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The art of accompaniment: tools and practices for personal and spiritual accompaniment in palliative care and end-of-life.

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THE ART OF ACCOMPANIMENT

**Tools and Practices for personal and spiritual
accompaniment in Palliative Care and end-of-life.**

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PROLOGUE

All of us are in transit through this life, through this world, towards a destiny that is sometimes hopeless or uncertain, sometimes suspected or dreamed of, sometimes desired or intuited. How to accompany people who are embarking on their journey and their most important internal transformation? How to lighten the “burden” of unnecessary weight that can halt their flight?

Care and accompaniment for people who are going through critical moments in their illnesses or who are approaching the end of their lives is a noble task full of significance and meaning. It is an activity that does not require special qualities.

Fundamentally it means letting the love, kindness and compassion for the other person, that we all have inside us, be expressed correctly and appropriately. Then, when this happens, **“accompanying” becomes “art.”** My body, my heart and my mind come together in a valid act whose only purpose is the well-being and inner freedom of that other heart and mind that I am accompanying.



Personal experience in accompanying many people in the final moments of their physical existence has strengthened me and has reinforced in me the certainty that physical death represents a moment of profound internal transformation and a passage towards a new destination. This certainty has led me to bring together in this work the lessons, tools and practices that have helped me in this task and that I consider to be both well-founded and of great help in caring for and accompanying others.

Many people are in the position of caring for and accompany others. Many doubts and questions tend to arise:

- What is the most appropriate thing to do?
- What to say, or not say, at any given moment?
- How to calm the mental anguish that crushes the heart of the person we accompany?
- How to help “heal” the mental wounds that seem to overwhelm the hearts of those who are departing and of many of their loved ones?
- How to help reconciliation and intense love spread their wings and transform both life and death?
- How to spread and radiate the kindness and true compassion that dwell deep within us?

When I have been able to re-signify the moment of death, it has also re-signified the world of life, bringing me closer to a dimension where inner peace, agreement with myself and a very gentle joy springs up within me. In those moments, a deep understanding of the meaning of human existence and the certainty of spiritual transcendence are present.



This work responds to the individual, inner need to pass on those lessons and practices that have been so good for me and for others. It is an attempt to respond, even if minimally, to some of those questions outlined above.

My thanks to all of those who have collaborated to ensure that this work is completed. Rosita Ergas, Elsa Sierra and Catalina Portel for sharing their material and experiences on the issues that are dealt with in this Guide. Dario Ergas, Roberto Blueh and Andrés Koryzma for their valuable opinions and comments. Tamara Gastelaars for her excellent, invaluable assistance in editing and final recommendations. Mariana "Puné" Pereyra for the illustrations. To Jon Swinden and Alex Skinner for the valuable and careful work in translating the book into the English language. Ana Lía Dellacasa and Silvia Gómez from Editorial Hypatia for their support and help in getting the work into its final form for publication. And particularly to the team at the Palliative Care Unit at the Hospital Tornú in the City of Buenos Aires who are a living example of a daily activity where professional excellence is combined with a kind, caring and compassionate approach and accompaniment.

My deep gratitude to Silo who with his teaching opened the doors of true Meaning to me and in this way allowed me to discover that life does not end in the absurd objectification of death.

This work is a humble attempt to spread his knowledge where the internal need is present, at the frontier of this life, where human existence takes its final steps to then embark on its new destiny.

Víctor Piccininni



*“I will tell you hear what the meaning of life is: to
humanise the Earth!*

*What is humanising the Earth? It is to overcome pain
and suffering, it is to learn without limit, it is to love the
reality you build.*

*I cannot ask you to go beyond that, but neither would it
be outrageous for me to state:*

*“Love the reality you build and not even death will stop
your flight!”*

SILO



1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

About this guide

This Guide is addressed to those people who, directly or indirectly, participate in the process of palliative care and its objective is to share and disseminate a series of tools and practices oriented towards personal and spiritual accompaniment.

The dimension of the “deeply personal” and the “spiritual” are universal human characteristics and go beyond cultural, ideological or religious aspects. They are an expression of the essence of life itself, of the search for happiness and of giving life meaning. They also express contact and communication with ourselves, with others, with nature, with the Universe and with everything that every person considers to be full of meaning. How can we not pay attention to it at the most important and significant moments in our lives?

Of course, the scope of personal and spiritual accompaniment is so broad and deep and encompasses so many nuances, that it would be impossible to include them in a written “guide”, so this work is more of a contribution, an aid, for those who are going through this and are faced with the need to care for and accompany others.

