

Title: *Recapturing the Power of Ritual to Enhance Community in a Postmodern Age*
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The presentation on ritual has emerged out of the presenters' experiences with ritual and aging and end-of-life populations. The guidance below is from Nelson-Becker's 2017 acclaimed book, *Spirituality, Religion, and Aging: Illuminations for Therapeutic Practice*. This highly integrative book was written for students, professionals in aging, religious leaders, and older adults. With a fresh approach, the book includes meditations, exercises, cases, skills, and evidence-based knowledge designed to expand competency in this important area of health, mental health, and aging.

Shared from Nelson-Becker, H. (2017). *Spirituality, religion, and aging: Illuminations for therapeutic practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Press. ISBN: 9781412981361.

Table 7.1 Guidance for Therapeutic Ritual Design

1. Assist the client to consider the why, where, who, and how elements for this ritual. Why will it be performed? Where will it be conducted? Who should be invited? How will it develop? Assess the client's background characteristics, relevant history, level of support, and any areas of loss that the ritual may be intended to mend or restore. What is the client's history with rituals and other ceremonies? What is the client's expectation or hope?
2. Think about the goals for the ritual. What are the immediate and ultimate goals? Are they celebratory, transformational, or healing? Will the ritual address:
 - a. transitions—major life transitions such as marriage, adoption, entry into elderhood, or death
 - b. continuity—reinforcing bonds and stability of relationships during times of change, e.g., when a young family member leaves for the university a special meal may be designed with an opportunity for each member to share objects of meaning with the one departing and wisdom thoughts, or when a grandparent transitions into an assisted living or long term care facility, family members can facilitate a goodbye and hello ceremony.
3. Specify the types of thoughts and feelings that will be symbolically expressed: love, regret, forgiveness, endings and openings, for example. This can guide the activities to be planned.
4. Consider whether the client prefers to engage in a familiar ancient ceremony and participate deeply or to creatively craft a new or modern ritual.
5. Engage the client's spiritual or religious support system or family system if desired. It can help if there are witnesses—especially if any sorrow addressed is a community sorrow.
6. Co-consider sensory elements:
 - What elements will affect sense of smell?
 - What colors and visual elements will be present?
 - What music or sound will be made or listened to.
 - What will be tasted or sipped?
 - What or who will be physically touched and in what way?
 - What symbols will be present? Examples might include candles, a stone, another natural object, a small statue, a painting, or a photograph.

Also consider whether some aspect could be offensive to anyone who attends, cause allergies, or be harmful in another way.

7. What can be prepared in advance or constructed by hand?
8. Co-create procedures:
 - Who will be invited and what will be their role? Who will preside or lead?
 - What symbolic acts will occur? Examples include reading personal writing, sharing a handshake or hug, reading poetry or sacred text, planting a tree, releasing balloons, passing a talking stick
 - What will be open and impromptu and what will be determined?
 - What will the location, tone, and preferred timing for the ritual be?
 - Ensure privacy, if desired, and safety of setting.
 - Establish the beginning and ending, or how to know when ritual is complete.
9. Implement the ritual and evaluate both the process and result.
10. Identify whether further ritual work or something else might be needed to complete the healing process.
11. Celebrate what has been achieved!