
Hello and welcome to Death Expo. This Death Expo is a four day educational event online that's being brought to you by End of Life University and I am Dr. Karen Wyatt. I'm the founder of End of Life University and the host for Death Expo and for the interviews that you're going to be listening to here. This presentation today is titled "What Hospice Patients Know that the Rest of Us Don't," and unlike other presentations you'll be listening to here, I have no guests. I will be simply talking to you myself. This is an opportunity for me to tell you a little bit more about who I am so you can get to know me better.

So I'm glad you're here to join me for this talk and I'm really looking forward to sharing with you some of my thoughts and experiences around the end of life and the issues that it brings up for us. So thanks so much for tuning into this talk. Thanks also for signing up for Death Expo and I hope you have a great experience here listening to all the interviews, enjoying our keynote speakers, and hopefully also participating in some of the live call-in events in the evenings, the Death Cafés, and the question and answer session with Jamie, The Psychic, that's coming up on Saturday.

So to begin with I'll just tell you a little bit about me so you understand my story and my history and how I came to work in the end of life arena. I'm trained as a family practice physician and I was a brand new, young physician just about three years into practice. I was also a wife and a mother of two very small children. My father died. He actually died by suicide, which was as you can imagine an extremely devastating event in my life and I really struggled with grief and guilt after his death. And after about three years of trying to recover from my father's death I felt like I was in a black hole. I was in a pit that I could not find my way out of. I was just surrounded with darkness and I had completely lost joy from my life and I was aware of that. I knew that something was missing in my life that I desperately wanted to have back again, but I didn't know how to find it. I didn't know how to recover and how to get through this grief that had just taken over my life and was really consuming me in every way.

And one day I got an inspiration that I should try working in hospice and at the time I actually didn't even know very much about hospice. I only knew that people who were dying were cared for by hospice. So I actually started out by just offering to be a volunteer for the hospice in our community and my first day as a volunteer it turned out the medical director for the hospice had just resigned and since I was a doctor willing to volunteer I instantly became the medical director for the hospice on my very first day. So I really got thrown into it full force when I started to volunteer, and my thoughts about hospice were, "I'm in this dark place I can't find my way out of and I'm just going to go for it. I'm gonna immerse myself in death and dying and sadness and be around it all the time and see if that helps me somehow figure out how to get through it."

So I expected when I started visiting hospice patients in their homes that I was going to see tremendous sadness and grief; that I would just be washed over with this terrible grief and loss and sadness from the families and the patients I was working with, but I actually found something different than I expected. And when I started making visits to patients I was completely surprised as I walked into their homes and saw them surrounded by their

loved ones at how much joy was present in these families that were coping with the end of life and coping with loss that was happening before their eyes. I saw laughter and humor. I saw these patients and their families enjoying every moment of life and I knew “They have something. They have what’s missing in my life. They have right now what I lost when my dad died and I haven’t been able to get back to.”

So I recognized that this work in hospice had the potential to not only heal my grief, but to also transform my life in many ways. I recognized that these hospice patients know something that I want to know. They understand something about life that is so important and so essential, but largely not known in our day-to-day world. It became clear to me that they had been through their experiences of a terminal illness and by facing up to death and dying they themselves had been transformed. They themselves had been awakened in a certain way to issues and features about life that I wanted to wake up to. So during those years of hospice work, ultimately I loved it so much I gave up family practice all together, and became a full time hospice medical director. So I was literally visiting hospice patients every day and sitting with them at the bedside talking with them, hearing their stories, able to ask them questions and able to take in their perception of life and what really matters in life.

Those experiences I had and the lessons that I learned from those patients ultimately turned into the book I wrote, *What Really Matters: Seven Lessons for Living from the Stories of the Dying*. And what I’m talking about today is a little snapshot of some of those lessons that I learned from the hospice patients I worked with, and how ultimately my own life ended up being transformed through this work. I’m passionate now about sharing it with other people because I think all of us can wake up in the same way that our hospice patients are awake without necessarily having to be diagnosed with a terminal illness. I think we could all wake up now no matter where we are in our lives and the situations of life. So that’s why I’m so excited and passionate to share some of this information with you.