The works and experiences set out here have been and are of great help in minimising mental suffering and in



strengthening the most profound aspects of human existence and the transcendental meaning of human life. These practices, explained in a simple way, are intended to assist in the kind and appropriate accompaniment of the person, their relatives and friends and the professionals who accompany this process.

This work is not a compendium of theoretical issues or developments; it is specifically focussed on the personal and spiritual aspects of Palliative Care.

It is basically a compilation and systematisation of experiences and practices carried out over many years in the accompaniment of these types of processes and life situations.

These contributions, these experiences and practices, fit within what we might define as “humanising health.” In other words, incorporating into clinical practice, those elements that make up the inner self and human spirituality, understanding that just through an observation and awareness that incorporates physical, psychological and spiritual aspects we will be providing a response to the totality of the needs of any human being, and more precisely in this case, to those going through critical and very significant moments on the threshold of their lives.

The issues and the practical tools that are included are inspired by the fundamental ideas of New Humanism or Universalist Humanism, and the teachings given by Silo in his universal message and by other authors who have investigated and worked on these fundamental issues of human existence.



Finally, this work is also a “testimony” by the author in his attempt to share and communicate, in the simplest possible way, his own experiences and convictions which he has brought together on accompanying other people in order that they may help in understanding the depth and evolution of life ... and also the profound, transcendent meaning of the process and moment of death.

How to help...? How to care for...? And how to accompany at such significant moments in the certainty that we are doing our best for others?



How is it set out?

We have arranged the work in five parts.

First part: General introduction, seeks to summarise the objectives of Palliative Care.

Second part: **Personal and spiritual accompaniment**, includes brief explanations about the differences and connections between “physical pain” and “mental suffering.” It is mainly intended to emphasise those elements that can bring about the right mental attitude for help and support. This part also introduces us briefly to the existential and spiritual dimension of the human being.

Parts three and four: **Tools for personal accompaniment and Tools for spiritual accompaniment** form the main core of the Guide and describe the tools, and the practices that can be carried out individually or on a group basis by participants.

Part five, **Appendices**, includes a series of topics for complementary reflections to develop on an individual, or group, basis and also bibliographical references for those who want to explore the topics suggested in the other parts.



What is Palliative Care?

General definitions and basic concepts

"If death were not the prelude to another life, the present life would be a cruel mockery."

M. GANDHI

According to the World Health Organization, 2002, Palliative Care - PC - is an approach that improves the quality of life of patients with life-threatening illness, through the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification, **impeccable assessment and the treatment of pain and other problems: physical, psychosocial and spiritual.**

Among its main characteristics we can highlight that it:

- Provides relief from pain and other distressing symptoms;
- Affirms life and regards dying as a normal process;
- Intends neither to hasten or postpone death;
- **Integrates the psychological and spiritual aspects of patient care.**
- Offers a support system to help patients to live as actively as possible until their death;

² Text extracted from the Manual of Palliative Care. Ministry of Health 2014.



- Offers a support system to help the family in their adjustment during the patient's illness and their bereavement;
- Uses a team approach to address the needs of patients and their families, including during the bereavement;
- Enhances quality of life, and may also positively influence the course of illness;

Can be used early in the course of the illness, in conjunction with other therapies that are intended to prolong life, such as chemotherapy or radiotherapy, and includes those investigations needed to better understand and manage clinical complications.

PC can be carried out at home or at an outpatient's clinic, during an admission to a general hospital or at specific units, in care homes -hospices- or retirement homes, etc.

PC covers different stages. It begins with early PC in parallel to specific primary care, continues with end-of-life PC at the stage where physical death is approaching and finishes with that stage of PC during bereavement in supporting the family and loved ones of the person.

In every case, the care setting is always the **patient-family-context** - or significant context-. Significant context refers to all of those people who, independently of their closeness or physical distance, are linked emotionally and



meaningfully to the person.

PC is not just designed for people with oncological diseases; but also people with **diseases that are potentially chronic, progressive and/or advanced with a prognosis of limited life expectancy.**

This sphere of care is not just limited to physical discomfort, but works with the person in a **multi-faceted way and also takes into account the emotional, social and spiritual dimensions.**

II. PERSONAL AND SPIRITUAL ACCOMPANIMENT

“When you treat others as you want them to treat you, you liberate yourself.”³

SILO

Here we set out various points that we consider to be extremely important to understand and take into account in personal accompaniment in general, and accompaniment in Palliative Care in particular.

