

ECHO IDAHO

Behavioral Health in Primary Care

Grief and Spirituality

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None of the planners or presenters for this educational activity have relevant financial relationship(s) to disclose with ineligible companies whose primary business is producing, marketing, selling, re-selling, or distributing healthcare products used by or on patients.



Learning Objectives

- Explore the Meaning of Spirituality
- Review Aspects of Grief
- Identify 5 Existential Tensions



**Grief – Resilience
As Spiritual Companion**



Spirituality

gwish.smhs.gwu.edu Dr. Christina Puchalski

- Fundamental aspect of our human experience.
- Involves the search for meaning and purpose in life through exploring the existential questions of life,
- Comes alive through the narrative of our lives reflected in our relationships to self, family, community, nature, the significant or sacred.
- Expressed through our belief systems, our priorities and values, our feelings and perceptions, spiritual practices (both inside and outside the constructs of traditional religion).
- Points to the importance of quality of life and how we cope as humans with the experience of loss, illness, and suffering in our lives.
- Journey toward self-awareness, inner peace, acceptance, and transformation.
- Dynamic, flexible, and adaptable.

Grief

A type of stress reaction, a highly personal and subjective response that an individual makes to a real, perceived, or anticipated loss.

Mourning

An intrapsychic process through which a grieving individual gradually adapts to the loss, a process that has been referred to as “grieving” or “grief work.”

The social aspect of grief, the norms and patterned behaviors and rituals through which an individual is recognized as bereaved and socially expresses grief.

Anticipatory Grief

Emotional response when one expects or prepares for a significant loss.

Disenfranchised Grief

Grief that is not acknowledged, validated, or openly supported socially.

