

4th International Conference on

Palliative Care, Medicine and Hospice Nursing

August 27-28, 2018 | Boston, USA

Lessons learned from the dying on becoming a better person and practitioner

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At the bedside of our Palliative Care patients, we can learn a great deal about living life well. Patients, when faced with their own mortality, can be some of our most inspiring teachers challenging us to be better than we are today in our personal and professional lives. They teach lessons on the importance of daily gratitude and the significance of embracing the present moment. They teach about the fallacy of “bucket list,” and the need to leave judgement at the door. They teach us that every person has a unique definition of quality of life and the need to cultivate compassionate detachment in order to have longevity in the field of Palliative Care. They challenge us to work on and develop the art of conversation to help guide our patients and families in decision making. In addition, they teach us to learn the needs of our patient's (hint, they may not be what we think). Each day our dying patient seeks to teach, guide, and lead us if we make the time, pull up a seat and just listen.

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