They are brief explanations mainly directed towards professionals, relatives, friends and volunteers in the position of “companions”. Taking these issues into account will help to reinforce the tasks that are carried out, and will help to achieve an appropriate inner, mental attitude from which to focus the activities of individual and spiritual accompaniment that are carried out. Spiritual accompaniment is the practice of acknowledging, embracing and providing space for a person’s inner dialogue, so that they can give voice to their questions and give life to their responses. That is, to help the person to awaken or bring to light the yearning and inner search that all people may have.⁴

³ SILO Humanise the Earth. The Inner Look. Cap.XIII Principles. 2011.

⁴ Benito E., Barbero J., Payás A. SECPAL. Spiritual accompaniment in Palliative Care. 2008.



Physical pain and mental suffering

It is important to distinguish between “pain” and “suffering.”

“Pain” is physical and its regression depends on the progress of society and science. In this specific case, advances in medical science in recent years have permitted the development of innumerable mechanisms to minimise physical pain and improve the quality of life of people in palliative care situations.

“Suffering” is emotional and mental. You suffer for fear of losing what you have, for fear of not achieving what you desire, for fear of illness, solitude, death and fear in general. Lack of communication, distress, disorientation, internal and external violence are generally consequences of mental suffering when it cannot be treated in an appropriate way.

Suffering is mental and its regression depends on a deep reconciliation with ourselves and with others.

Physical pain and mental suffering interact, they feed on each other and need to be approached in a holistic manner.

This Guide concentrates on mental suffering and how to act to avoid it, which undoubtedly will also influence positive advances in the field of physical pain.



The existential dimension of the human being. The meaning of life

The human being is not just a physical body. Its emotions, aspirations, ideas, plans and search for a meaning in life also denote a profound existential and spiritual dimension.

When human beings find a true meaning in life and are reconciled with themselves, they cause mental suffering to retreat and clear the path towards their own happiness and that of those who surround them. The assumption, belief, experience or simple intuition of a transcendental meaning in life, beyond physical death, opens the door for reconciliation and overcoming internal suffering.

This experience, however minimal, also translates into the physical aspect, bringing about the best conditions for well-being or mitigating pain.



Deep reconciliation with ourselves and with others

It is very important that we reconcile ourselves with our inner beings and with those we believe have harmed us or to whom we feel resentful.

Deep reconciliation leads us to the transcendental meaning of our own lives.

Reconciliation is not about forgetting affronts or situations that have taken place.

Reconciliation goes beyond forgiveness, by also trying to understand what has occurred so that our minds can remain at peace, without dissimulation or falsification.

Sincere reconciliation with ourselves and with those who have hurt us brings us to a profound transformation of our lives.

"When we come to understand that it is not an enemy that dwells within us but a being full of hopes and failures, a being in whom we see a brief succession of images, beautiful moments of fulfilment and moments of frustration and resentment. When we come to understand that our enemy is a being that has also lived with hopes and failures, a being in whom there were moments of fulfilment and moments of frustration and resentment, we will be casting a humanising look over the skin of the monstrosity.

Reconciling is not forgetting or forgiving, it is acknowledging what has happened and resolving to break away from the cycle of resentment." ⁵

⁵ Silo. Days of Spiritual Inspiration at Punta de Vacas. 2007. Available at www.silo.net



Kindness and compassion

Kindness and compassion are fundamental attitudes to help others in the search for reconciliation and in overcoming mental suffering.

Kindness implies a warm, affectionate and respectful closeness towards the other person. Kindness is experienced through friendly treatment and sincere, calm and deep-felt communication.

Compassion is not “suffering” or “identifying” with the suffering of others. It is not “suffering” with the other person. That attitude generally does not help to overcome suffering.

Compassion implies “putting yourself in the place of the other person” in a kind way, trying to “understand their situation” and acting towards the other person in “the way you would like to be treated in the same situation.”

There is a principle that reflects, in its maximum expression, kind and compassionate treatment. It is the one which says: ***“Treat others as you would like to be treated”***

Meditation and daily application of this Principle places us in a position of caring, **kind and compassionate treatment towards others and it is of fundamental importance to consider it in all the practices of accompaniment in Palliative Care.**



Meaning of life, death and transcendence. Reflections

The critical situations and significant moments of life - such as accidents and serious illnesses or the proximity of physical death, either of ourselves or of a loved one - put us in a position of reflecting on essential issues that are often pushed aside when faced with the rush of events in our daily lives. Calm, kind, inner meditation around the fundamental questions of our existence will help us to find the best and clearest responses in the depths of our own consciousness and will be of great help in support in Palliative Care.

