Patrick Arbore: How are we doing? We're ok? Ok. I mean not for me, but for you. Uh, I'll clap for you. Uh...so...uh...I did want to make another comment during uh the break. Uh, we were having a discussion about some of these again, um, financial issues. We talked about Medi...uh...Medicare and just always the threat to Medicare. And, and we know that many things are not covered particularly if you caring for a spouse or a family member who has features of dementia. At home the burden is on you, in terms of cost. But it's really important that we think about that. We want to think about long-term care too. Who was saying that? Oh. Um, you were saying that...longtime care. We need to be aware of the expense of long-term care. You know. And if you don't get long-term care really in your 30s uh and you wait till you're in your 60s or 70s it's exorbitant in terms of cost. Uh, so we need to think about that. But also we need to think about why are the costs so dear? And we need to think about that as well. Uh, so we want to be aware of the notion of staying healthy and staying connected. Uh, are...are essentials for us as we age. And so if we're gonna have a healthy life we need to stay physically active. Again eat well, but have a social life. You have to have social connections. And you must be thinking of this from the age of 60 or earlier. You know, one of the difficulties that I often hear older people say is how hard it is to make friends later in life. If you're not able to maintain friendships with people throughout your life and some of you probably have uh people that you've gone to high school with or community college or whatever college and you might still have those connections.
I think one of the useful aspects of Facebook or those kinds of social media is being able to keep in touch with people. But again it's no replacement for this. We have to have this. The energy of connecting is so important. Um and why I think is so important terms of the real research social relationships have as much impact on physical health as blood pressure, smoking, physical activity, and obesity. Social relationships have as much impact on us. So we want to be aware that at that if I have been slipping into isolation because I don't feel well physically or don't feel well mentally, I want to think about it that. I need to reactivate those. And even having one person, one person that you can connect to in a real way can have lasting impact on your physical and mental health. You know that is one of the reasons why at the Friendship Line we call out to people as well. We call out to people doesn't matter where they live we can call out to them. And they'll often say this is the only call that I get this is the only person that is regular as will call people on it daily basis or whatever. And that and so it's important to be alert to people that are slipping into isolation that there are ways that we can help support them. Researchers found a 50% increase in survival of people with robust social relationships regardless of age or gender. Very crucial and important.
So social relationships belong on the list of factors that affect mortality and health. That the data are very clear that if we are engaged, you know, in life that's going to have a positive impact on my, my, my life. Satisfaction with these relationships increases with age. We prune our social networks maintaining only those relationships that support emotional well-being. I think it's a Ann Lamont in her book, “Stitches” says, you know, “It's important for us in terms of health that we need to exercise whatever we can take walks”, you know, “have a schedule.” We want to be able to say, “I'm going here. I'm going there.” You know, we want to have a calendar of activities. And then she says, “You want to schedule lunches or dinners with non-awful people.”

**Audience laughter.**

**Patrick Arbore:** And I said, “I'm in Ann Lamont. I'm with you.” You got, you got to be aware of negative people, you know. People that sap you of energy. Drain you. I just say, it is really important to me that when I read the research I listen. I also teach social research methods. My Master's degree is in research and my doctorate is in counseling psychology with an emphasis in aging. And I listen.
And when people I am around our negative if they are…I find myself drained when I have a lunch or spend time with them, I say, “No more.” I am not going to do it. My life is too fleeting. When you look at the obituaries, or as some papers call them, “Life tributes.”

Audience Laughter

**Patrick Arbore:** [inaudible] I don't like euphemisms. And you see people 53, dies suddenly at 62, it gets my attention. Life is precious. And I’d like to spend it with non-awful people. I love that. Partners and spouses can offer strong social support because of the high rate of integration that you have in each other's lives. So, you know, if you have a healthy marriage, if you have a healthy partnership that really does make a difference.
And you can understand then if somebody had a very healthy relationship, I'm thinking of one of our grievers, who I think had a 40 year relationship, and she said, “It's one of those relationships Patrick where we didn't need other people, we never had children.” They had each other and he was about 10 years older than she, but she said, “Now that he died,” he died suddenly unfortunately of a heart attack, and she said, “All of a sudden she realized that because we had each other, we didn’t foster the development of, of other relationships.” And she said, “Now I'm stuck and now I'm 64,” whatever she is 65, he was 75 and she said, “I really don't know how to do friendship. I don't how to make friends. I never needed them because I had him. And, you know, we had everything. We had this great love.” And I said, “The disadvantage of a great love is when one of the great loves dies.” You didn’t create other loves along the way. That is tough.

