

# THE DEATH OF MY TWO FATHERS

## Curriculum Guide

### INTRODUCTION

The curriculum is a resource to spark ideas on how to creatively engage your students with the film, the Death of My Two Fathers, in order to have a larger discussion around death, loss, and identity. The goals of the project inspire moments of intergenerational storytelling, seeking identity and finding family. It seeks to celebrate creative approaches to healing and dialogue.

Each module can be used as a stand alone exercise or can be combined with one another to engage deeper. We encourage teachers to utilize the portions that work for them and take the liberty to omit or expand upon it as desired. Each exercise is designed for any teacher to facilitate.

---

The following are a list of skills advanced: Writing, video recording, public speaking, critical thinking and interview based research.

The Toolkit includes:

- Introduction
- Quote
- Directors Statement and Biography of Sol Guy
- Educators Guide
- Recommended Reading List
- Meditation Guide
- (2) Arts Exercises:
  - Video/Written Interviews
  - Journaling

We encourage teachers and students to share their final projects via social media utilizing the **#Deathofmytwofathers** and tagging **@mytwofathers**.

*“So, we’re going to give up blaming. We’re going to give up complaining. Whatever’s happening in your life, the way you respond to that event equals the outcome.”*

—William Richard Guy

## ABOUT THE FILM

The Death of My Two Fathers (TDOMTF) is a courageous exploration of identity, fatherhood, life, and death. The film unpacks the meaning of family, explores race, and how we must all face where we come from for the sake of those who come after us.

By offering the film as a resource to actively engage with communities, our hope is to inspire people to live intentionally, face hard things, and be inspired to use creativity and conversation as a means for healing and honoring loved ones.

---

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The Death of My Two Fathers is an exploration of how our human family must reconcile with our painful past if we hope to create a more hopeful future. It speaks to the complexities of multiracial identity and the persistence of racial trauma. It speaks to the challenges of fatherhood. It speaks to coping with grief and loss and the liberation that exists in facing our own mortality. Above all, it speaks to my own children based upon the words my fathers spoke to me. I

hope that my family's story can offer something for others to reflect on and hold throughout their own healing.

*"What we don't heal, what we don't confront, we pass on."*

—Sol Guy

# EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

The Death of My Two Fathers curriculum is a free resource designed to be self-guided or facilitated for students and educators. We encourage teachers and facilitators when engaging in community to create safe judgment-free and courageous spaces. Feel free to utilize all of the activities or choose the modules that work best.

---

## 1: WATCH THE DEATH OF MY TWO FATHERS FILM

### Access the film:

- Sign up to Host Your Own screening on the [Deathofmytwofathers.com](https://deathofmytwofathers.com)
  - Note that you have 48 hours to use your screening code
- Assign students to watching the full film or break the film into segments.
  - Select a few Journal prompt questions (see the Journal) to create a writing exercise or homework assignment
    - Create a sharing opportunity with the writing assignments/homework.
  - Host a group discussion about the film addressing the ideas it highlights: identity, healing through creative practice, supporting loved ones in hard times, building connections with family, mourning or loss for example.

---

## 2: THE RECOMMENDED READING LIST

The recommended reading list has a list of books in various categories to share with students. Feel free to add any of them to your reading lists.

### 3: THE MEDITATION GUIDE

This can be used to lead your students in a basic mediation practice. This is a great activity for group settings and even for online classes. Walk your students through the steps and try a short 10 minute meditation with them. You can play soft music or have them practice in silence. Anytime your class has high energy or encounters a lot of stress, you can use meditation as a tool to bring them back to calm and focus.

**After completing the meditation, facilitate a group discussion:**

- Asking your students to say a few words of reflection about how it felt to meditate? What thoughts came up for them?
- Assign meditation homework. Meditate 3 times this week.

---

### 4: THE VIDEO/WRITTEN INTERVIEW

This is a self guided activity for students to interview family members or a trusted community member to ask questions about their history, lessons learned, and overcoming adversity, which could help shape the students understanding of self. It is a safe space for students to learn from mentors and practice interview skills which include writing, research, public speaking, active listening and recording stories. It is a practice of intergenerational knowledge exchanges and opening deep conversations.

## 5: THE JOURNAL

This section provides prompt questions that address issues brought up by the film. It also has questions for reflection. Create writing assignments based on the prompt questions. We encourage students to write about their own experiences. The journal section is meant to be self-guided or can be facilitated.

- The Journal activity can be 6 weeks of journaling or feel free to only use the journaling questions that meet your needs.
- We encourage group sharing in order to allow for group healing, reflection, and public speaking opportunities.

# RECOMMENDED READING LIST

The following is a collection of books that have inspired Sol Guy, William Richard Guy and Freye Parkhouse along their paths. Feel free to incorporate them into your reading lists.