So back to the question, “What is it – what do hospice patients know that the rest of us don’t?” And one of the first things I recognize that hospice patients know very clearly is that life is fleeting. Life is fragile and precious. Life comes and goes so quickly. It’s over with before you know it and there’s no time to waste. Every hospice patient who recognizes that their days on this planet, their days with their loved ones, their days of seeing the sunrise in the mornings, of tasting a piece of chocolate or a dish of ice cream, those days are numbered, they’re limited. And because of that fact every day becomes precious. So in the eyes of a hospice patient who’s looking at very, very few days left every single day is important. Every single moment is important and precious and none of them can be wasted. Everything must be enjoyed and experienced to the fullest for those patients.

So I found my patients appreciating everything, even the smallest things, and I remember making a home visit to a patient with multiple sclerosis who was wheelchair bound and had lost nearly all of his vision. He was nearly blind, but when I got into his home – I came to visit him for the first time to meet him and get to know him – and when I walked

into his living room I found him sitting in front of the French doors looking out on to his deck, and as I said he was nearly blind. He couldn't see much, but what he could see is that there was a squirrel scampering around on his deck that was gathering seeds or leaves or something and carrying them back and forth across the deck and when I walked in he hushed me for just a moment because he was – in that moment he was watching the squirrel and what he knew is that that squirrel wouldn't always be on the deck. The squirrel wouldn't always be there for him to observe and he wanted to finish watching the squirrel doing whatever, building its nest or whatever it was doing that he was observing. He wanted to finish watching it in that moment because that's what his attention was focused on, that's what he was engaged in

And so he was able to appreciate that small little gift of a squirrel that came to his deck for just a few moments and he was able to take it all in and enjoy it and laugh and find some humor in the antics of this squirrel and then when the squirrel left he was able to fully turn that same attention to me and to our conversation and our time together. But it impressed me so much that he had this capacity to be fully aware and fully focused in the moment on whatever was happening at that moment and it struck me at that time that I did not live my life that way at all. And in fact, I was aware that much of the time I wasn't really fully present in anything that I was doing.

I was driving down the road and I was thinking about 100 other things that I had to do that day not really focusing on where I was, the scenery I was driving past, and sometimes I'd get home and barely remember the drive I had just been on because my mind had been so occupied with something else. So it became clear to me that much of the time when I was going through the motions of my day to day life I wasn't fully focused and fully present for those activities. I was letting my mind be distracted and be somewhere else. So I clearly saw this contrast. My hospice patients who were really able to enjoy fully everything they were doing and every moment they were doing in contrast with me being distracted much of the time.

So I might be at a restaurant for a nice dinner and instead of fully enjoying the dinner be thinking, "I'll have to come back here again someday. I'll have to come back here and eat someday when I have more time so I can really enjoy it," except I was there at that moment. I was right there. It was my opportunity right then to enjoy the restaurant, but I was throwing that away imagining that some other time I'll come here and I'll fully enjoy the experience of being here, but for now my mind isn't here so I can't fully enjoy this. So that capacity of enjoying whatever is happening in the moment because each moment is fleeting, because it will never exist again, that is the first thing I observed about my hospice patients that had this powerful impact on me. I knew that one way or another I needed to learn that. I needed to learn how to do that.

The second thing that I saw from my hospice patients that I learned from them is that they understood that love, giving and receiving love, is the most important task we can accomplish in a lifetime no matter who we are, where we are, what our circumstances are, what situation we find ourselves in, love is the most important factor in every single situation. No matter what we're doing, no matter what's happening to us or no matter

how we're participating in life we need to keep in mind the importance of love and that love in many ways is really all there is. In many belief systems, mine included, God is love. The Divine Creator of all is love and the creative force in life and in our world is love. So when we go through our lives on a day to day basis love needs always to be in our hearts, but also in our thoughts so that as we're choosing our behavior or our activities or our actions in a certain situation love needs to be the guiding force that helps us make those choices, that helps us decide what do I do now, where do I go next, how do I respond to the situation, how do I react to my angry neighbor who just yelled at me. Love needs to be the guiding force that directs us and shows us how to behave and really how to live in the moment from day to day.