Sibling relationships tend to increase in value and importance in later life. How many of you are a sibling or have siblings? So there's many of us in this room that do. Some of you might've been only an only. Some of you that raised your hands might also be acknowledging that one of your siblings may have died. And what we have to look at in our society is how we devalue sibling relationships. That if you have a sibling who died, I'm thinking about a woman in her grief group and her siblings died at the age of 62, she was older she was about 64, and she said it was amazing to her how within maybe a month after her brother died she said nobody even mentions him.
Nobody talks to her about it. And she said, she said one of her friends she said, “I wonder why you don’t ask me about my brother anymore? It’s only been a month since he died.” And she said, “Well he was just her brother, it’s not like he was your husband.” And that is how blatant we are about sibling relationships. Particularly sibling relationships when they might be only a year or two older or younger than us or even more but if they happen to be old we really devalue that. And we have to really think about that and change that. And what we know is a positive conversation, a meaningful conversation, a conversation that has some depth to it, can impact us in a healthy way. And we want to be aware again of social support, you know, practical assistance and emotional support helps individuals deal with stressors.
As I said, it goes back to communication being really a hallmark of healthy communities. We need to talk. We need to have programs like this. We need to get you out. Participate, you know, and communicate. We need to look at support services or other types of social engagement that fulfills social needs. So look at your county and look at what programs are offered. Companionship does many, many positive things: alleviates stress, increases positive affect, supports resilience and a sense of self-worth. So if a person has self-worth, if a person has connections and they start to slip into isolation, as a friend, as a good person in their life, you are going to question, “Hey you look, look sad today. What’s going on?”

I think that Yvette said... I was just having one of those days, you know, but you can say that your son and your son gets. Oh yeah. This isn't a crisis but it's so good that Yvette is able to say that to her son and he says, “Okay.” And then I'm sure the next day then you say, “I feel better today.” But you probably feel better even as you're saying to that, you know, adult son or daughter or a neighbor or friend, “I'm not feeling too good today.” but it's manageable. And so that increases feelings self-worth.
The link between social relationships and health is hard to overstate. Stay healthy has an enormous debt of gratitude to social relationships. Connections are what bind us to life. And however it is almost ignored in the healthcare delivery system. Think about a time when your primary care physician said, “Tell me about your relationships and the quality of those relationships.” Because he must have read the same thing I have read, I don’t know why I only said he, he-she. There are female physicians as well. That they see this. And, and it needs to be integrated. And that is when I know Carlos is paying attention here. Because I think he has an interest in becoming a physician. So I want him to particularly think about that.
And so again friendships, good boundaries, mutual respect and honesty is a good antidote for loneliness.
One of the things that studies have indicated is that women tend to have, have better friendships, deeper long-lasting friendships in their lives. Women who had a close friend were more likely to survive traumatic losses without any new physical impairment or permanent loss of vitality. Women without friends, however were less fortunate in this nurse’s study. Friends are helping us live longer.
Men however have a tendency to have a big network of people, but not the quality of relationships that women do what you think about that? Do you think that that results of that study ring true to you? Do you think women tend to have deeper richer relationships?

Audience member: [inaudible]

