

3-S⁺ Group #11: The art of living and dying

Materials Required

1. Meditative Video Segment, and the equipment required for playing the video.
2. “Tardiness” door sign to be placed on the door at the end of the video: “Entrance to the group room will not be permitted once the video has finished. The video has finished. Please join us next week.”
3. Wall Posters prominently displayed – In large letters ...
 - a. Commitment: “Today I renew my commitment to my spiritual path.”
 - b. The Spiritual Qualities – the spiritual self’s 14 Spiritual Muscles: “generosity, morality, renunciation, wisdom, effort, tolerance, truth, strong determination, loving kindness, equanimity, gratitude, courage, forgiveness, and serenity”.
4. Timer (for meditation and other timed exercises).
5. Pencils and notepaper for each participant.
6. Tape (to adhere poster paper to the walls, as needed).
7. Paper and easel board with marker for recorder.
8. Worksheets:
 - a. Do not stand at my grave and weep.
 - b. Life and Death; Fear and Faith Worksheet.

Therapeutic Goals

1. To provide a therapeutic context for a cognitive shift from habitual activation of the addict self-schema to increased activation of a spiritual self-schema that has as its focus doing no harm to self and others.
2. To increase awareness of the automaticity of schematic processes, such as the addict self-schema.
3. To provide an opportunity for the creation of new cognitive scripts and behavioral action sequences that are consistent with the individual’s spiritual/religious faith.
This session provides the opportunity for ...
 - a. the practice of meditation on the in-and-out breath (to increase the ability to focus attention and still the mind);
 - b. the practice of mindfulness (to increase insight into the absence of a permanent ‘self in the physical body’);
 - c. the creation of new cognitive scripts and action plans for feeding faith and overcoming fears of death and dying.

Begin Group

1. Video

A commercially available meditation video of tranquil nature scenes is played to mark the beginning of each 3-S group session. The purpose of playing a meditative video at this time is to provide a buffer, or transition period, during which group members can

begin to detach from their often chaotic lives, in readiness for the activation of their Spiritual selves through the practices of meditation and mindfulness. The video also provides a “tardiness window.” Out of respect for the group, punctuality is expected of group members. However, if group members are unavoidably detained, they will be permitted to enter the group room late only during the playing of the video. Once the video has finished, the group room door is closed, the “tardiness sign” is placed on the door (see list of required group materials) and any late members will not be permitted to enter. They will, of course, be encouraged to return, on time, the following week. Repeated lateness should be discussed with the client during individual sessions.

Ron Clearfield, “Home,” *Eversound Expressions*, Eversound (2002) (5.51 minutes)

2. Welcome

At the end of the video the therapist places the “tardiness sign” on the outside of the group room door and welcomes all members to the 3-S group [Note: ground rules for the group, if any, (e.g., time management strategies used, policy regarding eating/drinking during group, etc.) may be reviewed at this time.]

Therapist script:

Welcome to Spirituality Group Therapy.

3. Introductions

Immediately following the welcome, the therapist asks group members to introduce themselves, by standing and saying their first names. [Note: as new group members may be added each week, it is important to have all group members introduce themselves every week.]

Therapist script:

Let’s begin by introducing ourselves. One at a time, please stand and say your first name; then remain standing. [Therapist begins]. Hello, my name is

4. Commitment

Following the introductions, while group members are still standing, they are asked to renew their commitment to their Spiritual path by reading aloud the words on the Commitment Statement Poster [“Today I renew my commitment to my Spiritual path”] that is displayed prominently on the front of the group room (see list of required group materials). Group members are then seated.

Therapist script:

While we are still standing, let’s renew our commitment to our Spiritual path by together reading the Commitment Statement aloud. [Therapist

points to Commitment Poster]. All together ... Today I renew my commitment to my spiritual path.