So we need to be calling upon love to give us that guidance. We need to be asking, "What is the most loving thing I can do right now in this situation?" That's the question to ask, but also we need to be expanding our capacity to give and receive love. So we almost need to be working at love 'cause we need to be looking within ourselves and recognizing where our own barriers to love are, what wounds are we carrying, what fears do we have that keep us from loving fully? And that became clear to me that this spiritual work that most of us need to do involves love and involves this idea of expanding more and more our capacity to love others and to be loved by others. So our work – in order to expand that capacity as I was saying, we really have to go within ourselves and remove whatever obstacles there are to love: love entering us, flowing into us, and love flowing out from us to others.

So I understood as I came to witness and observe the love surrounding many of my hospice patients that love is within us and around us at all times, but there is a certain amount of work to do on our capacity for love and that that needs to be part of our daily practice in some ways: focusing on and thinking about, "How can I be more loving and how can I receive more love which in essence is really extending love to myself? How can I love myself enough that I can also receive the love that is around me which will make me any even better giver of love if I am capable of receiving love?" So that was one of the second things that I learned, the idea that love needs to be a focus at all times. It needs to be a guiding principle for me in life and that as I'm moving forward and making choices I need to always consult love and ask from love what is the highest path, what is the best choice that I could make in this situation.

And then that brought me to a third point, which involves forgiveness because what I realized is that once you begin giving and receiving love more fully, forgiveness becomes absolutely necessary. Everyone that we love will in one way or another disappoint us or hurt us or cause us harm just because all of us are human. None of us are perfect. Each one of us has flaws and we can't possibly be perfect in our behavior towards others so we will experience pain from other people. We will be hurt by others and we will cause hurt to other people and that requires us to practice forgiveness. And forgiveness is really one of the highest acts of love, the willingness to let go of resentment that we're carrying towards others for harm that they may have done to us and a willingness to release them from our blame.

We need to have that same level of willingness with ourselves to release ourselves from the shame and the blame that we're carrying with us, the guilt that we carry around for what we perceive as mistakes that we might have made earlier in our lives. And as I looked at this concept of forgiveness and how important it is and honestly I can say literally almost every single patient I ever met in hospice who was facing the end of life was working in one way or another on forgiveness. It was such a big issue. Each one of them in their own ways was working to just let go, untie these tangles and knots from the past that were holding them back.

And so I understood that forgiveness along with love is such an important practice. It's something that we need to be working on at all times, but one of the beautiful parts I discovered about forgiveness is once we start practicing forgiveness it actually enables us to become more present in the moment because when we're holding on to lots of resentment and anger and bitterness about the past it's actually tying up a lot of our energy and keeping our energy stuck in old memories and we tend to rehearse those old memories, go around and around and around thinking about wounds, something that happened to us that we can't get over. And maybe even adding more fuel and more power to those old memories, maybe even making them worse and worse in our minds because of this energy that we're putting into them as we hold on to the memories.

So if you think about ourselves we're energetic beings. We have a certain amount of energy available to us each day, but if a significant portion of our energy is actually tied up in the past maintaining old memories, particularly old negative memories and unhappy memories, then the amount of energy available to us in the here and now in order to live in the present moment is limited because we're caught up in the past and focusing on it. So one of the beautiful surprises that occurred for me as I started to actively work on forgiveness, actively looking back at things - like what is it that I'm holding on to that I need to let go of - as soon as I started releasing things from the past and letting them go of them, I became aware of having more energy and greater ability to be in the present moment.

