



NHS Education for Scotland

Bereavement Education Conference 2022: 'Bereavement support through companioning: A spiritual care approach' promotional clip

Speaker: Maureen O'Neill, Director, Faith in Older People

I'm Maureen O'Neill and I'm Director of Faith in Older People which is a voluntary organisation which focuses on spiritual care, however people interpret it, but fundamental to it is what gives people meaning and purpose, what matters to them most. So we work with care homes, with health and social care staff in different settings, with chaplains, with academics, in order to highlight the importance of spiritual care.

What is the workshop about?

What we want to do in the workshop, and I'll be doing it together with my colleague Ruth Aird, is to look at the importance of spiritual care so that people have a stronger understanding of why it matters to people however they interpret it, and to explore with them how they can bring that into their practice when supporting someone who's dying, somebody who's bereaved, and I think there's a lot of bereavement in the person who's actually got a terminal illness, so the two things need to come together, both the individual and the person they are caring for. And what we are going to work around is this, the concept of 'companioning' so that somebody has a person to be with them who can enable them to vent their feelings, to feel they are listened to, and the person who's doing this doesn't carry the emotional baggage that a family does; they are not as emotionally involved. They don't have the worries, they don't have the sadness and so on. So that they can just be with the individual and they're not, as carer would be, a professional carer, involved in physical tasks, so the essence of companioning is to be with the person, to listen to them, to be alongside them – no judgment, just to be there. And we would look at it as somebody who's the non-anxious presence, and that is a very important factor for all of us, that there is someone who can just manage those difficult moments, maybe they can't answer every question but they can listen to the concerns, the anxiety, the lament that somebody brings, both as somebody who's dying, but also as someone who would be bereaved, so it works both ways, and they act as a bridge in some instances to this.

So what we would like to get out of the workshop is a chance for people to have explored what they understand by spiritual care, to have a stronger perception of actually how they might already be delivering it in their practice, but how they would wish it to be supported and improved. And we're going to do this by using scenarios and general discussion. So the take-away from this session is why spiritual care is important to you and the people that you care for.

The film was produced in October 2022 and can be found at <https://www.sad.scot.nhs.uk/events/2022-conference/> or <https://vimeo.com/757203055>

For more information visit www.sad.scot.nhs.uk or contact supportarounddeath@nes.scot.nhs.uk

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