



Nursing Home

A Model for Using the Spiritual Literacy DVDs with Elderly Residents

Group Makeup: This group consists of 15 - 20 elderly residents at the Luther Manor Nursing Home. Some group members are very alert and able to engage, while others are more limited in their ability to participate.

Goal of Group: The Chaplain leading the group asks participants: “Where and how do we see God or Spirit active in our lives in this nursing home and, when we become aware of this, how does it change how we look at ourselves and those around us?” The group is a place where residents can interact with one another and gain a sense of self worth that the outside world often doesn’t offer them at this point in their lives.

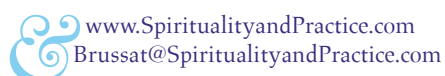
Preparation: The Chaplain prepares by watching the DVD episode and creating a series of questions that highlight the issues raised about the quality/practice. The Chaplain also makes a note to point out if a particular segment talks about God or relates to some of the group members’ beliefs.

Group Process: The group meets for 45 minutes weekly. The Chaplain gathers the group and begins with prayer, reminding them of how important it is to gain deeper understanding about Spirit in their lives. Some of the episodes lend themselves to an opening question which he uses to help get them thinking. As they watch, the Chaplain stops the DVD at various places and asks questions that help the group participants delve even deeper into the material.

Some Examples of Group Insights around the Enthusiasm Episode:

- The first question asked was: “What enthused you?” Here residents were given the opportunity to reminisce, which they enjoy tremendously.

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- Then they were asked: “What enthuses you now?” This was a harder question and often takes some prompting.
- Then they were asked: “What does the phrase ‘I just stand there and shine’ remind you of?” Here they talk about their faith. They also ponder: “Why don’t we easily think that we are lovable, desirable, and deserve to be loved?”
- The Chaplain asks: “What’s special about you and what’s your own edition of the good news?” They mention the reality that sorrow often overwhelms them but that they have learned here that each day of life is meant to be enjoyed.
- The conversation ends with thinking of ways they can enjoy life in the midst of all the struggles and pain experienced living in a nursing home.

Benefits of Participating in the Group:

- Residents have the opportunity to share their insights, and no one is ever put down or told they are wrong.
- Residents have their thinking stimulated.
- When the opportunity presents itself, the Chaplain gently helps residents examine their thoughts and feelings in a different, more expansive way.
- The Chaplain notes that the format of the DVDs enables everyone some level of connection even if they can’t fully participate in the group.
- All in all, their faith is strengthened, and their spirits are cared for by participating in the group.

Model prepared by Chaplain Doug Kahl of the Luther Manor Nursing Home, Michigan. Kahl also uses the DVDs for customer service training with management and direct-care workers.