And I described being at a restaurant and not even enjoying the meal I was having and not even enjoying being there because I couldn't be fully present and I knew there was a better way to be doing that activity, but I had no idea how to get there. The reason I couldn't get there is that too much of my energy was elsewhere. I wasn't even able to get my energy into the present moment and that's why I couldn't focus on what I was doing at that time. So it became clear to me that healing old wounds from the past is a very important part of this process of loving more fully, of being fully present in the moment right here, right now. And as I looked at it I realized at the same time on the other end of things one of the things hospice patients understand that the rest of us don't most of the time is that the future is out of our control and out of our hands.

So I realize not only do most of us have energy that's tied up in the past, we also project ourselves into the future much of the time. So we're either living in the past or the future or both and dividing ourselves between those two places in time that actually don't exist right now in this moment. The past is a memory, the future hasn't even happened, and

we divide our energy up between those two much of the time. Another reason why we are not fully present right here, right now experiencing life as it is because we're sending our energy either back in time or forward in time. And what I saw, one of the blessings for hospice patients, one of the blessings of having a terminal diagnosis and one of my patients just said this to me. She said, "I've been freed up from so many of the worries that I used to carry with me all the time because," she said, "I had a whole list of things I worried about 'How will I support myself when I retire? Where will I live? Who will I be with? Who will take care of me when I'm old?'"

And she said, "In some ways," she said, "having this terminal cancer diagnosis has freed me from all of those worries. I don't have to think about them now because right now I understand that I have cancer that can't be treated and I understand my path. I understand where I am and what's coming for me over the next several months and I can be at peace about it and stop worrying about the future." But what stood out to me is how futile it is for any of us to actually worry about the future because at least in my experience, and I'd love to hear if it's been different for someone else, the worrying that I have done has not really changed anything in the future. I can't say that worrying has been a benefit to me at all and has really led to anything being different in the future, but worrying has expended a lot of my time and energy.

And so I came to realize that on the other end of the spectrum hospice patients know that there's no point in worrying about the future. They understand that the future's unknown and we don't really have control over it. They've had to surrender all of their control. They're dealing with an illness that has taken over their bodies and taken over their lives and there's nothing more they can do to stop it or prevent it or control it. They have no choice but to surrender and allow that process to take place and experience it as it's happening. And I remember also one of my patients saying to me, "This cancer is my cancer. This is what happened in my life and I consider this my gift because this is what has been given to me to learn from and to grow from in life," and so she said, "I am actually cherishing this cancer because it's what I have. It's what came to me in my life and I would much rather be in the situation of cherishing it and embracing it than hating it and feeling devastated that it's here." So she said, "I am accepting my cancer and I am going to make the most of it. I am going to learn everything I can from having this cancer."

That was such a phenomenal lesson for me to see someone who had this capacity to let go of expectations for the future, to understand all of that has now faded away and dissolved away, and to be fully in the present moment with the situation she's in right now, embracing it, accepting it, and making the most of it. It was phenomenal for me to see that playing out before my eyes and indeed she was an incredible woman. She made a lot of handicrafts and she made so many things. She gave away to so many people little knitted and crocheted items and embroidery. She did her handicrafts as long as she could and made gifts for other people. That's one of the ways she turned being home bound because of her illness into a way of being creative and giving a blessing to other people.

It was such a beautiful example of being able to take whatever situation has arisen in life in this present moment, dealing with whatever you have available to you in the moment and making the best of it, letting love guide you to the highest and best action that you're capable of in that moment, and that's what I saw from her. That was the example that she showed me that was so profound and again I realize, that's actually how I would like to live every moment of my life. Even without having a terminal diagnosis right now I would like to be able to live life in that same way. And then it occurred to me so many patients were telling me that they saw a terminal diagnosis as a type of blessing because it forced them out of the future and into the present moment and I wondered, "Do the rest of us have to wait until we have a terminal diagnosis before we can see life that way, before we can embrace the present moment, before we can get our heads out of the future and stop worrying about it and bring all of that energy into right here, right now and fully live our lives?"

