What is death? Why do people die?

- A biological, psychological & social processes
- Highly influenced by cultural context (custom, religion etc) across the era
- Causes varied according to age (e.g. of US cases in 2006)
- Younger than 1 year old: congenital abnormalities, low birth weight, sudden death syndrome

1-25 years old – unintentional injuries, congenital abnormalities, cancer
25-44 years old – unintentional injuries, cancer, heart disease
45-64 years old – cancer, heart disease, unintentional injuries
> 65 years old – heart disease, cancer
As human grows old, the odds that one disease or another will strike

Why do we age and die?

- Theories:
  - Programmed theories (systematic genetic controlled of aging process)
  - Damage theories of aging (haphazard processes that cause errors in cells, organs to deteriorate)
- Islamically – Every living soul will experience death
- Read more on religious & cultural perspective
Death imposes two kinds of “burdens”

1. Preparing oneself for one’s own death
2. Dealing with the interpersonal aspects of death that will affect one’s loved ones

grief, anguish, anger, anxiety, denial

Dying Process

- Stages of Death and Dying (Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, 1960: 200 terminally ill)
  - Denial: Not me!
  - Anger: Why me??? ?Why now??
  - Bargaining: Yes, me…but!
  - Depression: Yes…me…
  - Acceptance: Yes, me.

Bereavement

- Bereavement = a state of loss
- Grief = emotional response to loss,
- Mourning = a culturally prescribed way of displaying reaction to death

- Anticipatory grief? How do people grieve?
Model of Dying & Numbness

Kubler-Ross’s Stages of Dying
1. Denial & isolation
2. Anger
3. Bargaining
4. Depression
5. Acceptance

Parkes/Bowlby Attachment Model of Bereavement
1. Numbness
2. Yearning (including anger and guilt)
3. Disorganization & despair
4. Reorganization

Death according to life stages

- The dying child (curious, may understand by school age, link death with biological reason); terminally ill children are often aware
- The bereaved child (body symptoms, behavioural and academic challenges)
- The adolescents – understand the abstract part of death, cope according to developmental themes of adolescence
- The adult – half show resilience, many widows and widowers have many physical, emotional and cognitive symptoms; at increased risk of dying
- Death of a child is often more difficult for a parent to bear (vs death of a parent)
- Grief can be complicated for people who have insecure attachment styles, neurotic personalities, limited coping skills, close and dependent relationship, lack social support
Themes for a ‘Good’ Death –
the western concept
- Home
- Comfort
- Sense of completion (tasks accomplished)
- Saying goodbye
- Life-review
- Love

What is a good death to you?