**Patrick Arbore:** What she is saying, in terms of married couples, that many of the husband of the, the men, tend to have relationship because the wife is the one that creates a relationships or nurtures the relationship because relationships as you know take effort and you got to do something, you got to call people up. You got to say, "Hey, I'm going to this because they have vulnerabilities that workshop this morning you want to with me whatever, whatever. And then men benefit as a result of that, men find it difficult however to express their feelings to reach out or to ask for help. And that's an area of health that we've got to figure out. Is that many older men that idea with over the last 42 years will say to me "I can't ask for help because you're gonna think less of me That I'm embarrassed that I can't take care of this or solve this problem myself."
And I know, you know men like this in your life and I'm gonna say that the men here by coming today..... Woops... may not be in a category, but it's out there in the data that men tend to have extensive acquaintances, but not necessarily deep friendships and that their main friendship is often with their spouse or partner. And so we need to pay attention to that.
We need to be aware of intimacy and, you know, and and how does intimacy begin? Intimacy and I'm talking not about sexual intimacy, but intimacy in general, begins from the inside out. That we have to have a sense of connection with ourselves. That we have a sense of our aliveness. That I am actually here you know and I'm not just kind of, you know, not aware of where I put my body. You know, "I am conscience." and we want to be able to reflect on our inner world, but many times we don't have that opportunity because nobody talks to us about it.

Chris and I were just talking about the emergence of a more spiritual kind of world and I'm gonna ask you to do something at tables for a moment. I want you to think about a an awareness about spirituality or religious involvement. Do you find yourself more aware of spiritual issues or religious issues now and say when you were younger or is it about the same or do not think about it at all. Could you turn the people at your table or near you and just asked about this, "what is the role of spirituality and/or religion in your life today? Does it have importance?"

So could a couple of you just kind of relay what you were talking about. What, what came out of this? You know, what is the role of spirituality or religion in your life today and is it different than when you were younger? What we are talking about? Anybody. I'm looking at this table, come on. Cathy.

**Audience member:** Well we talked about personal journey. How some people wandered away from church and came back to church. The, the perception of being such a person and I also talked about... [Inaudible].
Patrick Arbore: Yeah and I think that's really a very important aspect is now on assessments it's very common that spirituality is at least introduced as a domain that we need to explore. I was saying to Chris earlier, earlier that my experience of spirituality and religion and what role it plays has, has, particularly the spiritual aspect when I give talks across the country, that people are very reluctant and kind of suspicious about spirituality and that doesn't serve us well, particularly when we get to a point of dying when we are dying it's very important to have a sense of inner life and that's often where that spiritual kind of illumination occurs. How about Chris and your table? What were you looking?

Audience member: [inaudible]

Patrick Arbore: Yeah that's right, that we're all very different people and how does that fit? It doesn't have to be a cookie-cutter approach. That I can look at religion and spirituality as kind of impacts me. You know, rather than I might not fit in really well to just kind of a rubber stamp approach, but it might be very helpful as I look at relationships, as I look at meaning, as I look at what it means to grow older in this society. What it means to leave a legacy, you know with family, neighbors, friends. It might be helpful to cultivate because it's going to play a role particularly when we think about the role of, you know, commitment to lasting friendships and love, love, love is a, a trans-formative experience.
Those of you that have loving relationships and I'm not saying just only with a partner or spouse, but have loving relationships with your adult children or grandchildren or friends or neighbors are very, very blessed indeed to have that kind of energy going through you and, and it's important as a way to kind of help us deal and
balance with our need at times for solitude and our need to be engaged with others.

Here's our friend, Robert Butler again and I know you all know who he is and I'm so proud of you, but he was also not only involved in ageist attitudes, but his ageism also went over into the role of sexuality and sensuality and he has been speaking about this for many, many years. He died July 4, 2010 and it was a real blow to the aging community because he would speak very directly. He was about 82 I think when he died and he was very, very involved in his relationship with his wife and had a very long marriage and she died and he grieved for a number of years and when I met him when he was 80, he was giving a talk in San Francisco at Institute on Aging and he said "Patrick when I walk out he what you are gonna see it that people are gonna be wondering how old I am and they're gonna be really scrutinizing me. How do I look? How do I Sound? Because they're going to anticipate an old man." And he said "And this is just the man I am. I want them to see inside and not pay so much attention to the outside." But he said the other thing he said that finally he started to date again and he said this publicly to the group and the somebody yelled out, "Who are you dating?" and he said "Well I just got back from Bermuda or somewhere. I'll I'm gonna say is that she's very well known and her first name is Barbara, but it was Barbara Walters, was who it was. But he said "It's important, again, for health is to recognize that we are, and continue, to be sexual beings, sensual beings. And that, you know, it's, it's sexuality has to do with physical and emotional responsiveness it goes on beyond the sexual urge and a sexual act. What he really lobbies for, and just because of time I'm not going into this in detail,
but what he really lobbies for is just the awareness that "Because I happen to have birthdays or more birthdays, doesn't mean that I can't respond in my relationship with my wife or husband or partner." What we're seeing is a lot of older people now go on these websites. I was giving a talk to the in Berkeley to retirees of the Berkeley, UCSF Berkeley system and it was on sexuality and intimacy. And I can't say how many people said their on these websites for older adults and they don't know how to date and are trying to figure it out and some of the men and women were embarrassed to even tell me. They were embarrassed to come in the room that said "Sexuality and intimacy" cause they didn't want me to think that they were like dirty old men or something. I said "I don't think that. It's like... I just think it's tough making friends, let alone taking off your clothes in front of somebody that you don't know very well known. "No me gusta" to that that in a big way.