We invite you to read and meditate internally on the following phrases:

*“Do not let your life pass without asking
yourself:*

Who am I?

*Do not let your life pass without asking
yourself:*

Where am I going?

*Do not let a day pass without asking
yourself:*

Who am I?

Where am I going?

What is the meaning of my life?

What is death really?”

6 Phrases extracted from the book Silo's Message, Part III: The Path.



Recommendations for the Accompanying Person. Useful questions and reflections ⁷

Help for people in palliative care situations requires our willingness to carry out acts of great generosity. All of us can help, some will be able to do it with greater knowledge and skill than others.

Let us quote the valuable words of Soygal Rimponché:

"We all need emotional help; it is important to learn to include lovingly, to give unconditionally, not to be frightened by the erratic and destructive aspects of the patient, to respond with empathy to their need to be supported, listened to and understood: All of this represents a guarantee, a confidence in the fact that, although we must die alone, we can rely on a calming presence that will not abandon us."

Below we set out some ideas about how to connect with our own ability to love, to support and to satisfy the emotional needs of those who are facing death:

- **First make contact with the best of yourself.**

Before you approach a person, try to connect with the deepest aspects of yourself, with what you consider to be "sacred" and "profound." Take a brief moment, a few seconds...and try to feel that essential and "profound element" that dwells within you.

⁷ This point is taken from and inspired by ERGAS, ROSA B. *Light on the Threshold*. 2007.



- **Facilitate an open, sincere and profound communication.**

It is essential to establish a sincere communication that is free of fear. The most crucial thing is to encourage the person to feel free to express their emotions, their fears without restrictions. Let us learn to listen without judging, or commenting...to create a receptive and kindly silence.

- **Useful phrases to initiate communication.**

When the moment is right, without impositions or awkwardness, you could ask:

- Would you like to discuss...? You could add that you have time and that you are available.
- If you don't mind, tell me a bit about what is happening to you?
- What is the most difficult thing for you?
- Is there anything I can do for you?
- Is there anything that is worrying you...? Would you like to tell me anything?
- You can share with me what you are worried about, any unfinished business or any other things or thoughts that you imagine and would like to share.

- **Do not impose your own beliefs.**

Love and compassion are the means by which the other person can express their deepest feelings. That is our objective.

We should never try to persuade others by imposing our own beliefs or telling the other person what they should do. Let us be



instruments to facilitate their own process of opening up, of communication and reflection and not to impose our own beliefs or ideas. It is not appropriate to use phrases like:

- *You “have” to... or you do “not have” to...*

Nor is it appropriate to minimise what the other person tells us. Avoid responses or phrases that are expressed as:

- *“It is nothing...” or “don’t worry...”*

- **Unconditional love.**

Let us not believe that we must be expert at this. Let us be ourselves, connected to the most profound and sacred elements that dwell inside us. In this way, the person that we support, will have the sensation that we “are really” with them, communicating simply as one equal to another, as one human being to another. Let us try to understand their needs in depth and from there seek the intense communication that stems from unconditional love and compassion towards the other person.

- **“Being” with the other person. Contemplation and silence as care and healing accompaniment.**

Let us not believe that we must always say or do something special. Often, the most important thing is “presence.” **It is a full presence, in deep peace, in silence, feeling that all of my being is there, supporting the other person. My head, my heart and my mind are completely there, without distractions.**



It is a communication from “heart to heart,” with or without many words. You experience an internal coming together and profound peace with the other person. “Being” at the other person’s side, in profound silence, feeling the best of yourself and trying to feel the best and deepest aspects of the person you are supporting is transformed into a healing practice.

Communication and intense, essential support can also be provided in an affectionate and respectful silence.

(We recommend reading and doing exercises to deepen the practice of “attention” included in Appendix B.)

III. Tools for personal accompaniment

“There is no attachment. There is no criticism, annoyance, nor opinion. I listen with kindly attention. There is a profound silence within me. There is calm, a gentle affection and a gentle intention...true support. There is an intense communication... there is compassion.”

This series of practices is based on simple exercises that help to achieve rapid psychophysical well-being.