5. Overview of 3-S development program philosophy

The therapist provides the following overview each week:

Therapist script:

Each of you are here today because you have made a commitment to abandon the addict self that has caused such suffering in your lives, and to develop instead your Spiritual self which will provide you with access to the peace and happiness of your true Spiritual nature. I know I don't have to tell you that although the addict self promises you relief from suffering, it is actually taking you on a path that leads to unending physical, emotional, and spiritual pain. You all know that once it takes over – once it goes on automatic pilot – your welfare and the welfare of loved ones is of no importance to the addict self: it can easily convince you that absolutely nothing else matters except getting high. The goal of this program is to help you see the addict self for what it is – a habit pattern of the mind that causes tremendous suffering. You will learn how to interrupt its habitual scripts – those “tapes” that play over and over in your head that urge you to use drugs just one more time, or to engage in other behaviors that can cause harm to you or others. These include sharing drug paraphernalia and having unsafe sex, both of which can transmit HIV and other infections that can cause even greater suffering in your lives and the lives of others. In this program you will learn how to recognize the voice of the addict self and to stop it before it can harm you or others. You will do this by seeking refuge and strength in your true Spiritual nature. In this program, we view you as your Spiritual nature. That's the real you, not the addict self. Over the years of addiction, you may have come to doubt that you even have a Spiritual nature, or you may feel that it is now inaccessible to you. At this point, just have faith that it is still there; that it is always there. Your true Spiritual nature may be temporarily hidden from view, but trust that it is there. All you need is a way to access it – a path – that's your Spiritual path. However, in order to develop or strengthen this Spiritual path you will need a Spiritual self that has strong spiritual muscles – [therapist points to the poster – see list of required materials] – your Spiritual self's muscles are these 14 spiritual qualities that the addict self has tried to destroy. Together we will help you strengthen those spiritual muscles so that your Spiritual self stays strong and so that access to your Spiritual nature is available to you in every moment of every day. Just like strengthening physical muscles,

strengthening your spiritual muscles takes training and practice. Each week we will practice meditation and do mindfulness exercises together that will help you to stay on your Spiritual path and access your Spiritual nature, but you also need to practice between groups. To get the most out of these group sessions, you will need to make the effort to quiet your mind, to focus your attention, and to listen carefully to what I and the other group members are saying.

6. Agenda

The therapist provides group members with the agenda for the session. Providing an agenda aids in keeping the group focused and facilitates time management.

Therapist script:

Today we are going to begin as we always do by practicing meditation on the in and out breath. We will do this for five minutes. We will then work on some new material for about 30 minutes. After this we will end as we always do with a discussion and review, and our spiritual stretch.

7. Meditation Practice

Each group session provides an opportunity to practice meditation on the in- and out-breath (*anapanasati*). This brief 5-minute practice session is primarily for the purpose of reviewing the technique, for providing rationale for its use as a means by which the automaticity of the addict self is reduced and the spiritual self is accessed, and for encouraging daily practice. Group members are encouraged to practice daily for longer periods (e.g., 30-60 minutes daily).

Meditation on the in- and out-breath (*anapanasati*) with rationale and step-by-step instructions:

Meditation Rationale:

Therapist Script:

- *Our minds have a center or resting place – a peaceful stillness that is available to each of us where we can go to experience our true Spiritual nature. Some people may experience this stillness as their Spirit, or God or their Higher Power. Whatever way you experience it, just know that it is always there within you.*
- *Habit patterns of the mind (like the addict self) cause the mind to wander away from its center – this stillness. In fact, the addict self thrives in the wandering mind. When we don't have mastery of the mind – when we let the mind jump here and there out of control, it can very easily get carried away by the addict self.*

- *We begin each group with meditation practice because it is through meditation that we begin to take back control from the addict self and give it to the Spiritual self.*
- *Meditation trains the mind to return to its center – it provides an **anchor**. Just like an anchor on a boat stops the boat from drifting away on the tide, your meditation anchor prevents your mind from being swept away by emotional storms and strong currents of craving and aversion. In other words, it prevents the addict self from taking control of your mind..*
- *When you practice meditation **every day** you are creating a new habit pattern of the mind so that whenever your mind tries to wander away from its Spiritual home, for example towards addict thoughts, you are quickly able to pull it back before the addict self takes over.*
- *In our meditation practice we focus on the in and out breath because as long as we live, the breath is always there. When you meditate on the breath, it might help you to think of what you are doing as connecting with your Spirit. In fact, the Latin derivation of the word ‘spirit’ is breath. So you can think of your meditation on the breath as your connection with your spirit which is your anchor in all of life’s storms.*

Meditation Instructions:

Therapist script:

When you practice meditation at home, you will need to choose a quiet place where you will not be disturbed. If you wish you may sit crossed legged on a cushion on the floor, you may kneel, or you may sit in a chair with your back straight. You should feel comfortable, but not so comfortable that you fall asleep. While meditating, it is important to remain alert.

