

Exercise: What's Your Mission? What's Your Legacy?

This exercise comes from Julie's experience counseling patients with terminal illness. She saw that most people, in the face of their own deaths, have little trouble setting priorities. They know what matters most.

Through our workshops, we've learned that visualizing the end of your own life may have similar benefits. You come to understand your own values better. And that helps you make choices about how to spend your time.

Read the following questions and jot down your ideas. Then discuss your ideas with your partner.

1. Imagine that a doctor has just told you that you have only six months to live. How would you choose to spend that time?

2. Imagine opening the newspaper the day after you die and seeing your own obituary. How would you like that obituary to read? How would you like people to think of your life, to remember you? What legacy would you like to leave behind?

3. Using ideas from steps one and two, write a mission statement for your life. What is your purpose? What is your life's meaning? What are the most important things you'd like to accomplish? What elements of your current life matter most to you? What matters least?