

## Group Support for Volunteers

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The following outline is currently used for the volunteer support portion of our weekly Day Hospice program at Hospice Niagara. It could be adapted for a Volunteer Support Meeting.

### **Opening: Relaxation Exercise:**

- Purpose: to begin the meeting with an opportunity to consciously 'put aside the busyness' of our day, and to centre ourselves with peace.

- Sample:

I invite you to settle into your chair with your feet flat on the floor and your hands relaxed in your lap. And if you feel comfortable doing so, close your eyes.

Now, take a deep breath in through your nose... and slowly out through your mouth.

And take one more deep breath in... and slowly out...

Now just breathe normally.

If you feel comfortable doing so, I invite you to join me in a relaxation exercise now.

In your mind's eye, remember a place that you have been to that you would consider a 'place of peace' or a 'happy place'; a place where you have felt peaceful, contented, relaxed....

As you remember this place, use all your senses in this memory.

In your mind's eye, look around. Remember the sights that give you peace and comfort. Relax as your eyes drink in the sights... (pause)

And if there is a sound in this place, remember it...(pause)

And any special smell, allow your memory to breathe it in... (pause)

And maybe there is a taste in the air, or you might have just had something to eat or drink, with the taste lingering in your memory in the special place...(pause)

And your sense of touch: is there a breeze? Remember where you are sitting, how your toes feel, where your hands are, how your shoulders and neck feel. Feel your whole body relax in this memory of this peaceful place...(pause)

And as we relax, remember how good Life is... How good it feels to be alive...

How grateful we are for all our blessings.....(longer pause)...Life is good...

Now, when you feel ready, remember this place where we are now. Remember how good it feels to be here too. This too is a place of peace and joy. We are grateful to be here today... to give and to receive... We are grateful for this moment – now...(pause)... Life is good...

When you feel ready, I invite you to take a deep breath, in through your nose... and slowly out through your mouth. And take one more deep breath in..... and slowly out. Now, breathe normally.

And you may open your eyes when you are ready.

### **Sharing Circle: (adapted from Aboriginal tradition)**

- Two Questions are put forth: 1) What has been challenging lately? 2) What has been a highlight?
- A small object is passed from person to person (I currently use a sponge ball). Whoever has the ball, has 'the floor'. That person shares what they wish to share. Everyone else listens but does not verbally respond. When that person is finished sharing, they pass the ball to the person beside them.
- If someone does not wish to verbally share, they hold the ball quietly for a moment and everyone honours the unspoken thoughts and feelings. Then the ball is passed again.
- Once everyone has had a chance to share, the facilitator closes the circle time with a few words of thanks. In sharing with each other we can learn, heal and grow.

### **Information Sharing:**

The Coordinator uses this time to update the Team about the Clients who will be attending Day Hospice, and how we might best serve them during their time with us.

Any announcements can be shared at this time. For a regular Volunteer Support Meeting, this time could be used for some continuing education such as a DVD or a guest speaker.

### **Self Care Homework:**

Every week we are all given the homework to 'do something special for ourselves'. At this time in the meeting, we each go around the circle and share what we did for our homework. Anyone who can't think of anything is assigned double homework for the following week! The team enjoys this activity. Many people say that just knowing that they will be accountable to report their "self care" activity each week, forces them to actually put into practice that which often is only given lip service.

### **Closing:**

Go gently!

*Note from the author:*

*In the 20 years since I began nursing in the field of palliative care, I have had the privilege of journeying alongside many wise people who have influenced my life and my way of working. I humbly offer up this outline, which has evolved over time, recognizing that what it might lack in original thought is outweighed by depth of gratitude to those who have come before me.*

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