So, but it offers us the opportunity to express not only passion, but also affection, esteem, and loyalty you know. And when people apologize to me that they're in their 60s, 70s and says "I'd really like to meet somebody." I said “And I think that is really great,” you know. That is okay, you know, to do that I just think you have to be smart about it. Where you meet people." Online is one of the big things. That was not the way it was for most of us when we were growing up. You didn't meet people online. We didn't even know an online existed. And what sexuality allows is for feelings of joy.
Joy comes in other ways too. We got to be aware of sexual orientation which includes heterosexual people, but also lesbians and gays, bisexual and transgendered individuals look at all the hoopla around Bruce Jenner. Frankly, I didn't care about him before, I still don't and because he's been going from male to female. Great, that's fine with me, but I am not watch the Kardashians.

But older, older adult date, co-habituate, engage, in affairs have protected or unprotected sex, may be sexually abused, they masturbate or, or whatever. And we have to be able to acknowledge that, particularly when we lose a partner of many years and one of the things I say in my grief groups is, you know, we're gonna talk about when the last time you had a feeling of intimacy, sexual intimacy or affection, It's particularly challenging if you have a partner who has features or symptoms of dementia because he or she may not think of you as the husband anymore or as the wife anymore. Intimacy might be really cut off, especially if it's the wife who has the symptoms of dementia and she thinks of you as her son, but you're her partner. You know that you brings up some very challenging situations and I'm sure that nobody LCSW, their social workers or counselors in this room or aging specialists, know that's a very hard time for people and they have grieve that. You know, the loss of that relationship.
It's more than just my, my spouse, there was much more to it. This one older man said to me when his wife died and she had a series of strokes in rapid succession so there was no anticipation of her death he said you know I realize that my three adult children, two nurses and one physician, kept saying "Don't talk about this because it's so upsetting for your dad. Don't talk about Mom anymore." and this was like maybe three months after she died and, and he came to see me and he said as we were talking and I was just saying to him “Your adult children lost a mother. You lost your partner, your best friend." they went to high school together. They were high school sweethearts. I mean I love the story and, and I think you have to remember that you're grieving a different much more complex loss and it's also this was your sexual partner. Eddie said, "I would never say that to my children." I said "They're nurses and a physician, surely to God they can handle that." "Oh, no, no, no." Talk about stereotype, you know. But you know I said... he came to the grief group and was really glad had that opportunity to be able to talk about his whole relationship, not just the part that looks socially acceptable, you know. We have to give people latitude for that. Older adults may be using the Internet as I said to seek relationships,
but what we have to say in terms of being healthy, is be aware of sexually transmitted infections. Older adults may not ask questions or raise concerns about risk factors, prevention, or symptoms of STDs. So if you are going to be engaging or you know people that are going to be dating, be smart, asked questions, talk to your doctor, you know, your ability to function may have shifted with age and, and just be aware of that.
Again, bonds of intimacy, you know, could be sexual, but it could also be friendship and, and but deep and loving nonetheless. Without bonds of intimacy people can feel very lonely even if they're living with somebody. That if there isn't an openness, if there isn't a feeling of connection and care and love and intimacy, that kind of living with somebody, loneliness that Jermaine Greer had acknowledged in her writing back in the 70s, can be extremely painful.
And so we want to be aware if somebody says to you "You're too old to date." Oftentimes, adult children will say that. We have to really be able to say, "Wait a minute, I have a need for connection." maybe that's okay. I say to male grievers who are older and have been married for many years, don't replace your wife, meet a new person. So be thoughtful about that because that's not fair to her, but love really affirms the human condition.
You know, is the problem the fear and denial of age itself which reaches its apex in sex and intimacy. Is that the problem? Or can one really talk honestly to other women or two men, even to oneself about the need to be touched and to touch and to be touched. Again, all through my career in aging when I worked with a lot of people that have lost their partners or have had a lot of deaths in their life and are by themselves, what they'll say is "Can you just hold my hand? Without putting a needle in it." because that's... you know, right? That's often what happens and you know, you want to have good boundaries and I say to people you know you know what we home visits, you know, let's just make sure that we know what we're doing now. That my kind of love is agape love, a love for you because you're on the planet. It's not about dating, you know, and that's where boundaries come in, and respect.