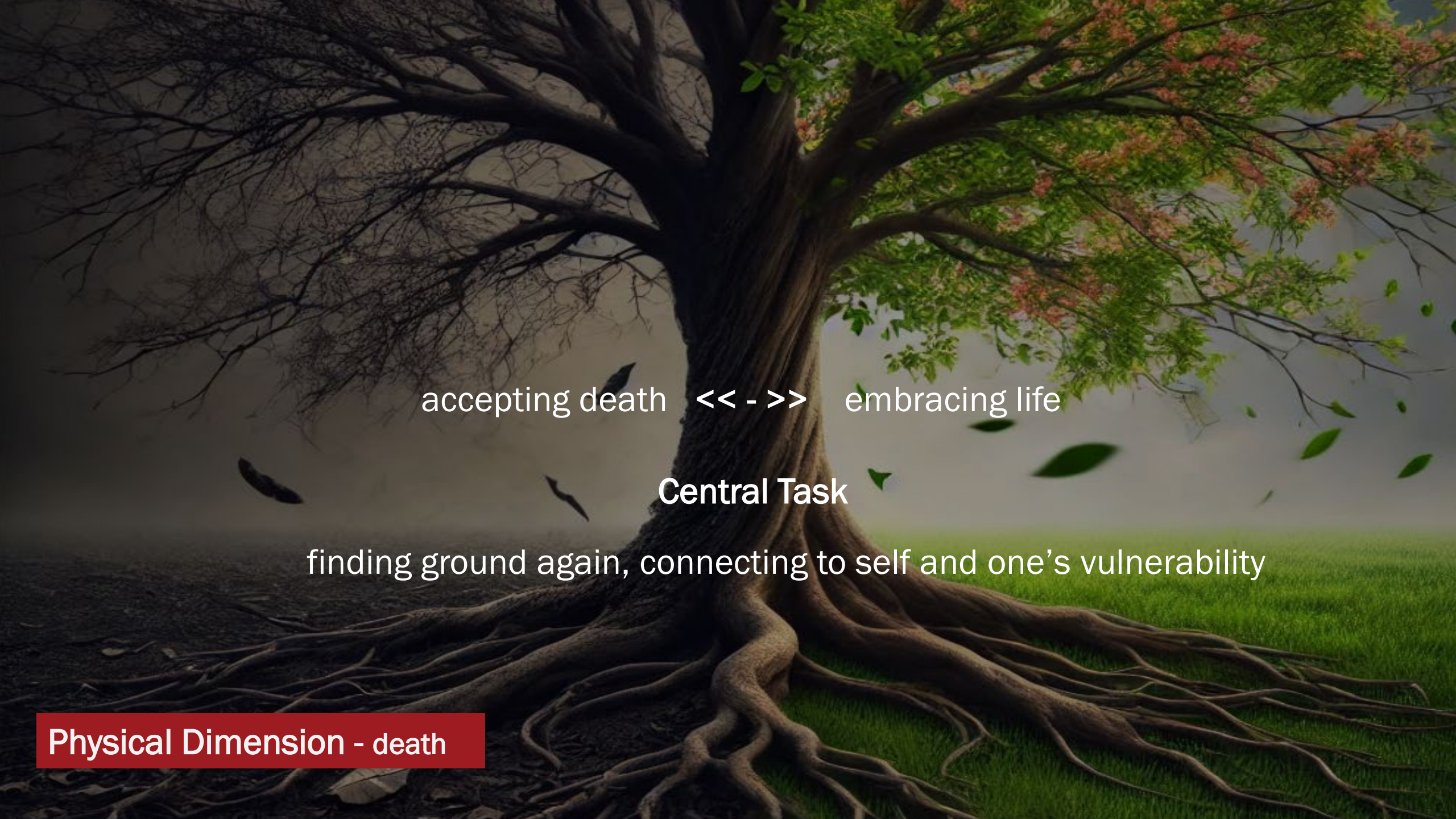


Prolonged Grief Disorder

Intense and prolonged form of grief that disrupts a person’s ability to function in life and reconcile the loss.

Total Grief

Insights drawn from the Palliative approach of care addressing Total Pain.