They can be carried out with the person we are supporting

- always with prior consultation with the medical professionals and nurses who care for the person - and they are also excellent practices that can be carried out with relatives, friends and professionals who help with it and recognise the need for practising.

General recommendations for all the exercises, tools and experiences:

- It is recommended that the companion follows mentally and experientially within themselves the text they read or recreate with the person, relatives or friends. In this way, the experience will be “shared” and the atmosphere of intense communication that we need will be reinforced.



- It is very helpful if prior to the practice of these exercises the companion has read the suggestions explained in part 2 of the Guide -more precisely in the section *Recommendations for the companion. Useful questions and reflections*, where some guidelines and issues are set out to take into account in personal support.



A. External, internal and mental relaxation

Objective: to achieve appropriate relaxation of the internal and external muscles and the mind. The relief of muscular, emotional and mental tensions improves relaxation and allows the achievement of calm and general well-being.

Development: guided reading, with soft and slow voice of the following text.

“...Close your eyes.

Now start to loosen your body going down it step by step...

Start with your head, and move down over your shoulders, feeling every part, towards your arms. Continue further down, until you feel your hands unfurl as you relax.

Feel each muscle in your face. Soften your gestures and slide down the neck to your chest. Slowly relax your chest, tracing your way down it to the base of your torso.

And when you have done that, do not forget to ease your back. Lift all the weight from it as you move down your spine towards your legs, towards your feet.

At that point you will have loosened up your whole body, realising that you have got rid of any strain, any pain. Now you can take care of calming your heart.

Approach it calmly, lowering yourself confidently down through you neck, towards your chest, then further down to the end of your trunk, experiencing how your emotions are become calmer and your heart is embracing them calmly, without distress.

Then you will quieten your mind.



Listen to your work in your head. Listen to the murmur of your own thoughts and silence your mind. Rid it of everything that is not present and acknowledge the stillness.

Then you will have experienced for yourself, the state of your body, your heart and your mind, when there is no tension in them. And you will have done it simply, without anyone having demanded that you let go of anything.

Pay attention for a few moments to what you experience now, and understand that it is just the beginning of a state that you will be able to create within you, if you resolve with faith to overcome suffering.



B. Experience of Peace ⁸

Objective: the “Experience of Peace” allows you to intensify feelings of relaxation and achieve a deep calm and inner peace. It is suggested that you perform it after the relaxation described in the point above.

Development: guided reading, with a soft, slow voice of the following text.

Fully relax your body and quieten your mind...

Then imagine a transparent, luminous sphere that is coming down towards you, and finishes by lodging itself in your heart.

If picturing that image is difficult for you, simply pay attention to the sensation of your chest without distress or disquiet-.

You will recognise the moment when the sphere starts to be transformed into an expansive sensation within your chest...

Carry the sensation of the sphere out of your body. Without fear, allow your emotions and all of your being to continue to experience calm and an increasing joy...”

