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# End of Life Doulas - Re-envisioning Being-With in End of Life Care

Phenomenologically grounded research for doula praxis

## The changing nature of "being with" each other

Being-with, according to Heidegger, meant that "encountering one another in the surrounding world with which we are jointly concerned"

It is important to consider that the nature of encountering each other is changing. Virtual environments are replacing physical.

However, Heidegger also stated that in being-with others "the table over there, with its particular seating arrangements, entails a reference to those whom we dine with on a daily basis; ... the umbrella in the corner was left behind by ... Others are always already present as those with whom we have a concern."

### Reference

Heidegger, M. (2011). *The concept of time: The first draft of being and time*. A&C Black. Print.

## Being-with now

Until now End of Life Doulass have been preoccupied with the being with or being-together of physical presence.

With the advent of COVID-19 we have replaced physical presence as much as possible with the synchronous virtual presence. However, using Heidegger's notion of being-together as having concern over something or someone, then the opportunities of being together can perhaps take a more asynchronous turn.



## Being-with in the future - a real "game"- changer

Should physical presence be impossible due to any number of reasons, other methods of being-with can emerge as levels of care:

Individuals who wish the comforting presence of a loved one can have them brought to the bedside via

- electronic hardware, novel software and innovative interaction arenas (see below):
- interactive video games
- avatars and virtual reality
- online meeting places



Synchronous being-with

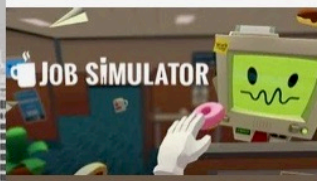
## Impacts on Praxis

For end of life doulas, an embracing of the connections made in both synchronous and asynchronous environments must inform our practice.

We must be ready to inform ourselves of novel modes of connection and to apply them to the death doula role.

The role then becomes more of an approach than a job description. This paradigmatic shift means that a death doula approach can be applied to any care field.

### Adapting our practice to creative technology



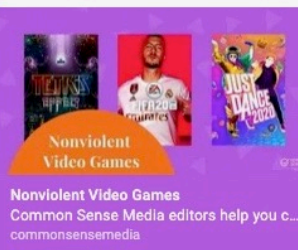
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## Training implications

While many end of life doulas focus their training on empathic skills and practical tasks it could be valuable to include technological training and research into tools which enhance connection.

Staying current with new trends in various disciplines and their use of technology will inform the end of life doula moving forward.

### Explore beyond our sector and our usual modes of learning



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## Potential Research Directions/Design

### Applied project - virtual visitation environment

Pilot study to explore the connections made in a virtual environment created exclusively for end of life doula work.

### End of Life Doula praxis as a philosophical approach to end of life care.

A philosophical exploration of Heidegger's concept of "being-with" and its implications for online virtual environments

### Its time to re-thing Being-with each other

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