Let’s do this now:

[In a slow, calm voice, the therapist narrates the first 1-2 minutes of the 5 minute practice]

- *Remain seated in your chairs. Sit with your back straight, feet flat against the floor, hands on your lap.*
- *Now close your eyes* [Therapist checks that client is comfortable doing this in session. Clients who are uncomfortable closing their eyes are instructed to close their eyes half-way and to focus on an object within their vision. As clients’ comfort levels increase over the course of treatment, clients are encouraged to close their eyes more and more, and to do their daily at-home practice with their eyes closed.]
- *Just breathe normally through your nose.*
- *As you continue breathing normally through your nose, begin to focus your attention on the sensations in and around your nostrils, and on your*

upper lip just below your nostrils, that are caused by the breath passing in and out. You may feel a slight tickle, or a feeling of warmth or coolness, or heaviness or lightness.

- *Just keep your concentration fixed there – **this area is your anchor** – the place you will always return to -- observe the changing sensations you experience in that area as the breath passes over your ‘anchor.’*
- *At the beginning of every breath, commit yourself to noticing everything you can about the sensations caused by just that one breath. Then do the same for the next breath -- committing yourself to your practice, just one breath at a time.*
- *If thoughts arise, gently, but firmly, bring your awareness back to your anchor, and again commit yourself to remaining focused on the in and out breath, one breath at a time.*
- *...Pause briefly (e.g., 5 seconds) to give group members opportunity to experience the breath...*
- *Again, focus all your attention on the changing sensations around your nose and upper lip that are caused by the breath as it goes in and out. Notice whether the breath is long or short? Does the air pass through one or both nostrils? Is the air cool or warm?*
- *If your mind wanders again, just note ‘mind wandered away’, and immediately return it to your anchor. No need to get discouraged, it is the mind’s nature to wander, and your job to train it, so just keep bringing it back. Gently, but firmly bring it back. Just as you would train a young child not to stray away from home, you patiently train your mind to stay close to its Spiritual home.*
- *If you are having difficulty bringing your mind back, you can try counting your breaths, just up to 10, but don’t get caught up in counting. The goal is to stay focused on your ‘anchor’ not on numbers.*

We’ll continue meditating on the in- and out-breath in silence for another 4 minutes. I will let you know when the time is up.

At end of 4 minutes, therapist asks clients to open their eyes.

Meditation practice feedback

Therapist ensures that each group member has understood the technique. The following are examples of questions to pose to the group in the event that group members are having difficulty with their practice:

Therapist script:

Open your eyes.

*How was that for you today?
Were you able to keep your attention focused on your anchor?
Could you experience your breath? Where did you feel it?
Did you notice if the air moved through one nostril more than the other; or if the breath was long or short, or if it was warm or cool?
What sensations did you feel (e.g., tickle, tingle, pressure, perspiration, etc.)?*

Note: If any group member is not experiencing any sensations, expand the area of concentration to include the entire nose as well as the area between the nostrils and the upper lip.

Therapist script continued:

*Did you experience the monkey mind? It is very persistent, isn't it?
Can you see how it could get you in trouble if you are not aware of where it has wandered off to?
Were you able to bring your attention back to your anchor each time it wandered away? It takes a lot of practice, doesn't it?*

Note: As needed, therapist explains that it is not uncommon for individuals to have difficulty returning the mind to the anchor, and that continued effort to bring the mind back to the anchor has lasting benefits even if the mind wanders away again.

8. Presentation of new material with experiential exercise

New material is provided experientially each week for the purpose of helping group members to increase mindfulness and to practice activation of the Spiritual self-schema. The therapist uses a technique that requires group members to attend carefully to the instructions as they are being provided. Instructions for all exercises are provided slowly and clearly, just once. After the instructions are given, group members are permitted one question in the event further clarification is necessary. If a group member still does not understand the instructions, he or she may ask another group member to repeat the instructions aloud to the entire group. This technique fosters mindfulness, group cohesion, and cooperation.

