

An Abstract of the Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies Thesis of:

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Transformation Through The Dark Nights Of Death, Loss, and Grief.

Our lives are filled with many forms of grief and loss. Many of these experiences are life-changing events and can be understood to take us into what Thomas Moore defines as “Dark Nights of The Soul.” These experiences catch us off guard and rattle us to our core. However, these experiences are our soul’s way of providing us with the avenues for growth, for discovery, and for transformation. The question facing this research involves this: Do “Dark Night of the Soul” experiences such as illness and death provide avenues for growth and transformation? Can the weave of sacredness and presence be included to assist us in gaining the depth of these experiences, bringing us deeper understanding and meaning for our lives?

The fields of Psychology, Spirituality, and Human Becoming being explored in this research address each discipline’s approaches to the challenging experiences of death and grief. Well known researchers in the field of Psychology such as Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, Thomas Moore, Stephen Levine, and Raymond Moody all provide wisdom regarding the death experience as a transformative event. Our spiritual traditions such as Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism offer support and guidance through practiced rituals, ceremonies, and sacred texts. Rosemary Parse’s Human Becoming Theory allows us to gain meaning and value through our lived experiences and teaches us the art of true presence with those we serve.

By blending these three disciplines as we look at death and loss, we are provided with a lens to view the practice of true presence for the individual, allowing those we serve to guide us in the process as we walk in the shadows of their experiences with them. And we come to realize that it is through our lived experiences that we are invited to become more deeply developed beings. Focusing on creative ritual, ceremony, and loving presence with the individual, we recognize the importance of caring, compassion, and loving support during our loss encounters. Through the encouragement of true presence we can transition through our grief, bringing forth growth and understanding of these dark night journeys and all the wisdom that they provide to us.