But what occurred to me is that in truth to be fully honest each one of us is in a sense terminal. We're all mortal. Each one of us will die and we don't know when. We have no idea. We have no idea when death is coming for us and so in many ways we could look at life from that same point of view: how fleeting and fragile it is. Every moment is precious because we don't know how many moments we will have and we could be at that same place in time where just as our hospice patients, we could be choosing to make the most of what's right here, what's right now with us and around us. We could be choosing to bring as much love as possible into this present moment and living with that love if we recognized at every moment how precious and fleeting life is for each one of us.

So for me it became clear that it is possible for all of us to live with some of this same knowledge that hospice patients have, the knowledge that life is fleeting, every moment is precious, we don't know how much of it we have, the knowledge that love is the most important factor of our lives that we must expand our capacity for in every moment and remove our obstacles for, and we must learn how to practice forgiveness so that we can be fully in the present moment. And I'll emphasize again this idea of staying in the present moment which I already told you was really difficult for me. I've had to work on it a lot in order to learn how do I bring my attention and focus right here and now and stop myself from retreating into the past or running into the future. It has been a daily practice for me actually of thinking about it and I can't say at all that I spend most of my time in the present moment, but what I've learned is how to bring myself back to present moment.

I've learned some practices that have been really helpful to me for focusing on the present and learning to get better and better and better at returning to the present moment when I fall away from it. And so in this call today I really wanted to share with you some of those practices because they're so important and we can talk all we want about these theories and ideas, but if you don't know how to bring this about and how to practice it in your own life it will be hard for you to get there. So I wanted to start with – first of all, with the idea of letting go of the past because that's just such an obstacle for most of us and most of us understand that we should be forgiving, that it's better to be – to have an

attitude of forgiveness, to release people from our blame and to not carry anger and hatred and bitterness towards others, but practicing forgiveness is another thing and can be difficult.

So I wanted to share with you a practice that I've used and this involves journaling. I'm a big believer in keeping a journal and using a journal as a place to write out your thoughts and feelings, and so if you are not a person who journals now, but you're interested in starting, I wanted to tell you you can go to my website: karenwyattmd.com. I have a free "journaling starter kit" that you can download for free off my website that has a lot of tips and journaling prompts and even some journal pages in it that you can use to get started journaling 'cause it's a really helpful tool to use as you're working on these practices. So this forgiveness practice involves journaling. You can do it, you can think your way through it, but it's very nice to write down these four steps.

It's called "The Four View Process for Forgiveness" and so you're going to be writing in your journal about four different views of whatever the situation is you're trying to forgive. So let's say you had an argument with your sister and you still feel a lot of resentment and bitterness about that and you haven't been able to reconcile with your sister. We'll just use that as an example. And in the Four View Process what you would do initially, the first view is the third person view. And what you would write about is the argument itself and what happened and you're really writing just the facts of what exactly happened, how did the argument start, what happened, who said what. You try to remove emotion from it as much as possible. Write about it as if you were a reporter writing a newspaper article about this argument and just reporting the facts about what happened like, "Mary said this and then Susan said that." And so you describe the argument as much as possible in just plain language as factually as you can what happened without any of the emotions.

The second part, the second view that you take is the second person view and in this case you are taking your sister's point of view. So you write about the argument that happened as if you were your sister writing about it. You do the best you can at trying to understand how did your sister see what happened between you, what did she think was going on, and what was she feeling at the time. So you're writing from her perspective and you could even write in her voice as if you were her and what you think she might write about the argument, how she sees it, and what she might think happened between the two of you. That's the second step.

The third view is the first person view and this is when you write about your involvement in the argument, but rather than writing about simply your side of the story I want you to go deeper when you write the first person argument because I want you to write first of all about the emotions you were feeling during the argument. What was arising in you? What was coming up? What was causing you to feel anger or hurt or fear or shame? What was causing all of this emotion to arise within you? What was it that triggered you in that way? And then also look a little bit deep within yourself. Is there something from the past that was similar to this event that might be contributing to the fact that you got triggered by what happened between you and your sister? Is there something deeper

within you? Is this a recurring pattern? Is there something within you that has been present before that this particular argument brought up in you that maybe escalated your anger in the argument because it was coming from a deeper place, something you have maybe stored for a while from the past? So I want you to really be analyzing everything about your involvement in the argument including the deeper underlying motivations and issues that were going on for you in the argument. That's the third step, the first part which is the first person view.

