

Existential Orientation Form (EOF)

We all die. We all know it. But we all deny, most of the time, our mortality and the finiteness of things. At least to some extent, along some continuum. It's human nature to be in perpetual oscillation between acknowledgement/ acceptance and denial/ defense.

We need to face death if we are to face life. (Handa, 2021).

Consummate your life. The more un-lived your life, the greater your death anxiety" (Yalom, Starring at the Sun, 2008)

However ...Every person must choose how much truth he can stand. (Yalom, When Nietzsche Wept, 1992)

Below is a group of questions intended to elicit developmental memories, beliefs, further deepening the conversation around death and the meaning of your life. Clinical judgement with our patients helps us assess where we enter this conversation along the continuum of awareness to defense. *Take a breath.*

RELATIONSHIPS

1) Which relationships in your life are the greatest sources of support to you (Colarusso, 2000)

2) When you have a free evening, you would prefer to [number in order]_____ have dinner with a friend _____ exercise [e.g. gym, go for run]; or _____ read a book.

3) Do you depend on your child[ren] for self-esteem in your parenting role ?

4) How much? and how do you feel about your parents' dependency on you?

WORK

5) How satisfied do you feel doing your work?

6) Do you mentor a younger person? If not right now, would you?

CREATIVITY

7) a) How creative do you feel in your life?

b) in any specific areas ?

c) where/how would you like to be more creative?

TIME

8) a) Draw a line of your total lifespan, from I (born)...to... the age you expect to die.

b) Mark where your age is now along that line.

(/) _____ ()

LOSS

9) a) Along that time line, note losses in your life

b) which feel more raw?

BODY

10) Have you made? Or considering making any changes to your appearance ? e.g. Dye hair? _____

Surgery? [plastic?] _____ Other surgery? _____ Loose weight? _____ Other _____

11) How "old" do you feel ? _____ How "young"? _____ Do you accept your body as it is now? _____

(overpage >)

DEATH

- 12)** When did you first encounter death as a child?
E.g. when a pet died? or a Grandparent died?
- 13)** a) How often do you think about your own death?
b) What does it feel like when you do so?
- 14)** a) What happens to you after you die? dust to dust?
b) Do you believe your soul lives on? Do you believe in an afterlife?
- 15)** Does anything concern? or frighten? you about dying?
- 16)** Thinking about your legacy, write your epitaph (1-2 sentences)

LIFE

- 18)** For what are you grateful?
- 19)** If you could, is there one thing you'd like to redo in your life?
- 20)** What needs to happen so you don't die with regret(s)?
- 21)** a) What helps you to feel alive in your life?
b) How much do you live in your fully authentic self? (*Stracker, 2021*)
- 22)** What does life look like? Describe/ draw a picture.
- 23)** a) What would life be like without death: (*Shabad, 2016*)
b) Would you be motivated to get of bed each morning?
...c) How would your relationships change? Would hello & g'bye change?
d) Would love be possible without death?

YOUR PATIENTS

- 24)** a) In which ones to you detect an unlived life?
b) In what way(s)?
c) How might your approach them to begin a conversation about death?

Sit quietly. Take a deep breath. Breathing is a sign of life. YOU are Alive. You have the force of life within you.
jdryerphd@gmail.com 4/23 JoyDryerPhD.com