- The Prophet by Khalil Gibran
- Healing The Mind Through The Power of Story by Lewis Mehl Madrona
- The Mysticism of Sound and Music by Hazrat Inayat Khan
- When Things Fall Apart by Pema Chodron
- The Giving Tree by Shell Silverstein
- Oh The Places You'll Go by Dr Suess
- King of The World by David Remnick
- The Autobiography of Malcolm X by Alex Haley
- The Power of Myth by Joseph Campbell
- Hero with a Thousand Faces by Joseph Campbell
- Secrets of Divine Love by A. Helwa
- Warrior of the Light by Paulo Coelho
- Between the World Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates
- The Crusades Through Arab Eyes by Ibrahim Malouf
- The Subject Tonight is Love by Hafiz
- The Commanding Self by Idries Shah
- The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying
- Jewel of Remembrance by Rumi
- The Spiritual Journey of Alejandro Jodorowsky by Alejandro Jodorowsky

# MINDFUL MEDITATION

*“Meditation gives us the opportunity to have an open, compassionate attentiveness to whatever is going on. The meditative space is like the big sky—spacious, vast enough to accommodate anything that arises.”*

—Pema Chodron

Meditation can calm your mind and help bring focus to your thoughts. It can assist in stress management, lowering anxiety, clarity of thought, and calming your emotional reactivity. It also has many biological benefits like boosting your immune system, lowers blood pressure, and reduces heart risks. It can also help you sleep better. Meditation promotes spiritual benefits like increasing self-awareness, compassion, and allows for time to reflect upon your life in order to work out resolutions. It's a time for yourself. A daily practice of meditation can change your life.

We recommend starting small and working it into your daily schedule. Some people like to meditate first thing in the morning before they even speak to another person. Some people like to do it at the end of the day. Choose the time that works best for you. It can be as short as 10 minutes or even up to an hour. Try to set aside the same time every day to make it a routine. Listen to your body and do what is accessible and feels right for you.



*“Sitting meditation is returning home to give full attention to and care for ourselves.”*

—Thich Nhat Hanh

### Sitting Meditation by Thich Nhat Hanh

There’s an art to sitting in such a way that we can feel relaxed, at peace and at ease. In the Plum Village Tradition, we sit just to enjoy sitting. There is nowhere to go and nothing to do. We can just enjoy sitting there, following our breathing, enjoying being alive. Our daily life is so busy, and we need time to stop, sit down, and restore ourselves and the quality of our presence.

Sitting meditation is not hard labor. We don’t need to struggle or strive as we sit. We allow ourselves to be completely at ease.

It’s important to find a comfortable position, so our body can relax completely. You could be seated on a cushion or on a chair; cross-legged in the lotus or half-lotus, or kneeling. We can adjust our posture so the back is upright yet relaxed, our two knees touching the ground, and our hands placed gently in our lap. We allow the muscles in our face to relax, release any tension around the jaw and mouth, and gently relax our shoulders. If our legs or feet fall asleep or begin to hurt while sitting, we gently adjust our position while following our breathing.

Once we’ve established a comfortable position, we gently begin to follow our breathing, and extend our awareness to our whole body. We may find tension or restlessness in our body. With an in-breath we can smile to the tension, and with an out-breath we can release the tension and calm the body.

Firmly established in our body, we may begin to become aware of how we are feeling. We may feel peaceful and light, or we may feel sad, or anxious, or angry, or even lonely. We can gently recognise the feeling, and embrace it with our mindful breathing. As we breathe mindfully with the feeling, it will gradually calm and we can begin to look deeply to understand its roots.

## MINDFUL MEDITATION

Sitting meditation can be very healing and nourishing. It's an opportunity to be with whatever is present within us, without being carried away. Our mindful breathing is our anchor, and whenever thoughts arise, we simply recognise them, smile to them, and allow them to pass, like clouds moving across a windy sky.

In Plum Village we practice sitting meditation together every day, in the meditation hall or informally outside in nature. The collective energy is very powerful.

---

## RECOMMENDED MEDITATION APPS

- [Plum Village Mindfulness](#)
- 

## ACTIVITY

- We recommended meditating in silence or using a guided meditation
- [Try a guided meditation by Peggy Rowe Ward](#)

# INTERVIEW PROJECT

In this lesson, you'll have the chance to ask questions you've wanted about your family, community and history, which can shine light on your understanding of self. You can learn how others dealt with challenges and learn some of their life lessons. Through understanding where we come from, helps to shape who we become.

---

## PREPARATION

The questions below will help you prepare. We recommend that you write your answers digitally or on paper, but if you'd rather express yourself another way, do what feels right!