The fourth step you write about is called the galaxy view. In this view you are actually looking at the argument taking place between you and your sister from the highest, biggest perspective possible and what I mean by this is you look at it from – the big picture view is the view of your entire lives and bigger than that even, from the galaxy view. It's actually looking at it from the universe: From the history of the universe, how important is this argument? How big of a factor is this argument? What sort of difference does it make? What sort of difference does it make in your own life and then bigger and bigger and bigger views until you get all the way out to in terms of the whole universe.

Is this argument significant at all? Is it something that really deserves to be held on to? Is it something that has so much importance that you should be carrying it with you throughout your life or is it something that you could imagine letting go of because it's not important, because it's really not that significant when you look at all of your life and all of the potential of your life? Can you allow the argument to dissolve? Can you allow your anger and your bitterness to dissolve and begin to disappear and by doing that release your sister from your anger, from your blame, from the shame, and from the bitterness? And at the same time you're releasing yourself. You're releasing your own energy when you do this because the harm of not forgiving another is what happens within you. When you hold on to bitterness you're actually creating this toxic pool of negativity within yourself that's harmful to your own health.

So going through this practice and releasing that anger, releasing the bitterness benefits you. It will benefit your sister as well, but it primarily heals you and benefits you by getting rid of that negative pool of energy within you and releasing it into the present moment so that you can get back to this place right here right now where we know that life is meant to be lived. So I wanted to share with you that practice for forgiveness because you cannot be in the present moment if you're holding on to very much of the past. You will need to practice it and work at letting go and releasing the past if you would like to be fully alive, fully awake, fully living in the present moment.

And secondly, the other – on the other end of the spectrum we talked about already is the idea of stopping our worry about the future and letting go of some of that and no longer projecting ourselves out there in the future with anxiety and fear and concern about what's going to happen, how will this turn out, and simply letting go. We need to develop an attitude of trust about the future, trusting and believing that things will be okay, and allowing ourselves to relax a little bit in the present moment and that no matter what happens in the future we're okay right now. Right here in this moment today I'm

here and I have what I need right now and I'm okay. So there's an element of bringing ourselves back again into the present and reassuring ourselves that it's okay right now and worrying for the future doesn't solve anything.

And I have a little practice that can help reinforce that that I call "The Serenity Practice," and it's actually using the serenity prayer which you've probably heard of associated with 12 step groups because they are based on this concept and I think it's just beautiful and it's the perfect practice for all of us to use to stay in the present moment. So the serenity prayer was written by Reinhold Niebuhr and I'll read to you his original version of the prayer which says, "God, give us the grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things which should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other." I think this sums up perfectly the approach we need to take to our anguish and anxiety about the future and even our situation in the present.

So one of the things I recommend that you do in your journal is write down the things that you spend your time worrying about, things that upset you and bother you that you really give a lot of your energy and time and thoughts to, things that go around and around in your head that you find yourself constantly going to and anguishing over. Write down some of those things on the list and I want you to categorize them. Are there things you can change? And I want you to go through the list. If you find things on the list that actually are things that you can change, something that you could do differently, that you could do something about, I want you to circle those things and maybe the anxiety is about the fact that your house is a mess and needs to be straightened up. And that is something that you could change, that you could do something about. So you might circle that.

So what I'm saying is go through your list and you differentiate between the things that you actually could, you have it within your power to do something about it and change it, and leave alone the things that cannot be changed. And so worrying about the weather for one thing, whether is there going to be a storm or not, that can't be changed. We can't change the weather. What we could change about the situation is preparing for the weather. Just as worrying about later life or the end of life we can't change what might come to our lives at that time, but we can be prepared. We can prepare for it. That's what we can do. So the idea is first figuring out what things that you worry about can you change and of the things that you can't change are there ways you can change yourself, your attitude, or your behaviors that would make you less anxious about those things in the future.