New material: Overcoming fear with faith

Therapist script.

We're going to talk about living and dying in this group today because they are two sides of a single coin. Most of us try not to think about our own death. We may allow ourselves to think about the death of others. In fact, we may even entertain ourselves with murder mysteries, and we may listen, quite matter-of-factly, to the TV news that informs us of the death, from various causes, of people all over the world. In fact, in many ways we permit the topic of death to permeate our lives – but only if the topic is not

our own death. Indeed it's usually the case that we don't even consider our own mortality until we become old or ill. And even then, we may try to avoid thinking about it. This is really regrettable because if we were to come to think differently about the death of the body, we would actually be able to live our lives more peacefully, and we would be able to talk to our loved ones about it in a way that would help them also. Today we are going to talk about overcoming our fears of death using our faith.

The evangelist Billy Sunday (1862-1935) once said [Therapist writes the following on the board]:

Fear knocked at my door.

Faith answered it.

There was no one there.

Think about this for a moment. Does fear knock on your door when the subject of death comes up, especially your own death? If it does, you are not alone. We are going to consider now how we can use faith to make this fear vanish as if it had never been there at all.

There's a story about a man who was newly converted to his faith and was struggling with it. He went to his pastor to tell him about his struggle. He described it like this: He said 'It's as if I have two big dogs constantly fighting inside me.' The pastor said "Which one of them wins?" After thinking about it, the man replied 'I guess the one I feed the most.'

Think about what he said. The one that wins is 'the one I feed the most'. The man realized at that moment that his faith had to be fed; he couldn't just expect it to grow without effort.

So, when you think about your own death, do you feed your fear or your faith? When you feed your fear rather than your faith, you activate habit patterns of the mind, like the addict self, that prevent you from seeing your true spiritual nature and make your fear grow. But when you feed your faith, you activate your Spiritual self, and the fear vanishes like a rising mist allowing you to see life and death, the two sides of the single coin, in a whole new light.

Feeding your faith rather than your fear takes effort. Let me read you a poem, one that is sometimes read at memorial services and funerals. Some of you may have heard it before. Then I'd like us to discuss what this poem

could mean for each of us, to help us feed our faith and live our day to day lives more fully:

*Do not stand at my grave and weep;
I am not there. I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow.
I am the diamond glints on snow.
I am sunlight on ripened grain.
I am the gentle autumn rain.
When you awaken in the morning's hush
I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circled flight.
I am the soft stars that shine at night.
Do not stand at my grave and cry;
I am not there. I did not die.*

Therapist distributes copies of the poem (see Worksheet attached to this group).

Exercise #1: Do Not Stand at My Grave and Weep

Therapist script (continued)

In this program we talk a lot about your true self – your Spiritual nature. Do you think the poet was referring to the person's spirit – or spiritual nature -- when s/he says 'I did not die?'

I've giving each of you a copy of the poem. Think about its meaning for a moment and then on the worksheet, in the space provided, write down what you think the 'I' is that does not die.

Therapist gives group members 1-2 minutes to write on their worksheet what the 'I' is that does not die.

Therapist script (continued)

Clearly the poet is not saying that the body does not die. It's the nature of the body to get sick and die. Our bodies begin dying as soon as they are born. We all die a little every day without being consciously aware of it. Cells die all the time; some are replaced, others are not. Our bodies are forever changing; this is their nature. Nothing can change this truth.

Yet we remain so attached to this body. We spend our lives clinging tenaciously to the impossible wish that this body would not die because we

think of the body as 'I'. It's easy for us to confuse our body with the entity we call our 'self' and refer to as 'I'. But if we were to search for this entity in our body, would we find it there?

Exercise #2: Insight Meditation

Therapist demonstrates an 'insight' meditation technique.

Therapist script (continued)

There's another meditation technique I'd like to show you that helps us put an end to the illusion that your true self is in your physical body. When you end this illusion, you end the fear.

So, get comfortable in your chairs, legs uncrossed, hands resting loosely in your laps. Close your eyes, and allow yourself to focus on your anchor -- that point below your nose and above your upper lip where you feel the breath touch as you breathe normally in and out through your nose.

