

Life's a celebration

Workshop takes compassionate look at mortality

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If you had one hour, or even one year to live, what would you do, who would you call, what would you say, and why are you waiting?

Most of us don't like to talk about the D-word, much less contemplate the question above, but Claire Scott does. The Calgary-based nurse, author and public speaker has made a living leading people to boldly think about their own mortality, sometimes with tears, and surprisingly, with laughter.

"Knowing that you are dying or that someone you love is dying changes everything, including how you live for today," she says. "I've watched hundreds die and not one of them wished they had a bigger house or a faster car. They actually wished they had told those closest to them that they loved them more often. My question is: why do we have to be dying to get our priorities straight and what does it take to recognize it earlier?"

Scott helps participants uncover their own fears, judgment and misconceptions about death, ultimately trying to help them understand that it's simply part of the journey. She encourages them to build their own ideals on how to continue living with gusto, but celebrate

the death process at the same time.

"If we can diminish, not eliminate, a lifetime of work to acquire a total acceptance, then we can reach out and think a little bit about how we want to live up until that last moment," says Scott, who says many of her attendants include those who are terminally ill or dealing with the impending death of a family member or friend.

Heather Burlet knows how preparing for death can help ease the pain. Facing the last days of her mother's life a year ago, she was comforted by the insights of Scott.

"My daughter Sydney, who is an EMT, had taken Claire's course as part of her medical studies. Sydney brought home Claire's book one day and I read it that night. We didn't have time to take her course until after mom died because her illness progressed so quickly. When we did attend, it impacted us in a way that it empowered us to have a different perspective on life and death," Burlet says, who adds that she lives her life more blissfully than ever before.

Such sentiments don't surprise Scott. She says the workshops, often attended more than once by many individuals, put attention back into living in the moment.

"Most people have no idea what they would do if it was the last year of their life. Often the dread of death can be the life un-lived. Many regret not taking more risks and not feeling all that life offers," she says.

Scott will be teaching the One Year To Live workshop Dec. 7 from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Grace Women's Health Centre. Tickets are \$25 and you can register by calling 944-2260 or go to the website at www.crha-health.ab.ca/clin/women.