One of my social worker said that with one of her older clients, it's an older woman, she said that, "When I went to I go to see her now..." She said, "The woman immediately holds my hand throughout the whole session." And I said, "How is that for you? And she said, "I don't like it." She said, "Culturally, for me, that's not how we show respect for older people." And I said, "What do you want to do?" And she said, "I'm afraid to bring it up because I don't want to hurt her feelings"
And I said, "But if we think about the most important feature of any relationship as honestly, talk about it. Let her know that for you, it's not her, it's for you. It doesn't feel comfortable. You're not saying 'there's something bad about you.' just use statements and work it through as you would anything else. It's a very intimate conversation, you know."

We want to think about intimacy. With whom do we have that? Can we deepen our ties in ways that may not resemble our previous models of intimacy to stay healthy is, we might have to reach out a little bit to people. I might have to create other types of relationships in my life and, and, and that's important.
Woman or man, we need a new way to touch, know, love each other as we are now, not as we were 40 or 50 years ago. It's who I am now. We might value simply the companionship and, and that might be all we need, but you wanna make sure that the other person feels very similarly and we want to be aware of spirituality.
What Nussbaum also talks about is Neural Theology. I love that term before. Neural Theology is exploring the relationship between religious and nonreligious forms of spirituality and the structure and function of the human brain. So this again takes us back to some studies on the brain and spiritual practices that we want to implement that have a positive impact on brains. So when they do brain scans of people that meditate what they see is that even though you're at peace, your brain is very alert. Its alert to the silence, you know. Its alert to the feeling of meditation you know. Rather than all this information that we take in all the time. So the brain is always constantly processing, when we meditate, when we're silent and to me meditation doesn't have to be sitting in a cross-legged position which I can't do on a cushion which doesn't feel very interesting to me. Those of you that can do it I'm proud of you, but I choose walking or sitting, but sitting more comfortably and, and that can be very helpful if you meditate. For example, in neural theology, the researchers say 12 min. a day just to sit quietly, you know, or you can walk you know your dog for 12 minutes that practice complete forgiveness, that's the other issue. We need to be aware, "Am I caring resentments and grudges?" I know my mother got very mad at a cousin of hers who was about the same age because his mother, her sister, was like 17 years older than my mother. So she had kids that were round 10 years older than my mother. So her kids were about my mother's age and she even forgot why she was mad at him and, and I remember saying to her.
"Mom, he says to me that he wonders why you don't speak to him." and she said “Why? I can't remember now, but it must have been important and I'm not even try to talk him .“ And she carried these grudges to her grave. It's like I said to her, "It's not healthy for you, to carry these resentments and grudges day after day after day and you don't even remember what it is and you don't have memory loss." You just... it wasn't that important, but it's been like five years what what's the deal. "I don't know, but I must've been something." You know. So you know, we have to think about that. Forgiveness is very freeing to the individual, it doesn't even have to go towards the person. You don't have to sit down and say if we had a problem, "I want to forgive you. Will you accept that or will you forgive me?" It just has to be ourselves, that I'm willing to let the resentment go even if it's hard to do. Deep breathing five times a day or deep breathing 5 min. three times a day, believe in something greater than self; engage in muscle relaxation 10 minutes each day; focus on positive ideas/emotions daily; take time out from tasks for 30 minutes at least each day.
A sense of wonderment, you know. Just look outside, you know, look at the the lawn and the grass and the trees and humans out there hitting that ball, which I'll never do that either. And, but the idea it's beauty. Be aware when you go home today, feel the breeze if there is one. You know, look at the trees. This whole little enclave here is really quite beautiful, I'm ready to move in if anybody wants me. And you know, it has to do with the sense of the immediacy of life in a new ability to live in the present moment you know. We want to be alive in this moment. We don't want wait until Memorial Day weekend to say, "I'll be alive because my kids are coming" you know. Can we be alive right now? Can we enjoy the energy of people in this room? Is that possible? Because this is the moment we're in and there's no guarantee that were going to be in the next moment but we're in this one. Does this have meaning? You know, and I know for myself it does, but I'm, I'm hoping for you it does as well.