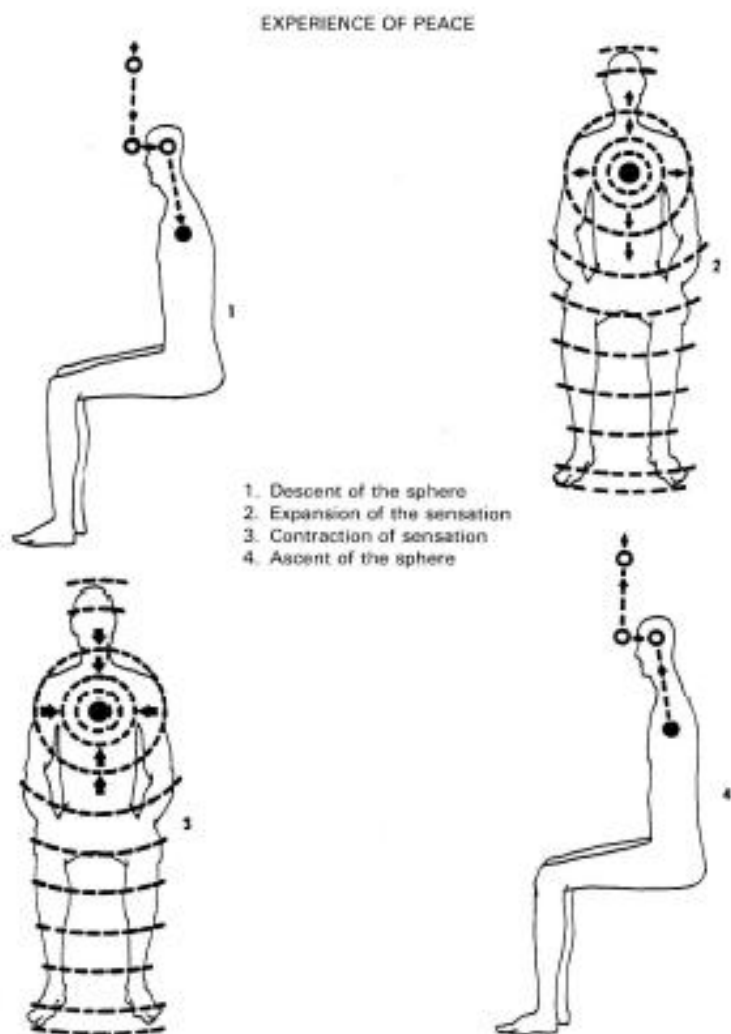


Figure 4

8 Based on the "Experience of Peace." Self-Liberation. AMMANN, LUIS A. Argentina. Ed. Altamira. 2004.



C. Brief Meditations. Playing with images⁹

These practices are brief reflections that are performed with the help of our imagination.

Objective: the positive mobilisation of our internal images is an exceptional tool for the development of inner strength and the realisation of signs of peace, strength and joy in our lives.

They are simple exercises that practitioners can use with the purpose of positively predisposing themselves to daily activities and fundamentally to reflect on particularly difficult situations in our lives that need greater understanding and reconciliation.

Development: slow, gentle reading of the text, inviting others to join the narrative with the images of each participant. Let us imagine the narrative by trying to give it continuity and reality in our own inner selves.

The protector of life.

I imagine myself in a beautiful, tropical grotto bordered by a stream of crystal clear water. Inside there is a very beautiful lady with a kind and dignified bearing. I approach her.

I show her which part of my body is weakest or sickest and talk to her of the unease I feel about certain parts of my body.

⁹ The "Brief Meditations" are summarised adaptations of the practices known as "Guided Experiences," from the Book - Guided Experiences. SILO Ed. Planeta.1991.



I see the lady touching and restoring the part that indicated to her previously. I listen to her teaching about what a wonderful instrument the body is and how fortunate we are despite the difficulties that seem so enormous.

Then, I drink water from the stream and I go away walking along a beach of very fine sand.

The child

I remember myself as a child in that place and the moment when I suffered an injustice. I understand and forgive that injustice, while I imagine myself as a child running happily through a sunlit field.

Fear

I remember myself in a situation faced with a person, animal or object that aroused a special fear in me. I face the situation while I observe that the fear factor is losing strength until it becomes pleasant.

The enemy

I try to remember that person towards whom I harbour an attitude of resentment. I remember the situation that caused that mood and I resolve to reverse the situation.

I imagine the negative situations of the other person right at the moment when they are falling into an abyss. I resolve to help them.



I throw them a line and succeed in saving them from certain death.
I feel an inner freedom...a deep inner reconciliation.

The big mistake

I remember the moment or moments when I believe I have mistaken the course of my life.

Moments when you assume that, if you had chosen well, your present life would be happier.

I put myself in that situation. I acknowledge that the course taken at that moment was the only possible one.

I think that if I had done otherwise, things would have been worse than at the present moment. I resolve to have freer choices in the future.

Nostalgia

I remember loving or affectionate relationships in my life that failed. I imagine myself in those situations. I thank the other person or people involved for the moments of happiness and the lessons learned as a result of them. I observe a flock of happy birds in the blue sky.

Resentment

I imagine myself at night in a dark garden bathed in moonlight. Very close by, in the shadows, a person who has caused great harm to me.



They are chained to a tree and ask for forgiveness and help. I decide to help them. I break their chain and I walk out joyfully while the dawn sun rises.

Repetition

I am walking at night through a narrow alley, the light is dull and there is mist in the air; although I try to get out through side streets I always come back to the same place. Three signs appear in the form of arrows pointing in different directions. One says: "Repetition of life," insinuating what has been happening to you. The second sign says: "Negation of life," meaning wearing out, loss of strength, routine and the elimination of enthusiasm. Finally, the third, indicates: "Beyond life," showing that there is a new possibility that you have not explored sufficiently. I remain at the crossroads for a moment, meditating on my own life in relation to those signs. Ultimately, I take the direction of the third one, going out on to a beautiful, well-lit avenue.