accepting death << - >> embracing life

Central Task

finding ground again, connecting to self and one's vulnerability

Physical Dimension - death

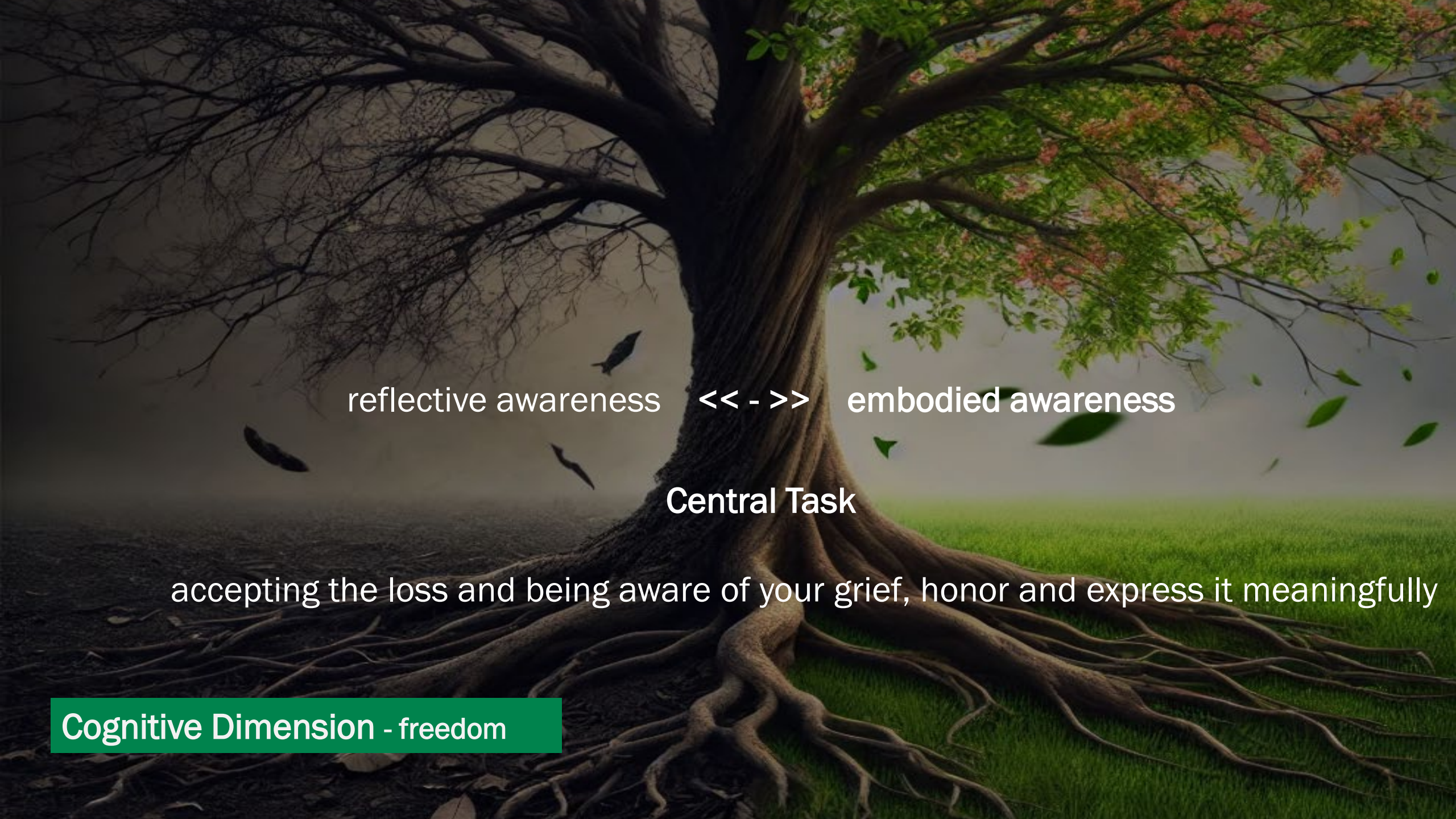


enduring << - >> taking responsibility

Central Task

feeling the grief, emotion regulation, care for self

Emotional Dimension - freedom



reflective awareness << - >> embodied awareness

Central Task

accepting the loss and being aware of your grief, honor and express it meaningfully

Cognitive Dimension - freedom



loneliness << - >> connectedness

Central Task

continuing bonds, seeking support, letting go

Social Dimension - isolation



meaninglessness << - >> meaning

Central Task

being open to significance or deeper truths, finding new meaningful goals

Sacred Dimension - transcendence



John's Story

John had been a professional soccer player for ten years when he lost his leg in an accident. The sudden loss of his bodily integrity felt for him like losing his life. Having a career as a professional soccer player had been a dream from his early childhood on. He felt like he had found his place in the world. Nothing had made him feel more alive. Then everything he had worked so hard for suddenly collapsed. It meant not only the end of his identity as a sportsman, but it also put an end to his source of income, the social embeddedness in his team, his sense of self and meaning in life.

During the first week after the accident, John was in a lot of pain, he could not eat and sleep, he was desperate, angry, and felt utterly abandoned. He completely withdrew from social interaction, had strong emotional outbursts and repeatedly talked about putting an end to his life. Having no clue how to live with the reality of his loss. John had great problems connecting to life again

Physical Dimension: ultimate concern death

Existential tension: accepting death < - > embracing

Spiritual Task: finding ground again, connecting to self and one's vulnerability



John's Story

During the rehabilitation program, the physiotherapist working with John was regularly confronted with strong emotional outbursts of anger and frustration. A psychologist was asked to work with John and learn about his struggles. John accepted and after some sessions he started to develop the inner space to realize that there was no way he could run away from his loss and pain. While accepting responsibility for his loss and grief, he gradually learned to better regulate his emotions. Although he still felt many ups and downs, he was also getting better at practicing self-care and self-compassion to minimize the frustration.

Emotional Dimension: ultimate concern freedom

Existential tension: enduring < - > taking responsibility

Spiritual Task: feeling the grief, regulating emotions, care for self



John's Story

John suffered from many thoughts about life being empty and a mere shadow of his former existence. For a while he entertained counterfactual thoughts on how he could have avoided the accident. In his process of grieving, he was invited by friends, the physiotherapist, and the psychologist to become more aware of what his grief was about. In time this helped him to accept his new reality and finding ways to gain new perspective and hope.

Cognitive Dimension: ultimate concern freedom

Existential tension: reflective awareness < - > embodied awareness

Spiritual Task: accepting the loss and being aware of your grief, honor and express it meaningfully



John's Story

In these weeks, John also opened- up more to friends and close ones. Through talks he started to realize how much living the life of a professional soccer player was a way of being connected to a meaningful social group. The deeper values he was committed to were related to being part of a social fabric around the common joy and value of sports. Once they understood the implications, his old team was a great support to him as they wanted him to stay involved and be part of their group, although in a different role.

Social Dimension: ultimate concern isolation

Existential tension: loneliness < - > connectedness

Spiritual Task: continuing bonds, seeking support, letting go



John's Story

Being able to look at the bigger picture of what a team is, John over time began to resonate with new ideas about how to live his life in the future. He could begin to use his experience and expertise to hand on to young soccer players. And the idea of assisting with game tactics during the matches gave him new energy to work with the physiotherapist on his rehabilitation. The pain and sorrow about the loss was far from gone. But John had begun to have trust and faith in life again and found new meaning and purpose.

Transformative Dimension: ultimate concern transcendence

Existential tension: meaning < - > meaninglessness

Spiritual Task: being open to significance and deeper truth, finding new purpose and meaningful goals.

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