Future Regrets (Anticipatory Losses)

Death Salience (Death Simulation)

Meaningfulness and Manageability of Life
(Provision of Space, Journal writing, and Sharing)
Illustrations of Experiential Exercises

Working towards general fear of death

- My ghost stories and death superstitions
- Visual Stimulations
Illustrations of Experiential Exercises

Working on Past regrets

- My Life Line

  ➢ Adopted from Adventure Based Counseling
Illustrations of Experiential Exercises

Working on Past regrets

- My Life Line
Illustrations of Experiential Exercises

Working on Future regrets

- My unanticipated Losses
  - My five most important possessions
  - My five most important abilities
  - My five most important roles
  - My five important persons
Illustrations of Experiential Exercises

Working on Future regrets

- My unanticipated Losses

- Rob by
  - Illness
  - Accident
  - Natural Disaster
  - Fate
Illustrations of Experiential Exercises Working on Death Resilience

- My personal reflections
  - My tomb stone
  - My letter to my beloved
Illustrations of Experiential Exercises

Working on Death Salience

- Death Simulations
Training Manual on Anticipatory Grief

善生探索日志

Project ENABLE
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289 participants

- Gender:
  - 234 females, 55 males

- Age:
  - mean = 36.04, sd = 9.59 (from 22 – 67)

- Length of work:
  - mean = 8.91 years, sd = 7.84 (from 0 – 40)
Evaluation

Timing of Assessments:

- $T_1$: Before Camp
- $T_2$: After Camp
- $T_3$: After Training

3 days

3 weeks – 5 weeks
Evaluation

Tools of Assessment

- **Past Regret:**
  - Past-Regret Questionnaire (Tomer & Eliason, 2005)

- **Future Regrets:**
  - Goal & Mode Values Inventories (Braithwaite & Law, 1985)

- **Meaningfulness of Life and Manageability of Life**
  - Sense of Coherence (SOC Scale) (Antonovsky, 1993)
Evaluation

Tools of Assessment

- **Death Anxiety:**
  - Multidimensional Fear of Death Scale MFODS (Hoelter, 1979)

- **Death Acceptance:**
  - Death Attitude Profile-Revised (DAP-R), (Wong, Reker and Gesser, 1994)

- **Competence in working with dying and bereaved**
  - 4 self-invented questions
Result (Comfort Level)

Means of different dimensions of comfort level at different time points (N=289)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working with the dying</td>
<td>5.68</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>7.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with bereaved</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>persons</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graph showing the comfort levels over different time points for working with the dying and working with bereaved persons.
Result (Competence)

Means of different dimensions of competence level at different time points (N=289)
Result (changes over time)

$T$-values of comparing means of comfort and competent scores over different time slots (N=289)

(* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$T$ value $(T_1 - T_2)$</th>
<th>$T$ value $(T_2 - T_3)$</th>
<th>$T$ value $(T_1 - T_3)$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comfort level in working with the dying</td>
<td>8.21**</td>
<td>5.05**</td>
<td>11.68**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort level in working with bereaved persons</td>
<td>7.88**</td>
<td>5.62**</td>
<td>12.00**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competent level in working with the dying</td>
<td>8.04**</td>
<td>8.12**</td>
<td>13.87**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competent level in working with bereaved persons</td>
<td>6.97**</td>
<td>7.74**</td>
<td>13.17**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Result

$d$-values of comparing means of comfort and competent scores over different time slots (N=289)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$d$ value $(T_1 - T_2)$</th>
<th>$d$ value $(T_2 - T_3)$</th>
<th>$d$ value $(T_1 - T_3)$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comfort level in working with the dying</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort level in working with bereaved persons</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competent level in working with the dying</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competent level in working with bereaved persons</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Result (Death anxiety)
Means of different dimensions of death anxiety score at different time points (N=348) *(the higher the score, the lower the anxiety)*
## Result (death anxiety)

$t$-value of comparing means of death anxiety over different time slots (N=348)

(* $p < .05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p<0.001$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>T1-T2 df = 295</th>
<th>T1-T3 df = 272</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factor 1 (Fear of the Dead)</td>
<td>6.38***</td>
<td>9.96***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 2 (Relational Concern)</td>
<td>4.01***</td>
<td>9.57***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 3 (Physical Concern)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.99*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 4 (Existential Concern)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 5 (Unfinished Business)</td>
<td>2.53*</td>
<td>6.56***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 6 (Fear of Conscious Death Moment)</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.37***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 7 (Fear of the Dying Process)</td>
<td>4.90***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 8 (Fear of the Medical Procedures)</td>
<td>2.87**</td>
<td>3.35**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Result (death acceptance)

Means of different death acceptance score at different time points (N=231)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Approach Acceptance</th>
<th>Escape Acceptance</th>
<th>Neutral Acceptance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>2.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Result (death acceptance)**

*T*-value of comparing means of death acceptance over different time slots (N=231)

(*) *p* < .05, (**) *p* < 0.01, (***) *p* < 0.001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach Acceptance</th>
<th>T value (T₁ – T₂) df = 221</th>
<th>T value (T₁ – T₃) df = 199</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.36***</td>
<td>4.99***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escape Acceptance</td>
<td>5.74***</td>
<td>2.40*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral Acceptance</td>
<td>3.07**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Result (Meaning of Life)

*T*-value of comparing means of life attitude score over different time slots (N=72)
(* p < .05, ** p< .01)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$T$ value ((T_1 - T_2))</th>
<th>$T$ value ((T_1 - T_3))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensibility</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.11**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manageability</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.41*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningfulness</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.01**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Result (Past Regrets)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>T1</th>
<th></th>
<th>T2</th>
<th></th>
<th>T3</th>
<th></th>
<th>T1-T2 t df = 70</th>
<th>T1-T3 t df = 71</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mean</td>
<td>s.d.</td>
<td>mean</td>
<td>s.d.</td>
<td>mean</td>
<td>s.d.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mean</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>-0.84</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The higher the score, the more regret*
### Result (Future Regrets)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
<th>T1-T2 t df = 70</th>
<th>T1-T3 t df = 71</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>All</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mean</td>
<td>s.d.</td>
<td>mean</td>
<td>s.d.</td>
<td>mean</td>
<td>s.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F1: Cultivating Relationships</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>4.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2: Spirituality</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>4.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F3: Status</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The higher the score, the more regret
Summary

The programme can

- improve the comfort and competent level of the participants in working with bereaved and dying persons significantly

- Reduce the death anxiety (fear of death, relational concern and existential concern) of the participants significantly

- Increase the meaning of life (meaningfulness and manageability) of the participants significantly
How to move on?

Reflections:

- Are life regrets a determinant for death anxiety?
- What are the determinants that affect the comfort level and competence?
- Why manageability improved?
- What components in the training programmes that help?
From Anxiety to Appreciation:

Reported Changes after the camp:

- **Personal level**
  - Better EQ, more patience to mother and colleagues
  - More energy, more life energy
  - Closer to God
  - More aware of the importance of self care
  - Enjoy life more
  - Less stubborn (無咁執著)
  - More kind to others 溫柔咗
From Anxiety to Appreciation

Reported Changes after the camp:

- Family level
  - More expressions of love (接放工、煮飯)
  - Discuss advance directives with/for family members
  - Sharing the eulogy with family members
  - Plan for family trip
  - Facilitate reconciliation of family members
  - More appreciation to spouses
From Anxiety to Appreciation

Reported Changes after the camp:

- **Work level**
  - More sensitive to needs of clients and their family members
  - Being more comfortable with helplessness
  - Being more able to listen
  - Being more patience
Thank you!
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