The journey

I imagine that I am at the top of a mountain. Near me a ship descends as if it were a transparent bubble. I enter it, going at an incredible speed.

It is moving towards a bright spot that is rapidly expanding. Suddenly, the ship settles on a level. Descending, a human figure offers me a luminous sphere that I hold to my forehead, receiving energy, peace and kindness. I return to the bubble that descends near my own house, with the sensation that it is possible to renew myself internally.

IV. TOOLS FOR SPIRITUAL ACCOMPANIMENT

“What we call ‘eternity’ is a soft and luminous Force, which nestles in the depths of our interiority.”

In this part some simple practices are shared that are able to produce spiritual inspiration and positive changes in daily life. They can be carried out individually, with a companion or in a group with friends and relatives.

It is very useful and advisable that, prior to practising these exercises, the companion has read the suggestions set out in part two of the Guide, and more precisely in the section *Recommendations for the accompanying person. Useful questions and reflections* where some guidelines are given and issues to take into account in personal accompaniment and in carrying out these kinds of practices.



The “Asking”¹⁰

Objective: to achieve contact with one’s inner self and make a profound and heartfelt plea.

Development: guided reading, with a soft, slow voice of the following text.

“In some moment of the day or night, inhale a breath of air and imagine that you carry this air to your heart.

Then, ask with strength for yourself and your loved ones. Ask with strength for the 'Well-being' of yourself and your loved ones

Do not take a lot of time with this brief prayer, this brief asking, because it will be enough that you interrupt for one brief moment what is happening in your life for this contact with your interior to give clarity to your feelings and your ideas.”

10. The Asking. Silo. Inaugural exhibition of the Park of Study and Reflection La Reja. 07-05-2005.



Well-being¹¹

Objective: an experience to carry out individually or in a group in those situations where one or more loved ones are having problems with their health or their emotional lives.

Development: guided reading and meditation, with a soft, slow voice of the following text.

“We are gathered here to turn our thoughts to those dear to us. Some of them are facing difficulties in their emotional lives, some in their relationships with others, some with their health. To them we direct our thoughts and our best hopes.

We have faith that our call for well-being will reach them. Let us think of those dear to us. Let us feel the presence of those dear to us. Let us experience contact with those dear to us

Let us take some time to meditate on the difficulties that they are facing...

-A few moments will be given for participants to be able to reflect...-

Now we would like these people to feel our best hopes for them. A wave of relief and well-being will reach them...

Let us take a short time to mentally locate the situation of well-being that we wish for our loved ones...

-A few moments will be given for participants to be able to focus their minds...-

¹¹ The practices of Well-being, Assistance and Death are extracted from the book “Silo’s Message”, Part III: “The Experience.” www.silo.net



We conclude this ceremony by allowing the opportunity, for those who desire, to feel the presence of those loved ones who, although they are not here in our time or in our space, are connected to us in this experience of love, peace, and warm joy...

-A short time is given...-

This has been good for others, comforting for us, and inspiring for our lives... Greetings to everyone immersed in this current of well-being, which has been strengthened by the best wishes of all those present..."



Assistance

Objective: ceremony of assistance and deep reconciliation to accompany those who are very close to their departure from this world.

Development: this is a very emotional ceremony and demands that everyone who performs it gives of their best. The ceremony can also be repeated at the request of participants or those who care for them. Whatever the apparent state of lucidity or lack of awareness of the person, the reader approaches them speaking in a gentle, clear, measured voice.

" The memories of your life are the judgment of your actions. You can, in a short time, recall much of what is best in you. Remember then, but without fear, and purify your memory. Gently remember, and calm your mind...

-Silence is given for a few minutes, then the words start again with the same tone and intensity-

Reject startling fears and disheartenment...

Reject the desire to flee toward low and dark regions...

Reject the attachment to memories...

Remain in internal liberty, indifferent toward the dream of the landscape...

.....

Resolve now to begin the ascent...

The pure Light dawns in the summits of the great mountain chains, and the waters-of-a-thousand-colors flow amid unrecognizable melodies toward crystalline plateaus and prairies...



Do not fear the pressure of the Light which pushes against you with increasing strength the closer you draw to its center. Absorb it as though it were a liquid or a wind, for certainly, in it is life...