We are going to begin at the top of our heads and scan our bodies to see if we can find this entity that we call 'I' or our 'self.' First, turn your attention to the hair on your head. Is it there – is this the entity you call 'I' or 'self'? Is it your skin, your nails, your bones? Is it your muscles, tendons, ligaments? Okay, let's go deeper now. Is it the organs of your body, is it your heart, your liver, your lungs, your genitals? Is it your brain? Many people think that it resides in our brain, but does it? If your brain is damaged, is your true nature damaged too? How about the fluids and wastes in the body? – is it in our blood, bile, digestive juices, our urine and feces? Is that your true self too? How about all the bacteria that make their home in this body? How about the virus that infects the body and causes AIDS? Is it there, too? Is this whole package with its billions of cells, its billions upon billions of subatomic particles that are constantly arising and passing away with great rapidity, is this the 'I' – the self -- that we cling to so desperately? Or is it just an illusion that a permanent self resides there?

Take a few minutes in silence now to continue scanning your body to see if you can find this self that you think of as 'me' – the 'I' that 'did not die' in the poem. Feel any sensations that arise as you scan your body beginning again at the top of your head. Now let your attention move down your face, feel the sensations that arise. Now the back of your head, feeling whatever sensations arise. Now down your neck, into your shoulders, your arms, your hands, your fingers. Now turn your attention to the sensations as they arise and pass away in your torso and now your back. Let your attention turn

now to your legs, feeling whatever sensations arise in your upper legs, knees, calves, feet and toes. We take so little time in our daily life to really experience our bodies. Take a few moments to continue scanning your body, experience any sensations as they arise; simply observe the sensations as they arise and pass away.

Okay, when you are ready, open your eyes. So, were you able to find it -- your 'self' -- the entity you call 'I' ?

Therapist waits for group members responses to the meditation.

Therapist script (continued)

There really is no self to be found in the body, is there? It's just an illusion. The body is the body; it's made up of many different components that are constantly changing. It gets old, it gets sick, it dies. That's its nature. It's not me. It's not mine. It's not my self. There's nothing to cling to.

Most religious traditions view the body simply as a temporary home or container for the spirit or soul. Is this how your religious tradition views it?

Therapist waits for responses, encouraging group members to share their beliefs.

Therapist script (continued)

It's interesting, isn't it that despite our Spiritual and religious beliefs that tell us that the body dies and is not our true self, we cannot let go of our attachment to it and our fear of its death. In fact, we cling so strongly to the idea that the body is our true self that we may even identify ourselves with diseases of the body. When we do this we further obscure our understanding of our true nature. When you have an illness, like HIV, it's important to remember that it is your body that has HIV, not your spirit – not the 'I that does not die.' Your spiritual nature cannot be touched by HIV, no matter how much the habit patterns of your mind try to convince you that it can. A mind that is well trained through your meditation practice, will help you to bear whatever comes by permitting you access to your true nature – your spiritual nature -- which is eternal. The skill you develop with meditation practice will not abandon you even if there comes a time when there is nothing medically anyone can do for your body. Meditation allows us to live each moment fully and peacefully, and when it is time, it also allows the body to do what is natural for it to do – to die, peacefully.

In short, meditation is a wonderful tool for feeding our faith and eliminating fear of dying.

One of the benefits of practicing meditation is that it trains our minds so that we see things as they really are rather than through our mind's habit patterns. With practice we gain insight into the impermanent nature of all created things, and come to understand that the body is not something to cling to; it is impermanent and not your true self. When we focus our minds on our anchor, we are training our minds to abandon their old habit patterns. With practice the incessant chatter of the wandering monkey mind stops and we are left with a stillness that has to be experienced, it cannot be described in words.

We can also feed our faith by combining our meditation practice with contemplative prayer. We are told in scripture to 'Be still and know that I am God.' One interpretation of this saying is that when our mind is still it can experience its source. Meditation lets the mind experience its source; it allows us to dip into the deep well of peace that is within each of us, where there is no past, no future, only the present perfect moment of peace. We are also told in scripture that 'The kingdom of heaven is within' -- that this place of peace that does not die is within each of us, available to each of us. We have only to quiet the mind to experience it. When we do this, we enter the world of our spiritual nature -- what Buddhists call the deathless or nirvana, and what other religions refer to as heaven or the kingdom of God. Meditation and other forms of contemplative prayer permit us to access the 'kingdom' -- this place of peace -- in our daily lives.