1. Sharing where you are in your life can help you connect with the person you are going to interview. What personal experiences would you like to share?
2. Are there things you are struggling with and could use advice, what questions could you ask to help you learn from others?
3. What questions would you most like to ask? Make a list..
4. Who would you like to interview? Start researching people in your family or community that you'd like to interview. Write down a list of at least 3 people you're considering interviewing.

*"Me, we."*

—Muhammad Ali

### LEADING UP TO THE INTERVIEW:

- Do your research! Find out some information about the person before you do the interview, so you come prepared.
  - Review the prompt questions. Create a few questions of your own and write them down beforehand.
  - Confirm a time and date to schedule the interview.
  - Record the conversation by writing it down, film it (camera/ phone) or record the audio. Make sure you practice using any technology before it begins.
  - Tips of video/audio recording: Find a quiet space and do some test samples to make sure the sound is clear and the camera angle is good. Check the lighting to make sure you can see the interviewee well.
  - Tips for writing it down: Feel free to ask the interviewee to repeat themselves or slow down to allow yourself time to accurately take down all the details.
- 

### AFTER THE INTERVIEW:

- Write, email, or text your interviewee a “thank you” note.
- Use the [Video Ask Portal](#) to submit your interview. When the profile is completed, it’ll be sent to your interviewee for approval—then it’s on to the Death of My Two Fathers video archive, so others can learn what you heard in real life.

# INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## OPENING QUESTIONS FOR THE INTERVIEW:

Name of Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

In a brief sentence, explain where you were born. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What were your parents' names? \_\_\_\_\_

Where do you currently live? \_\_\_\_\_

How are we connected? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

Is there a mantra you live by, which could help guide me along the way? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What have you always wanted to tell me that you never could? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Share a story when you were there for someone in a hard time. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Could you share a story about a challenging time when your/our family dealt with adversity? What insights did you learn from that moment? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Is there anything you wish you would have done in your life that you never got to? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Your Questions: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# JOURNAL ACTIVITY

Journaling is a powerful tool for creativity and our mental health. It helps you step outside of your thoughts and reflect. Journal entries can bookmark chapters of your journey. Your journal is a safe space to voice your truth. Incorporating a daily practice of journaling can be transformative, so we challenge you to journal every day for 6 weeks. Even if you can only spare a few minutes, it can bring clarity to your day.

Following is a list of writing prompts. There are 6 themes, two questions per week. We encourage you to go deep on each topic and explore each theme one for a full week. The prompts are a guide to begin your journaling practice.

The questions may push you to go deep and reflect within yourself, but remember that journaling is a judgment-free space to share your truth. It is a way to pull emotions outside of yourself, so you can reflect and heal. If you have trusted friends or loved ones who are also journaling, consider peer to peer sharing for the healing that exercise can offer, and for the space you can offer by listening. If journaling brings up issues that need deeper support, we recommend seeking professional therapy, a powerful tool for self healing. Lastly, don't worry about punctuation, or complete sentences, just write freely. Before you begin, close your eyes and take 3 deep breaths and relax.

## JOURNAL ACTIVITY

### **WEEK 1: LIVE FULLY**

1. Life is precious. We only have so much time with one another. What does living life to the fullest mean to you?
2. By confronting your past and mistakes, what patterns in your life would you like to change or revisit in order to show up as a better version of yourself?

### **WEEK 2: COPING WITH GRIEF AND LOSS THROUGH A CULTURAL LENS.**

1. Do you feel you are allowed to grieve, and how do you carve space to mourn loss?
2. What are ways that you practice healing? Are these rooted in customs or traditions? Are healing and art entwined in your family's culture?

### **WEEK 3: HEALING THROUGH CREATIVE PRACTICE**

1. Both Sol and his father use film and storytelling to share about their journeys with family, relationships, triumphs, and struggles. How can creative processes like storytelling encourage healing through art?
2. Throughout the film, Sol is vulnerable and open about personal stories. How does vulnerability encourage healing?

### **WEEK 4: HOW TO SHOW UP FOR THE PEOPLE WHO MATTER MOST IN DIFFICULT MOMENTS AND AT THE END OF LIFE**

1. Who have you shown up for in a difficult time or at their end of life? What did it take for you to show up and be present?
2. Do you hold back from showing up for your loved ones? What are some reasons you hold back?

### **WEEK 5: HOW SYSTEMIC RACISM AFFECTS FAMILIES**

1. How does systemic racism shape community safety and opportunities to thrive? What can be learned from understanding and addressing this?
2. How has systemic racism been used to divide people by race and class?

### **WEEK 6: IDENTITY: HOW A SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF THE PAST HELPS US GROW**

1. How has connecting to lost or disconnected family helped you grow? Who are the people you need to meet in your family to better understand where you came from?
2. What is an important family story that you would like to document? List a few questions that you would like to ask your family member(s)?