

Breaking the difficulty of providing
spiritual care by hospice team

Dr Doug Bridge
Taiwan, 7 September 2005

- Connecting to self
- Connecting to others
- Connecting to nature
- Connecting to God (Higher Being)

Connecting to self

Case history

- Margaret, aged 73, widowed, no children
- Carcinoma of pancreas diagnosed 8/04
- Liver metastases. Chemotherapy with gemcitabine
- Admitted to Murdoch Community Hospice 1 August 2005
- Increasing nausea, dyspnoea, abdominal pain, constipation, dizziness
- Miserable, depressed, restless, critical

Unresolved unconscious conflict can break through to the surface of our mind like a terrorist attack from within



Connecting to self

After 8 days, no better.

Totally miserable, wants to die

Nurses feel tired caring for her

I spent one hour with her, listening and encouraging

Connecting to self

“I did something terrible.

I made my brother commit suicide in 1992

I did something even more terrible.

I have never told anyone

I am a murderer

I killed my baby

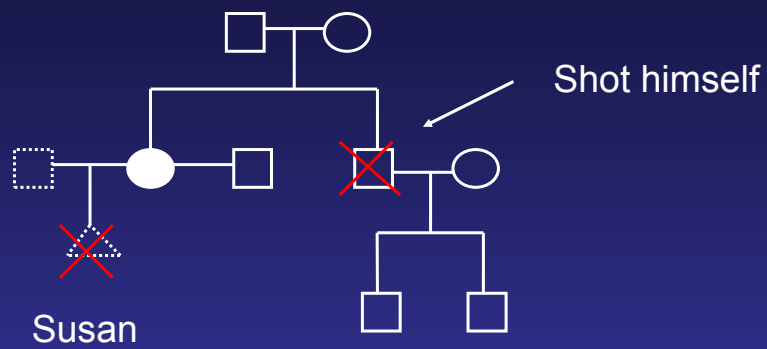
I had an abortion in 1964

I can never be forgiven”

Connecting to self

She opened the lid of her black box, and emptied the contents

She accepted forgiveness from God, and was slowly able to forgive herself



Healing of the patient (and the carer!) is facilitated by a beautiful, peaceful environment

Connecting to others

Through art, music and most of all through relationships

Dying is a time to connect with one's
childhood and family :

...to find one's place in history

Connecting to God

- The awesome wonder of his creation
- The satisfaction of our own creativity
- The simple life of people who live close to the earth
- The search for meaning through suffering



WHO AM I?
Dietrich Bonhoeffer 1906-1945 (Written in prison)

Who am I? They often tell me
I stepped from my cell's confinement calmly,
cheerfully, firmly, like a Squire from his country house.

Who am I? They often tell me
I used to speak to my warders freely and friendly
and clearly,
as though it were mine to command.

Who am I?

They also tell me I bore the days of misfortune equably,
smilingly, proudly, like one accustomed to win.

Am I then really that which other men tell of?
Or am I only what I myself know of myself?
Restless and longing and sick, like a bird in a cage,
struggling for breath,
as though hands were compressing my throat,
yearning for colours, for flowers, for the voices of birds,
thirsting for words of kindness, for neighbourliness,
tossing in expectation of great events,
powerlessly trembling for friends at an infinite distance,
weary and empty at praying, at thinking, at making,
faint, and ready to say farewell to it all.

Who am I? This or the Other?
Am I one person to-day and to-morrow another?
Am I both at once? A hypocrite before others,
and before myself a contemptible weebegone weakling?
Or is something within me still like a beaten army
fleeing in disorder from victory already achieved?
Who am I?

They mock me, these lonely questions of mine.
Whoever I am, Thou knowest, O God, I am thine!

Translated by J. B. Leishman.