When you find the hidden city in the great mountain chain, you must know the entrance—and you will know it in the moment your life is transformed. Its enormous walls are written in figures, are written in colors, are “sensed.” In this city are kept the done and the yet-to-be-done...

-Silence is given for a few minutes, then the words start again with the same tone and intensity-

Now you are reconciled...

You are purified...

Prepare to enter the most beautiful City of Light, this city never seen by the eye, whose song has never been heard by human ears...

Come, prepare to enter the most beautiful Light...



Ceremony of Death

Objective: to accompany, with a profound mediation to those relatives and loved ones who are saying goodbye to the person who has died.

Development: reading aloud of this text.

Life has ceased in this body. We must now make an effort to separate in our minds the image of this body from the image of the person we remember...

This body does not hear us. This body is not the person we remember...

May those of you who do not feel the presence here of another life, separate from the body, consider that although death has paralyzed this body, the actions he/she carried out will continue to act, and their influence will never end. This chain of actions that was set in motion in life cannot be stopped by death. How profound it is to meditate on this truth, even though we may not completely comprehend the transformation of one action into another!

And may those of you who do feel the presence of a separate life consider that death has only paralyzed this body, that the mind has once again triumphantly freed itself, opening its way toward the Light...

Whatever our views, let us not weep for this body. Rather, let us meditate on the root of our beliefs, and a gentle and silent joy will come to us...

Peace in the heart, light in the understanding!



V. APPENDIX A

The Path¹²

Here are set out 17 topics for meditation and reflection that refer to the harmony of thinking, feeling and acting.

The Path invites people to advance towards an inner unity and towards a profound reconciliation with ourselves, with others and with life itself.

1.

If you believe that your life will end with death, nothing that you think, feel, or do has any meaning. Everything will end with incoherence and disintegration.

If you believe that your life does not end with death, you must bring into agreement what you think with what you feel and what you do. All must advance toward coherence, toward unity.

2.

If you are indifferent to the pain and suffering of others, none of the help that you ask for will find justification.

If you are not indifferent to the pain and suffering of others, in order to help them you must bring your thoughts, feelings, and actions into agreement.

¹² The Path. Extracted from the book "Silo's Message", Part III: www.silo.net



3.

Learn to treat others in the way that you want to be treated.

4.

Learn to surpass pain and suffering in yourself, in those close to you, and in human society.

5.

Learn to resist the violence that is within you and outside of you.

6.

Learn to recognize the signs of the sacred within you and around you.

7.

Do not let your life pass without asking yourself:

“Who am I?”

Do not let your life pass without asking yourself:

“Where am I going?”



8.

Do not let a day pass by without giving an answer to yourself
about who you are.

Do not let a day pass by without giving an answer to yourself
about where you are going

9.

Do not let a great joy pass without giving thanks internally.
Do not let a great sadness pass without calling into your interior
for the joy that you have saved there

10.

Do not imagine that you are alone in your village, in your city, on
the Earth, or among the infinite worlds

11.

Do not imagine that you are enchained to this time and this space

12.

Do not imagine that in your death loneliness will become eternal

VI. APPENDIX B

Attention

Exercising attention is a fundamental tool for accompaniment. "Pure attention" refers to the sensation you have when you achieve it: relaxing your body and concentrating your thoughts and emotions on what you are doing, without judging, without expressing an opinion, in peace... without additional worries. When accompanying, particularly in the moments of "end of life" this practice and this attitude of "being full and essentially with the other" is of extraordinary help.

"Pure attention is the best expression of love"

The opposite of attention is distraction, it is having your body in one place and your thoughts on something else, on worries, judging, arguing internally and/or with my troubled emotions.

"I am engaged in what I am...and not anything else!"

"I am accompanying ...and not anything else!"

There are simple exercises to strengthen and internally record the sensations that go with "attention" and "full engagement" in what "I am" Here is one of them that is based on your own breathing:

- 1 Relax the body, the emotions and the mind (you can base it on the practice described in Chapter III, "Relax internally, externally and mentally.")
- 2 **I focus my attention towards my inner self and feel my breathing.** All of my "being" is focussed on the rhythm of my breathing...I pay attention and I concentrate solely on the internal sensation of



breathing... I continue to pay attention to that sensation for two or three minutes. Then on finishing, "I give thanks" inwardly.

Try to exercise and strengthen these sensations of "being fully present" in what I am doing... and that this attitude of being relaxed, in peace and fully attentive to my internal world and to the internal world of those I accompany be the basis of my attitude of accompaniment and help to others.



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