

# Remembering Love

## Reflecting on Values & Purpose

*Goal is to create more agency and self-determination, to move away from anxiousness and toward secure, internally anchored self-definition.*

### **“The Summer Day” (Mary Oliver)**

Who made the world?  
Who made the swan, and the black bear?  
Who made the grasshopper?

This grasshopper, I mean —  
the one who has flung herself out of the grass,  
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,  
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down —  
who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.

Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.  
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.  
I don't know exactly what a prayer is.  
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down  
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,  
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,  
which is what I have been doing all day.

Tell me, what else should I have done?  
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?  
Tell me, what is it you plan to do  
with your one wild and precious life?

This poem's closing line “Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?” is a perfect emotional portal. After reading, pause and invite stillness with the question for a moment before responding.

### Reflection Questions:

- “What line or image in that poem stayed with you most?”
- “When you hear the question about your ‘one wild and precious life,’ what part of you answers first—the heart, the head, or something else?”
- “If you didn’t have to please anyone, what would your ‘wild and precious’ life look like?”

### Exercise: “Legacy Reflections”

Imagine:

- “If your children were speaking about you 20 years from now, what would you hope they say about the kind of man/woman and father/mother you were?”
- “If a close friend were describing you, what qualities would you want them to name?”
- “What do those qualities reveal about what matters most to you?”

Reflect on alignment:

- “When in your life have you seen these values show up most strongly?”
- “What happens inside when your actions don’t align with these values?”
- “If you could choose three guiding principles for the next chapter of your life, what would they be?”

### Life Purpose Reflection

Bonnie Ware’s book *The Top Five Regrets of the Dying* comes from her years working as a palliative care nurse, sitting with people in their final weeks of life. What she noticed—again and again—was that when people were facing the end, they didn’t talk about achievements or status. They talked about love, courage, authenticity, and the moments they wished they had chosen differently.

Here are the five core regrets she heard most often:

**1. “I wish I’d had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me.”**

This was the most common regret. People realized how much of their life had been shaped by fear, obligation, and trying to meet other people’s expectations. It’s an invitation to come home to your own authenticity while you still can.

**2. “I wish I hadn’t worked so much.”**

This especially came from men in older generations. They mourned the emotional intimacy they missed with partners and children because their identity was wrapped up in productivity.

**3. “I wish I’d had the courage to express my feelings.”**

Many described how they swallowed their truth to keep peace, avoid conflict, or protect someone else’s comfort. The cost was emotional isolation and unfulfilled relationships.

**4. “I wish I had stayed in touch with my friends.”**

As people aged, they saw how deeply connection nourishes us. Busyness, pride, and distraction had slowly pulled them away from the people who once supported their heart.

**5. “I wish I had let myself be happier.”**

So many discovered that happiness had always been available, but they stayed stuck in old patterns—familiar suffering, self-judgment, or limiting beliefs—long after those patterns were helpful.

**Reflection Questions:**

- “When you look at those regrets—about courage, authenticity, and connection—which one feels most alive or relevant for you right now?”
- “What are you doing today that your older self might one day regret not changing?”
- “If you lived fully in alignment with your purpose, what would your days look and feel like?”

**Optional Exercise: “Eulogy from the Future”**

Imagine listening to your eulogy:

- “What would you want people to remember most about your presence in their lives?”

- “What do you hope your life has taught others—especially your children—about how to live?”  
Then ask,
- “What would have to change for you to live that truth now?”

### **Final Integration and Ownership**

Bring the conversation back to self-definition.

- “If you were no longer defined by what others think, how would *you* define yourself today?”
- “How would it feel to live from that definition, not as a performance, but as truth?”
- “What might be one small action this week that honors who you want to be?”

“It’s your road, and yours alone. Others may walk it with you, but no one can walk it for you” - Rumi

Reflect on this question: If this is your road, what’s one step you can take this week that moves you in the direction of that life?