

Compassionate Community Case Study

Death Cafés

Grand Forks, BC

What you need to know	
Organization	Boundary Community Hospice Association
Website	https://kootenayseniors.ca/item/boundary-community-hospice-association/
Contact information	Curtis Shokoples – CurtisShokoples@telus.net
Target Audience	Community members wishing to explore themes around death, dying, grief, loss and living fully that often do not have a forum
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To help normalize conversations in the community on death, dying, grief, loss and living fully To provide a safe place where these conversations can be facilitated
A story to share	One woman who was intensely afraid of death - and so many things about living - has softened and has shifted to really enjoying living.
Needs/Rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Death Cafes are a worldwide leaderless social movement in more than 65 countries Boundary Community Hospice began the Death Cafes in Grand Forks three years ago using the tenets of DeathCafe.com Creating a safe space for conversations in the community on death, dying, grief, loss and living fully
Outcomes/Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good conversations Normalizing the topics of death, dying, grief, loss and living fully Reducing social isolation Building community
Cost to Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free to attend
What is needed to initiate a similar activity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A quiet, easily accessible location (e.g. back room of library) Tea, coffee and cookies A facilitator Some possible topics to discuss (DeathCafe.com provides a list of topics, however, participants often have themes and topics they would like to discuss) Name tags (optional) Promotional poster - post at key locations around town (e.g. library, community centre, restaurants, etc.)

Existing Toolkit/Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website - DeathCafe.com • Descriptive PowerPoint slides
Evaluation/Progress	Attendance: 9-23 participants per session
Challenges/obstacles	<p>Challenge: People are not expected to speak. It is necessary to establish a safe environment.</p> <p>We addressed this challenge by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • beginning with introductions and the ground rules – confidentiality, many interpretations of religion and spirituality, and always listening respectfully, especially if you disagree • once these have been provided, people want to tell their stories and listen
<i>Learnings/Surprises</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have not needed to use topics supplied on DeathCafe.com because people have experiences they want to discuss • Haven't needed guest speakers despite expecting to • People who started out very quiet have shared their stories at their individual pace • Everyone is a natural storyteller • "Like kids playing with tire... others join in once it gets going" • Conversation goes from chitchat to real connection almost immediately • Facilitator is like talk show host and just needs to be curious about people • Has attracted people who really care about the community - has unexpectedly brought in volunteers • Should really be "Life Café" as it makes people want to make the most of their lives • At one session, 5 of 9 participants had had Near Death Experiences • Have not been able to enlist younger people
<i>Recommendations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No posting of topics in advance. Topics are determined by the interests of those who attend. • Stopped using an evaluation form as it changed the dynamics, formalizing the conversation. Keep informal like friends meeting for coffee. • "There are many more laughs than what one might expect – keep it safe, confidential and light."

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