In the next exercise, I'd like you to consider how your fears of death cause harm to yourself and others in your life, and then create a plan for feeding your faith so that it can overcome your fear.

Exercise #3: Life and Death; Fear and Faith

Therapist distributes worksheet to group members and reviews content.

Therapist script (continued)

Let's go over this worksheet together:

It begins with the Billy Sunday saying and then asks you some questions:

#1 asks you to write down what harm fear of dying causes you or others. For example, it might trigger your addict self, or prevent you from completing a Living Will, or talking to your loved ones about your illness. Complete #1 now.

Therapist continues when group members have completed #1.

Therapist script (continued)

#2 asks you to create a plan for feeding your faith so that it can overcome and eliminate this fear. You will need to be specific here. I'll go over it with you quickly first and then give you 5-10 minutes to complete it yourself:

a) asks if you are willing to set aside a place in your home where you can be alone for meditation and/or prayer, and to state the location (it could be as simple as a closet where you place a cushion or meditation bench).

b) asks if you are willing to meditate or pray daily, and to state how long you will pray or meditate and at what time of the day you will do this. If you set aside this time for prayer, don't use the time for prayers of request, but rather for silent worship. Simply sit silently in the presence of the God of your faith; feel your faith being fed as you sit in silent worship.

c) asks if you are willing to create a ritual that will feed your faith and remind you of your spiritual nature. It could be as simple as lighting a candle to symbolize eliminating the darkness of fear. Write down what this ritual will be.

d) asks if you are willing to repeat an inspirational saying to yourself throughout the day. Write down at least one saying from your own religious/spiritual tradition that will feed your faith. Or, if you wish, you may use one of the sayings we focused on in this group (e.g., "Be still and know that I am God" or "The kingdom of heaven is within").

e) asks if you are willing to sign a Living Will and if you are willing to discuss your illness and your wishes concerning life support with your loved ones. If you are, you should write down specifically when you will do this. You can get Living Wills at many stationary stores. They let people know what to do in the event you become incapacitated and cannot communicate your wishes concerning continued life support.

f) provides space for anything else you want to add to your plan for feeding your faith and eliminating your fear.

You will have 10 minutes to complete your plan. I'll let you know when time is up. Don't proceed to Question #3 on the Worksheet until I tell you to.

In 10 minutes, therapist calls 'Time'.

Therapist script (continued)

We began this topic by reciting a poem written by someone telling her loved ones how to remember her. Thinking about how you would want to be remembered can help you feed your faith and reduce your fear because fear often includes the pain of regret. So, spend the next five minutes in silence thinking about how you would want your loved ones to remember you, and write these qualities down in the space provided on your worksheet. Then consider what changes you will make in your daily life not only for others to remember you this way, but also for you to experience yourself this way. You will have 5 minutes starting now.

In 5 minutes, therapist calls 'Time'.

Therapist script (continued)

It is unfortunate, isn't it, that we wait until we have a chronic or life-threatening illness before we face our fears. Someone once said that we die as we live. If we have lived chaotic, anxiety-filled lives, we will die that way. However, we have an opportunity now to live differently, more peacefully, in tune with our own inner harmony and in harmony with those around us whom we love. So in this way, the art of living and the art of dying are really one and the same.

9. Questions and Answer Period

Following the experiential presentation of new material, the therapist poses questions for group discussion in order to determine how well group members have understood the relevance of the new material to their daily lives, specifically, to the prevention of harm to self and others, and whether group members can identify the spiritual qualities that they demonstrated during the session.