The elemental realities of life assume greater significance. Children, plants, nature, etc. physical and emotional touching, textures, colors. One day, all too quickly we are not going to be here because of impermanence, but when I work with older people who are dying and particularly in hospice, they say to me, "Patrick, am I dying? Well you're in hospice, there's a clue and you're conscious so in I know somebody told ya that you know.... but what they're really trying to say is as this one man told me "I never lived. I made money. I had a house for my children, my, my wife..."
and he said to me, “And my wife and I haven't spoken to each other in years, although we still live together and the adult children are not interested in me.” You know that that's really, really tragic and, and to wake up as you are dying, I said to him, I said, "I'm grateful you're awaken now, but it's painful for you to realize that 'yeah, you are dying.'" And he died about two weeks later and we don't necessarily want to go that way. We want to pay attention to today. And in order to be aware of wonderment, it's best achieved with social connections.
We want to have a purpose, as you were saying about your 98-year-old mother, she just wants a purpose. "Give me a job. I want to feel like I'm contributing in some way." You know, useful and it's related to longevity, tendency to derive meaning from life experiences and possess a sense of intentionality and goals contributes to healthy aging. We want to be engaged and when we can have a purpose that makes us feel useful and it has a positive impact on our self-esteem and, again, a community,
an active community is very crucial to our capacity for health. The individual and community can play an active role in optimizing the aging experience and so for those of you that live in the Chico area Butte County or Oroville or wherever, is that you really want to see what is out there that can engage in. Lindy will say something about the learning center in just a minute. The idea is to create environments that have safe mobility, age-friendly outdoor spaces and transportation. The biggest issue that faces and I know you know this, older people across the country is transportation. Can I get to places? Is that possible and, and that's very challenging. And I had wondered to myself coming here, although this is very beautiful, did anybody come on public transportation? Is there public transportation here? So somebody could have come on a bus.

Audience member: [inaudible]

Patrick Arbore: So in town it's great, but I just think it's important to kind of ponder that and think about that.

Audience member: [inaudible]

Patrick Arbore: You'll have to pay a little bit more, but it will come. And that's important to kind of think about
Then you think about your supervisors and we know this county as well every county in California throughout the country is increasing in numbers with older people. So you want to look at the future and wonder “Wouldn’t it be nice if, if all older people could have had an opportunity to come, but might not have been worried about transportation and that would be very important to consider.” I wanted to also say just couple things too, that when we think about modern gerontology, it treats aging as a problem of social engineering to be solved through technological means the one-sided drive to alter reverse or somehow control the biological process of aging actually impoverishes its meaning; So-called positive aspects of aging turn out to be disguised efforts to restore your youth rather than attempts to appreciate growing old as a fundamental part of human existence. So part of today, what I was trying to instill in us, is to be thoughtful when people say to you "hey you look good..." and then in parenthesis, ".... for your age." You know, I say "don't tell me that first part then. I don't want to hear that." and the and the other thing that we want to pay attention to is that "We live in a time that denies death. That distorts the dying experience by retaining traditional myths. What we need is a fresh start, a new myth, a new vision of maturity and longevity. We are not victims of dying. Death doesn't victimize us, but we are victims of shallow distorted attitudes toward dying which we conceive as tragic." And if we spend the last 25 years of our life fearing death, the word itself might trigger very uncomfortable feelings for you. Specially those of you that have had any kind of a recent loss or a loss from the past.
That still can be really challenging. What we have to do is to try to find a way to create meaning, you know. I spend lots of hours every week with people that have had traumatic losses and I say to them. I empathize really deeply with them because we're in a society where the issue when it comes to death is "Aren't you over it yet? Or don't talk about it because it's too depressing?" and so where do we go? We just push it inside, rather than share it. We need to share it and I know it's challenging to do that, but it really helps us.

