

## CONSIDERING LIFE THROUGH DEATH - INTRODUCTION TO LESSONS OF LIFE

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I am a palliative care physician for 30 years. And I have been teaching "Lessons of Life" to medical students and elementary, junior high, and high school students for 30 years. Based on the words left behind by the deceased patient, these are classes to think about life through death. I would like to introduce some of the lectures at this conference.

When I took care of a 23-year-old female terminal cancer patient, her pain of bone metastasis, which could not be removed, was relieved by a wedding ceremony. I was taught that pain is relieved not by drugs but by supporting the hopes and dreams of patients. A 21-year-old woman with cancer, who had not been told of her prognosis, realized that she was dying and left a letter for her mother. She wrote, "I am glad I was born as your daughter" with gratitude. A 17-year-old high school male student, who had a brain tumor, left a diary. In the diary, he wrote, "If I were to die tomorrow, what would I do today? All I can do now is to live my life to death as I am." An 18-year-old woman, battling rhabdomyosarcoma, said, "Walking, talking, seeing, hearing, laughing, crying, and living. You may think it's normal as someone who always takes it for granted, but that's not the case." Through the words and actions left behind by my patients, I learn that we are living a day that is irreplaceable. ■