Therapist script:

- A. How can what you learned today help you remain abstinent during the coming week?*
- B. How can what you learned today prevent the transmission of infections such as HIV?*
- C. Which spiritual muscles did you exercise today? [Therapist points to the poster].*

10. Summary

Therapist provides a brief review of the entire session

Therapist script:

Today,

- *We practiced meditation on the in- and out-breath and mindfulness in order to begin taking back control from the addict self and to strengthen the spiritual self.*
- *We learned that this takes strong Spiritual muscles and that a rigorous training program with daily practice is needed to keep them strong.*
- *We learned that much of the time we live our lives quite unaware of our thoughts, feelings, and actions.*
- *We learned that when we are not mindful, the addict self can quickly take control.*
- *We learned that we need to fill our minds with things that help us remember our spiritual nature – such as a personally meaningful prayer that we can use throughout the day.*

In a few minutes the group will be over. Until we meet again next week, keep reminding yourself of your true nature. Once you are back into the routine of daily life, it can be easy to lose sight of who you really are. Just remember, you are not your addict self – the addict self is that habit pattern of mind that lies to you over and over again promising you relief from your suffering when in fact it just causes more and more suffering. Don't forget that. Remind yourself of your Spiritual nature and its capacity for love and compassion, and enact it in your daily life. I know you can do it. Just keep practicing your meditation daily and try to be more mindful in everything that you do. When you practice, you are strengthening your spiritual muscles and making your Spiritual self stronger and your addict self weaker. Each step you take on your Spiritual path, no matter how small, takes you closer to your goal. You have taken several steps today. Well done. Let's end as we always do with our Spiritual stretch.

11. The Spiritual Stretch

The Spiritual Stretch is shown in the Appendix. Its purpose is for group members to renew their commitment to staying on their Spiritual path throughout the day in their thoughts, words, deeds, and perceptions, and to be open to the experience and expression of their Spiritual nature in all their daily activities. Group members stand and, while in various postures, recite the following affirmations..

Therapist script:

Please stand, and repeat after me:

1. *Today I take my Spiritual path (hands raised above the head, palms together).*
2. *May my thoughts reflect my Spiritual nature (hands in front of forehead, palms together);*
3. *May my words reflect my Spiritual nature (hands in front of mouth, palms together);*
4. *May my emotions reflect my Spiritual nature (hands in front of chest/heart, palms together);*
5. *May my actions reflect my Spiritual nature (hands in front of abdomen, palms together);*
6. *May my perceptions reflect my Spiritual nature (hands outstretched to side, fingers pointing towards the ground);*
7. *May I be open and receptive to my Spiritual nature (hands outstretched to side, fingers pointing towards the sky);*
8. *I am my Spiritual nature (back to starting position with hands raised above the head, palms together).*

12. End

Therapist script:

It was good to see you all today. See you next week.

3-S⁺ Group 11 Handout #1

DO NOT STAND AT MY GRAVE AND WEEP

-anonymous-

*Do not stand at my grave and weep;
I am not there. I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow.
I am the diamond glints on snow.
I am sunlight on ripened grain.
I am the gentle autumn rain.
When you awaken in the morning's hush
I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circled flight.
I am the soft stars that shine at night.
Do not stand at my grave and cry;
I am not there. I did not die.*

In the space below, write down what you think is the 'I' that the poet refers to throughout this poem (for example: does 'I' refer to the body, the spirit, the soul, the self, or something else)?

Worksheet: LIFE AND DEATH, FEAR AND FAITH

Fear knocked at my door;

Faith answered it;

There was no one there.

Billy Sunday (1862-1935)

1. How does your fear of dying harm you or others? (For example, does it trigger drug use? does it prevent you from talking to your loved ones about your illness?)

2. In the space below, create a plan for feeding your faith so that you can overcome this fear.

a) I will set aside a place in my home for daily meditation and/or contemplative prayer (a place where I can sit in silent worship experiencing the God of my faith).

_____ (location).

b) I will practice meditation or contemplative prayer for _____ minutes each day, at _____ (time of day).

c) I will create a daily ritual specifically for feeding my faith and eliminating my fear (e.g., lighting a candle to symbolize eliminating the darkness of fear).

_____ (ritual)

Life and Death: Fear and Faith Worksheet Page 2

d) I will repeat the following inspirational sayings to myself throughout the day (examples, or use your own: 'Be still and know that I am God'; 'the kingdom of heaven is within'):

e) I will complete a Living Will _____ (when)
I will talk to loved ones _____ (who)
about my illness _____ (what)

f) OTHER: I will _____

3. How would you want to be remembered by your loved ones after your death? What qualities would you want them to remember?

4. What changes, if any, will you need to make in your daily life, in order for you to experience yourself as someone with these qualities.