I want to share one final thing and if you have any questions and then Lindy is gonna say something here for us. I wanna share this very short essay when I was giving a similar talk in San Diego, there was a social worker there was 92 and I was talking about the same kinds of issues and she said, "Patrick, do you mind if I send you a little essay that I wrote about is called "Thinking about Death." Her first name was Doris and she said, "Everything you're saying, I really think about," she said "I find it difficult to talk about it because when I say the people," you know. She said, "You could tell that I'm older." And she was 92, but very healthy. Still driving, but she said "I want to talk about dying,' but she says, "soon as I open my mouth, everybody leaps in and says, 'you don't want to talk about that.'" And she said, "Wait a minute, you're making an assumption that I don't talk about something that I'm saying I want to talk about. It's confusing for me." So she said, "Maybe you could share this with people." And I find it very interesting, her every contemporary take on death.
She says, "I've been thinking about death, not death in general, but my own. This began when a faraway friend who always sent me a birthday card didn't this year and I learned she died a month after my last birthday. How easily that it could've been the other way around I think. So I make my will, arrange my affairs, talk frankly with my children about cremation, donating body parts, funeral services, and dealing with guilt with the loss that will be me. I see myself an enlightened woman trying to make death real. I say aloud 'I will not always be. I will not always be.' My stomach tightens at the thought of me dissolving into a void. I contemplate afterlife and decide reincarnation and transmigration, despite my great love of travel are for others not for me. I admit in the smugness of an earlier time to a fantasy of my wisdom and example of life living on even flourishing in those whose lives I would touch. I know now those close to me will find themselves as blessed and plagued, as enlightened and baffled by their legacy as I have been with mine. Regarding heaven and hell, I have neither enthusiasm, nor trepidation and recognize I would make a poor candidate in either place. So where am I left in my reflections on death, confused. Confused is the word and more often been used at my reluctance to accept this new neighbor from whom I can never move. It has come to this. One day, I may welcome death, but for now I choose to pass him by with a nod. Head up, inhaling sun, wind, words, visions, sweat of bodies, aroma of rising dough, hugs, hurts, flute songs, a baby's hand curled around my finger, and I celebrate the mix and tang and wonder that is my moment and myself."
Isn't that beautiful? I always would send her a note, she wasn't on e-mail, and tell her when I would read that, how it affected people, but she has subsequently died, but I send it now in a different way than what I did before. But I think that's very important, especially the line which is that I have this new neighbor from whom I can never move. You know, I'm 92, I need to be aware of that and we need to be able to talk about that. Any questions? Any thoughts that you have to before I give this microphone to Lindy for a moment. Lindy, I know speaking of education, would you just use a microphone?

Audience Member: [inaudible]
Patrick Arbore: Last thing before I give the microphone to Kelsey I just want to say, things that we want to take away to think about, insights that might have gotten through this. Everything changes, nothing remains the same. Everything that we've loved benefited from, contributed to, is going to change. All we actually have is this present moment. Our thoughts are just thoughts, they are not always reality. That's why I love the Buddhists who say, "Don't think so much. It gets you into trouble. Feel instead." We are part of an interconnected web of life. What we practice becomes stronger. So if I practice in having meaningful conversations, I'm going to get better at it. If I practice more optimism, I'm going to get better. So look at what we do repetitively, look at what we think repetitively and if it is burdensome and negative, we just might want to change that. And to keep in mind how do you get to Carnegie Hall, practice, practice, practice. Thank you very much for your attention and your participation today. I know that I feel connected to some of you in and I know there are people that I've met in other ways. I'm glad you came up to me, I'll come back there in a minute, but I know, I know some of you from other talks or other situations. So it's always good to be here. Thank you all very much.