



# FORUM *on* END *of* LIFE

*Bás in Éirinn*

IN IRELAND

An initiative of



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# *Conversations at End of Life; maintaining hope to the end.*

Dublin Castle  
10<sup>th</sup> September 2015  
Bryan Nolan

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# Conversation



*The exchange of thoughts and feelings by means of speech or sign language.*

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*What sort of conversations might we be talking about today?*

## *End of life*

*What comes to mind when you think about it?*

*What might it feel like to speak with a person about their end of life?*

*What might the challenges be?*

*What is our biggest fear/concern?*

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# Possible Concerns for me....

The person might get upset,  
Think I know more than they do,  
They might get worse,  
Get depressed  
It might be too much for them  
Give up  
Might Die  
Why might I feel this way?  
Its awkward for me,  
I wouldn't know what to say  
I might say the wrong thing.  
Beings up my own mortality

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# For the person: Dying is a fulltime job!

IT IS OVERWHELMING

Complicated information

Many new people and systems to negotiate

Unknown territory

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# *What concerns might a person have as they come to the end of their lives?*

Fear of pain

Being alone

Loosing control

Not coping

Being abandoned

Not knowing what's happening

What do I need to get rid of

Who do I need to speak to

Nothing sorted

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# *What happens when we don't talk about it?*

We make assumptions about how the person is dealing with the situation.

We talk about anything but what matters.

It gets awkward!.

We jolly the person along.

Important things are left unsaid and undone

The person becomes isolated, lonely and withdrawn.

Gives up.



**What elephant?**

Tomassi

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# *What do I need to know before approaching this conversation?*

*What is my purpose?*

*Who is this about?*

*What do they know? or want to know?*

*Does this person wish to talk about what's happening?*

*Does this person want to talk to me?*

*That I don't have to have the answers*

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# *Having the conversation*

*Begin with yourself.*

*Acknowledge your own feelings and notice them.*

*Remember, Ask yourself "If that was me how would I like this conversation to go?"*

*You cannot stop what is happening but you can be part of it.*

*Ask "How can I sit with this person without having an attachment to an outcome?"*

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# *If it was me ?*

What would I want for myself?

How would I like to feel at the end of my life?

” Contemplating our Priorities”