And so what I'm trying to get you to do is differentiate, as the prayer said, between what I can change and what I can't change. And what can't be changed is what needs to be let go of. We need a conscious effort to let go of whatever we cannot change in our life. Of the things that we can change then we need to sit with those things in mind and prioritize, "These are things I really could do something about, which ones are the most important to me, and which ones would I really be willing to work on?" So the moment we start actually taking steps toward changing the things we can change that's actually the moment we start feeling more confident and our fear starts to dissolve and dissipate

because we are taking steps and working toward the positive changes that we actually are capable of making. Instead of wasting and squandering our energy, our mental power, and our time worrying about things we can't change we can apply it to things we actually could change and begin to take some steps making those changes.

So that is the serenity practice that I recommend as a way of getting yourself out of worries about the future and again, if you're working on forgiveness, to bring yourself out of the past. It should give you more energy available for the present moment which is our goal as we've been talking about. So I will give you a couple more practices for the present moment that can help you reinforce and strengthen your ability to stay in the present moment. The first one simply is the practice of deep breathing and focusing on your breathing. This is the simplest thing ever, but if you stop for a moment during the day and become conscious and aware of your breathing and just intentionally take a long, slow deep breath, initially inhale for five counts and then exhale for five counts and you can gradually increase the number of counts as you get used to it.

For one thing the deep breath relaxes you just a bit, but it also brings your attention into the present moment. As you're counting the seconds and breathing your focus is on the present moment and you are also creating a little center of calmness and relaxation within yourself and so the more you practice that, the more you return to your breath and take a deep breath, the more you strengthen the little reservoir of calmness inside of yourself and the more easily you'll be able to get into that state. So the deep breathing becomes a tool you can use. Say if you're in a hectic situation – like I live up in the mountains – you're driving and a storm hits and the road becomes icy and it's scary because you feel your wheels slipping and it's dangerous to be driving, but you have to drive in order to get home. That practice of deep breathing is something that can help create calmness in a situation where fear begins to arise and anxiety because calmness is usually the attitude that will help us make the best decisions and the best choices.

So deep breathing just becomes a tool that we can use that will help us stay relaxed and focused when we need to be in the moment. So I would encourage you just as part of your daily practice and I'm encouraging you to have a daily practice and we already mentioned focusing on love and forgiveness and a little bit of journaling in there. Spend just a few seconds taking a couple of deep breaths and just practice that every day because you'll start to reinforce in yourself that the ability to use deep breathing as a tool. So that's one of our present moment tools.

The next one is to use this quality of being mindful and you can do it as a type of meditation. It can also be through prayer if you have prayer as part of your practice. You can practice, it's called centering prayer, or mindfulness meditation. They're very similar in that the goal is to focus inward on the present moment. Again, one of the ways you can train yourself to become more mindful, a little practice is to use a small bit of food. You might use something like a raisin, a little piece of chocolate, maybe a lemon drop, something you can put in your mouth that has a lot of flavor to it because it will attract your attention. A lemon drop, for example, it's hard to put a lemon drop in your mouth and not notice it because it's tart and tangy and sweet all at once and it really captures

your attention. So you can practice being aware and mindful in the present moment by intentionally putting a lemon drop in your mouth and just for a few moments focusing on that experience. What does it taste like? What does it feel like your mouth? What's the texture of it, the shape? How do you move it around with your tongue? What's happening with your taste buds as this lemon drop moves around your mouth? And just fully experience tasting the lemon drop.

