

Professor Sandra Bertman Presents at BACH Symposium
National Center for Death Education faculty member speaks on 'The Arts of Compassion'



Dr. Sandra Bertman, Distinguished Professor of Thanatology and the Arts at the National Center for Death Education, Mount Ida College

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Distinguished Professor Sandra L. Bertman, PhD, FT, of the [National Center for Death Education](#), Mount Ida College, was one of the experts who spoke at the Boston Arts Consortium for Health (BACH) Symposium “The Arts of Compassion: Perspectives on Arts and Health.” The day-long conference, held on Saturday, October 2, at the Berklee College of Music, gave Boston-area academics, therapists and clinicians the opportunity to come together to consider different ways of integrating the arts into their practices to promote healing and well-being.

“The arts have a way of getting us into a subject — unlocking our imaginations,” says Bertman, who has long synthesized the arts with literature, spiritual beliefs and cultural values for therapeutic use in clinical and academic settings. “They return us to life more impactfully, reaching our hearts as well as our heads, improving the outlook both for ourselves and those we’re caring for.”

Bertman’s session, “Ars Moriendi: The ‘Good Death’ in the 21st Century,” considered the detrimental ways in which society has stigmatized death, removing it as a natural part of life. “It will be with us all one day,” says Bertman, a strong advocate of living wills and author of *Facing Death: Images, Insights and Interventions* (Taylor Francis, 1991) and *One Breath Apart* (Baywood Publishing, 2009). “How wonderful to spend some time considering what each of us feels is an appropriate death.”

Other sessions examined the use of the visual and performing arts with particular populations, such as special needs students, Alzheimer’s patients, as well as victims of violence. The day concluded with a special performance of the Longwood Symphony Orchestra at New England Conservatory’s Jordan Hall. The Boston Arts Consortium for Health was founded in 2009 by a group of artists, educators, and health care professionals who are interested in the role of the arts in health care. BACH’s objectives are to position Boston, Massachusetts, and New England as centers for the practice of and innovative research in the arts and health care; to heighten the visibility of the arts as an effective tool in promoting health and wellness; and to broaden and deepen the sources of support for the arts in health care..