

ELE vs. Delirium Guide:

A Tool to Help Distinguish Between the Two Experiences

End-of-life experiences (ELEs) can often be mistaken for delirium, despite looking and affecting the dying very differently. While it is true that people at the end of life can often experience states of confusion such as delirium, it is separate and distinct from ELEs. Below is a guiding tool to help you differentiate between the two experiences.

If you are having trouble understanding the difference between ELEs and states of confusion, we recommend you first [watch Jeanne](#) share one of her many dream experiences. We invite you to listen to what she is saying, but also pay attention to how she is saying it, her demeanor, her facial expressions, etc. Afterward, please use this tool and reflect on Jeanne’s experience, looking at each sphere of being.

| Sphere of Being | Delirium | ELEs |
|------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Physical State | Agitated/Picking | Mild/At Rest |
| Cognitive State | Disorganized/Confused | Acuity/Recall |
| Relational State | Withdrawn/Disconnected | Engaged/Connected |
| Emotional State | Extremely Distressed | Comforted/Calm |
| Mental State | Sense of Disbelief | Sense of Reality |
| Spiritual State | Disconnected from Spirituality | Peaceful/Transcendent |

For citation, please see below.

Reflection Exercise:

1. Go through each “Sphere of Being” and think about how it pertains to Jeanne.
2. In your own words, how would you describe how Jeanne felt about the experience?
3. Would you categorize someone like Jeanne as someone who is confused or losing touch with reality?
4. Think about how you would respond to Jeanne if she was sharing this dream with you. How would you feel?

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