

Module IV-Death and Dying

Activity The Elephant In The Room

By Terry Kettering

There's an elephant in the room.
It is large and squatting,
So it is hard to get around it.
Yet we squeeze by with "How are you?" And "I'm Fine."
And a thousand other forms of trivial chatter.

We talk about the weather.
We talk about work.
We talk about everything - except the elephant in the room.

There's an elephant in the room.
We all know it is there.
We are thinking about the elephant as we talk together.
It is constantly on our minds.

For you see, it is a very big elephant.
It has hurt us all.
But we do not talk about the elephant in the room.

Oh, please say her name.
Oh, please, say "Barbara" again.
Oh, please, let's talk about the elephant in the room.
For if we talk about her death,
Perhaps we can talk about her life?

Can I say, "Barbara" to you and not have you look away?
For if I cannot, then you are leaving me

Alone...

In a room...

With an elephant...

Discussion: This may be done in small groups or the whole group.

1. Have you ever been exposed to an end-of-life situation where it felt like "an elephant in the room?"
2. How did it make you feel?
3. Why do you believe it is hard to talk about death and dying?