

FACILITATION GUIDE

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Thank you for Hosting a Discussion

Thank you for offering to host a discussion about Euthanasia in your parish, family, or with whichever community you have gathered around you. These are important conversations.

The goal of this Facilitation Guide is to help you, as the facilitator, understand how best to create a space where people with all experiences, opinions, and understandings can come together to hear and reflect. We created this resource with some simple ideas and explanations on how to do this, sharing norms for group discussion, a poster template (shown here but an editable Word document can be found on the Reverence for Life Website), bulletin announcements (found in the Parish Guide), and discussion questions for videos, all of which can be found on our website.

The goal of these sharing circles is not to try to convince anyone of anything, but rather to allow the Holy Spirit to move through the group and create a space of profound listening and sharing. To this end, the resources provided are here to foster the kind of environment where to can participate in this respectful and honest sharing. The key is prayer and openness to the Holy Spirit in this context. Often, people need to feel like they are heard and that they are not alone. Through this sharing, we all have something to learn and something to teach. Having these kinds of spaces is critical for engaging in meaningful and transformative encounters with one another. This is how we combat loneliness and the feeling of being a burden or unloved, which can lead us to fight the root causes of requests for MAiD.

Why Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) is Requested, and The Church's Response

We need to ask the deeper question of WHY" there are requests for Euthanasia or Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD). MAiD is rarely chosen because of pain. Doctors and experts tell us that all physical pain at the end of life can be managed with proper care. According to the Government of Canada, those who request MAiD often name the following as their reasons:[1]

- Loss of ability to participate in meaningful activities: 95.5%
- Feeling like a burden: 45.1%
- Emotional distress: 38.5%
- Loneliness or isolation: 21.1%

[1] Fifth Annual Report on Medical Assistance in Dying in Canada, 2023. Section 3.6 Nature of suffering. https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/publications/health-system-services/annual-report-medical-assistance-dying-2023.html#a4.4, November 12th, 2024.

The Church calls on us to respond with love and compassion. When people are asked why MAiD, we find that the reasons are not due to medical problems. They are human ones. These issues deserve human answers, not a prescription to die. When someone asks, "Do I still matter?" We want the Church, i.e. the people of God, that means you, to be the voice that answers, "Yes." You matter. You are not a burden. You are not alone. We will stay with you and love you to the end.

This is why the Church must respond with clarity and compassion. Our Catholic bishops warn that this expansion "undermines the universal and inviolable dignity of human life and harms the building up of society; it cannot be condoned under any circumstances."[2] For more information about MAiD, visit the CCCB website: Suffering and End of Life - CCCB

Getting Started

We suggest that you read through this whole document to make yourself comfortable with the materials. If you have any questions, please email Tashia Toupin, Social Justice Coordinator of the Archdiocese of Regina, at ttoupin@archregina.sk.ca

These resources have been created so that you can read, photocopy the materials to run your sharing circles with ease and confidence. All materials can be found on our website: Reverence for Life Website. You will find a poster that you can edit for the use of your parish. The video links, sharing circle norms, questions, and follow-up links. We hope that this serves as a launching point for meaningful and transformative conversations.

Introduction

The videos are both around an hour long. Planning to have a long enough time together so that there can be time for watching the video and sharing is important. Managing people's expectations and respecting timelines is part of your role as a facilitator. Ask to speak a week or two before your event with a Mass announcement, and make sure that you get the information into the bulletin so that people can plan to be there.

[2] Permanent Council of the CCCB. *Message from the Permanent Council to the Catholic Faithful on Permitting Persons Living with Mental Illness to Access Euthanasia/Assisted Suicide*. CCCB, March 9th, 2023. https://www.cccb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/2023-05-05-Message-to-the-Catholic-Faithful_MAID-final.pdf

As the Group Gathers, take time to introduce yourselves, Name tags can be helpful if you have a diverse group. It's an easy way to help people feel connected.

Having coffee, tea, and goodies helps to create a sense of shared safe space because breaking bread with others is an ancient and sacred practice that helps us feel connected. This is important if we are going to engage in potentially heated conversations.

Think about creating a space where people can sit comfortably and face each other for the conversation. Ensure that you have the audiovisual resources to show and hear the presentation. Asking for help can be a good way to encourage more people to attend, either by preparing food, helping set up, helping with technical aspects, etc.

Thanks for all your care and preparation for this!

Listening Circle, Group Norms

You might want to print these off or show them on PowerPoint (see our website for premade slides you can download and use). It is helpful to ensure that, especially if things get heated, the group and particularly you, the facilitator, can refer to these to call people back to the conversation. These are found in a clean handout at the end of this Guide.

1. We honour and respect the image of God in each one gathered here. We will seek to identify with one another and not to compare.
2. We honour confidentiality, motivated by a deep respect for the sacredness of people's stories and experiences.
3. We give ourselves and each other permission to listen for the pieces of grace we need the most. We do not need to agree with or like what others say.
4. We refrain from commenting on others' sharing or offering advice in a listening circle. We will welcome diversity and hold tensions without attempting to resolve them.
5. We acknowledge that God alone holds the fullness of truth.
6. We will give ourselves and each other permission to change our minds, opinions, perspectives, and feelings.
7. Everyone is invited to share and contribute, but no one is forced to speak. We give ourselves and others permission to "pass."
8. We will be mindful to leave enough time for everyone to have a chance to share their own experience, should they choose to do so.
9. We will trust our facilitator to respectfully remind us of our norms if needed.