Being with the Dying Joan Halifax 2008



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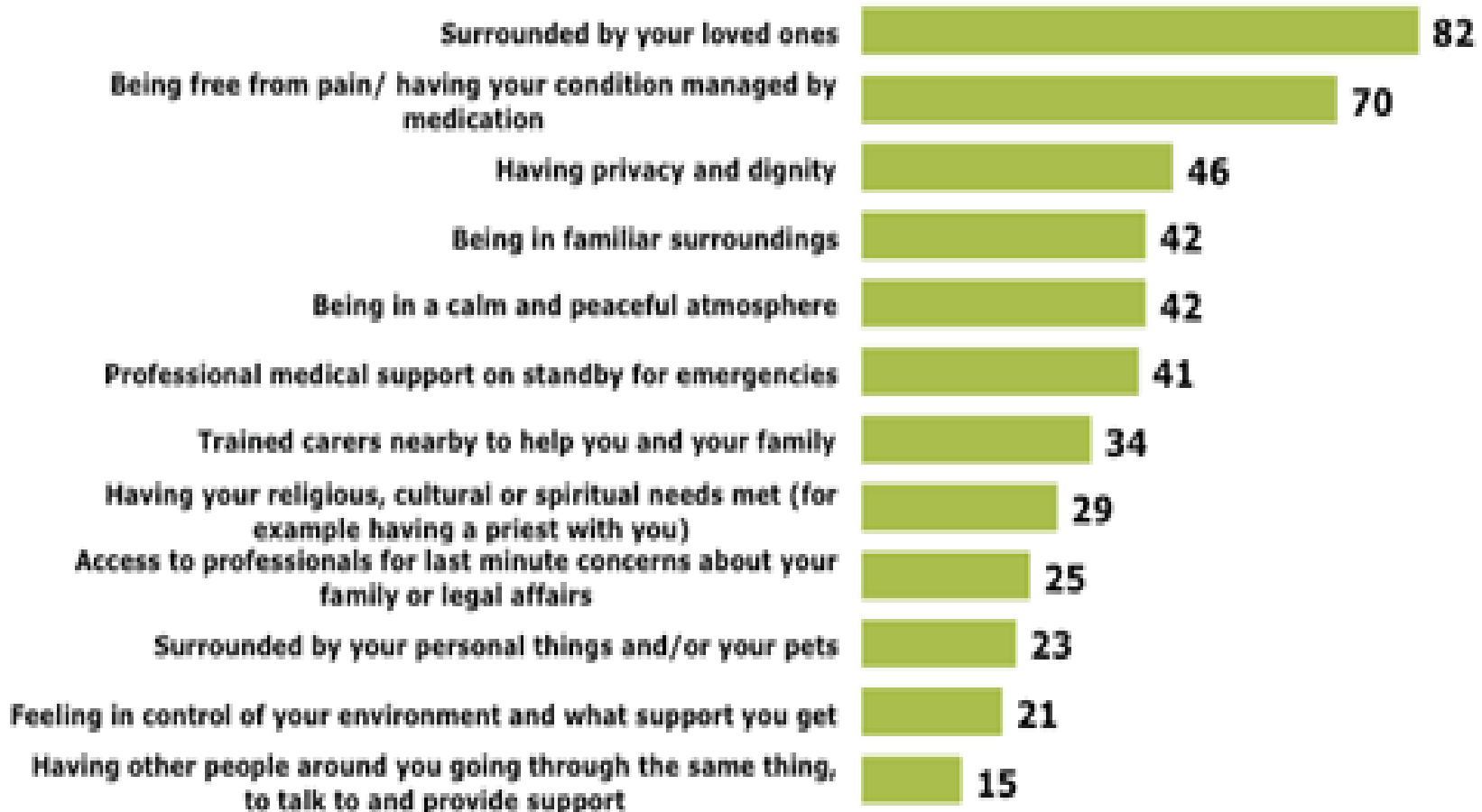


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# What do Irish people want? (2014)





*Caring for the dying is an extraordinary practice.*

*Carer Burden*

*Dying is not an individual act*

*The dying person has a lot to teach us*





# *Caring for the dying is an extraordinary practice.*

*Death is not only for the dying*

*Our dying is a legacy to those who are there.*

*How we are able to be with our own dying.*

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## *Is this work a Gift-Privilege - Threat or Opportunity?*

*A boat that takes me across  
unchartered waters*

*Remember the 3 Tenets*

*Not knowing*

*Bearing Witness*

*Compassionate action*



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# Maintaining Hope

*The wounded oyster heals itself  
with a pearl. Emerson*

*Hope is not found in a way out  
but in finding a way through  
Robert Frost*

*Hope means different things to  
different people*

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# *What might I be hoping for?*

Purpose

Meaning

Value

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**“Hope is the piece that stands between mankind and utter despair.” ( Maura Dunne)**

**In Greek mythology: It is the butterfly in the corner of Pandora's box that brings just enough light to help you see your way through all that could overwhelm you.**

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# What does this mean?

Facing death is facing the unknown.  
This is one task I have to do myself  
I have to leave everything and every one  
I am the most bereaved person in the room  
My hope might be that you will be with me at the end  
That you wont abandon me  
That I will be me until the end  
That you will acknowledge my fears  
That you will let me be whatever way I need to be in that  
moment.  
That you will not ask me to be strong or brave  
In the end- that you will be there  
This to me is hope.  
That in the face of death you will be still caring for me

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# Hope

*In the end I would hope that I would come to a peaceful place*

*A place of acceptance.*

*A place where all my jobs are done.*

*A place where everything that needed to be said has been said*

*A place where when the end did come -I was ready to go.*

*For me to arrive at that place I need you to be that safe pair of hands*

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# *In the end*

## *Remember the 3 Tenets*

- *Not knowing*
- *Bearing Witness*
- *Compassionate action*

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*Thank You*

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