That's actually mindfulness because you're bringing all of your focus and your attention on to that experience of the lemon drop in that moment. So you are practicing this ability to gather up your energy and your attention that's scattered all over around you in various places. Gather it all together, bring it right here, right now into this moment as you're tasting the lemon drop. Now using the lemon drop, that's simply a way to practice being mindful, but it teaches you, it lets you experience what it's like when all of your attention is in one place in the moment. So again, it's teaching you how to regain that same experience when you're in other situations. So you use that practicing with a lemon drop or a raisin or something that you're tasting trains your mind to become mindful to become aware and present in the present moment.

So it's a training practice that you're going to use so that in other situations you are able to bring your mind into the present moment. You're able to capture your thoughts from where ever they are scattered, pull them in, and focus them on the present when you need to. So the practice of mindfulness or centering prayer is quite similar. It's something that you might do on a daily basis and you're really training your mind, training yourself to be able to maintain that focus on the present and hopefully to maintain it for longer and longer periods of time, but also to be able to get into that focus quickly when you need to. So that's an additional practice for you for strengthening your ability to be in the present moment.

And I can't emphasize enough how important this idea of the present moment is. And again, as I said, it's one of the keys I understood that my hospice patients were able to do to be fully present in the moment and what I learned is that the joy that was missing from my life when I was stuck in my grief, joy exists in the present moment. Love exists in the present moment. All creativity, creation occurs in the present moment, not in the past or the future. It's right here, right now in the present moment. And what I discovered through my years of working with hospice patients and working on myself, practicing, learning lessons in order to grow as a person, in order to become the best person I can be is that I began to understand how to experience joy and what true joy really is. And if you think about it, one of the surprises I found is that hospice patients who are dealing with physical pain, physical discomfort, they're watching their body decline before their very eyes, they are approaching their own death knowing that they will be leaving behind and losing every person they love and everything they've loved on this planet, yet they are still capable of experiencing joy.

So the lesson I learned from that is that true joy, deep joy, joie de vivre, the French call it, which is the joy of being alive, can exist no matter what circumstance you're in, whether or not you're experiencing pleasure or pain you can still experience joy. Joy

encompasses all of it and so for me, all of those years of working with patients in learning and studied I finally re-experienced joy after many years. I was finally able to bring joy back into my life, the joy that comes from being fully alive in the present moment no matter what is happening, whether I am experiencing pain or discomfort or disappointment or discouragement I'm still capable of experiencing joy. And that's the ultimate message I wanted to bring home to you from this talk is get yourself in the present moment, be fully alive, be awake, be here right now and experience the joy of being fully alive in every moment of your life. Then when you reach the end of your life you will know that you haven't wasted a moment. You will know that you made the absolutely best of everything that was available to you that you possible could. So that ultimately is my wish for you and I hope that this talk has been helpful to you.

I do want to share with you if you are interested in any other deeper help with any of these lessons we talked about you might enjoy my book *What Really Matters*. I also have two workshops that are online workshops. You can go online and work your way through them. One is called, "Get Over it for Good: Healing the Hidden Wounds of Childhood" and this workshop really deals in-depth with forgiveness and letting go of the past. So if it seems to you that that's something that might be beneficial you can learn about it on my website: karenwyattmd.com. The other workshop is called "The Seven Lessons Wisdom Path." In that workshop we dive deeply into all seven lessons from the book *What Really Matters*, all seven of the lessons that I learned from hospice patients. It's an eight week course and we take an in-depth look at each one of the lessons. There's a workbook and there are homework activities and a lot more practices in addition to the ones I talked about today to help you cultivate each one of those lessons if you're interested in that.

Both of these online courses include a 30 minute telephone consultation with me that can happen any time during your workshop while you're working on it. So you can learn about them on my website at karenwyattmd.com. You can also buy my book there and you can contact me through my website. I hope you will if you have questions for me or any comments or messages for me. Please don't hesitate to contact me. Thank you so much for your presence with me for this last hour for tuning in and being here with me and learning with me. I hope that you enjoyed the Death Expo and that it becomes a life changing experience for you to take in the wisdom and knowledge that all of our speakers have to share. So thank you again and may your life be blessed with what really matters. Goodbye.

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