Discussion Question Guides

These Discussion questions can be used or modified for your use. There are several questions, you do not have to answer all of them. All questions are present in the video and are questions that can help us dig deeper into the content that the speakers presented in their talks.

Important things to consider when facilitating a conversation like this:

1) Some people require time to think and formulate their ideas, allowing time for quiet reflection is a good way to ensure everyone is comfortable sharing. Having pens and paper so people can write down thoughts and comments during the viewing of the video can aid in this. People are free to use them if they need. Assure people that nothing is collected; it is just there for those who find it helpful.

2) Some people are verbal processors and could speak for longer than others. This is something to be expected but managed. This is your role as the facilitator. Before people share, you can simply remind everyone gathered that we have allotted x amount of time for sharing and to ensure everyone has time, each person will be permitted to speak for x amount of minutes.

3) You could set a timer on your phone and raise your hand when the person has 30 seconds left so they have time to complete their thoughts.

4) You might want to decide after watching the video but before beginning to share, which questions you are going to discuss. This can be done by asking if there were one or two questions that jumped out at you. This can help focus the group, as there are several questions. There can always be a second gathering if the group wants to continue the conversation.

5) The videos are posted on YouTube so others can watch, or those who attended can rewatch. If you meet again, you can ensure that everyone has the opportunity to watch and participate.

6) It is good to always start your sessions by reading through and having people agree to the sharing norms.

The above six points are to help create an environment where people feel safe to share and to mitigate potential arguments. We must be mindful that there are many perspectives and experiences on life issues. Remember, the goal of this Discussion is to create a space where people with all experiences, opinions, and understandings can come together to hear and reflect on the realities of those who are choosing Euthanasia/Assisted Suicide and reflect on

our fears and joy, hopes and sorrows around this topic. The goal of these sharing circles is not to try to convince anyone of anything, but rather to allow the Holy Spirit to move through the group and create a space of profound listening and sharing.

For the "Panel Discussion on MAiD and Its Impacts", you might want to have copies of the Saskatchewan Bishops' Pastoral Letter, "Dying with Hope: Living and Walking Together". The link to both English and French Versions can be found here: Catholic Bishops of Saskatchewan Pastoral Letter on Human Dignity and Medical Assistance in Death - Archdiocese of Regina. There are links to PDF versions in blue at the top of this page.

The Discussion Guide Questions can be found in a clean handout at the end of this Guide.

Printable Resources

Listening Circle, Group Norms

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2. We honour confidentiality, motivated by a deep respect for the sacredness of people's stories and experiences.

3. We give ourselves and each other permission to listen for the pieces of grace we need the most. We do not need to agree with or like what others say.

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5. We acknowledge that God alone holds the fullness of truth.

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7. Everyone is invited to share and contribute, but no one is forced to speak. We give ourselves and others permission to "pass."

8. We will be mindful to leave enough time for everyone to have a chance to share their own experience, should they choose to do so.

9. We will trust our facilitator to respectfully remind us of our norms if needed.

Panel Discussion on MAiD and Its Impacts: Personal and Professional Testimonies and Reflections

56-minute video

Discussion Questions:

1) What are the ways, as individuals, a community, and the Church, that we can "say 'yes' to accompaniment; 'yes' to community; 'yes' to solidarity with the suffering; and 'yes' to caring for those who need it most?"

2) What does it mean to be a safe space for people to come to, so that they might lay down their burdens?

3) What are practical steps we can take to journey with people towards the grave?

4) What are the ways that we can cultivate a good life, so we can have a good death? How can we extend this to others?

5) When were the times that you knew you were in a sacred place with another person? What was the importance of that in your life, in theirs?

6) What does it look like when we turn anger into advocacy? You might start by listing what makes you angry, and then start to imagine how, with God, we can transform that anger into positive action.

7) What would the world look like when we bear our burdens with one another?

8) Reflecting on the way that a candle dies as it gives its light, what does it mean for us to then snuff out our candles?

Living Hope & Preventing Euthanasia with Amanda Achtman

1:03-hour video

Discussion Questions:

1) What are the ways that our faith has been tested, as individuals and as a Church?

2) What would our world look like if we focused on humanizing **all** of humanity?

3) Rather than Euthanasia as a proposed solution to deeper needs not being met, what are practical steps we can take to solve the issues, to be curious about?

4) When Jesus proclaims in the temple when he reads from the scroll of Isaiah that he has come to proclaim liberty to the captives, what are the ways that we are called to continue this mission as Christians in this world?

5) If compassion is best expressed as a communal suffering of loved ones, what are the ways that we need to be compassionate in our world? What are the ways that we need to invite people into our suffering?

7) If you have ever been blessed to hold the sacred vigil at the end of a loved one's life, can you share why that was a sacred time? Imagine not having that time with that person? How can we share our reflections on the importance of this time with those who are considering MAiD?

8) What could it mean for us to make intentional space for people to exceed themselves? What encouragement do you wish you had had at a younger age? How can you pass this encouragement onto others you encounter?

Conversation on Hope Amid Death and Dying

Join us for coffee and refreshments to watch an hour-long video that explores the hope we can experience amid death and dying. There will be a time of reflection and sharing afterwards. The goal of these sharing circles is not to try to convince anyone of anything, but rather to allow the Holy Spirit to move through the group and create a space of profound listening and sharing.

Please join us at: LOCATION
On: DATE

For questions or to register, please contact:
FACILITATOR'S NAME AND NUMBER

