Terror-Management Theory

Recent history has supported Freud's idea that we unconsciously defend ourselves against anxiety. Jeff Greenberg, Sheldon Solomon, and Tom Pyszczynski (1997) proposed that one source of anxiety is "the terror resulting from our awareness of vulnerability to death."

Nearly 300 experiments testing their **terror-management theory** show that thinking about one's morality--for example, writing a short essay on dying and its associated emotions--provokes various terror-management defenses.

Faced with a threatening world, people act not only to enhance their self-esteem but also to adhere more strongly to worldviews that answer questions about life's meaning. The prospect of death promotes religious sentiments, and deep religious convictions enable people to be less defensive--less likely to rise in defense of their worldview--when reminded of death. Moreover, when contemplating death, people cleave to close relationships. The events of 9/11--a striking experience of the terror of death--led trapped World Trade Center occupants to spend their last moments calling loved ones, and led most Americans to reach out to family and friends.

Step 01: About Death

Don't have a complex or anything. And I don't want anything gorry or wierd. But I want you to put terror-management theory into practice. Write a 1 page, single spaced, size 12, Times New Roman font reflection which responds to the following prompt:

Write an essay about your own death, reflect upon your morality, what emotions would go through your head?

Step 2: Reflecting

Wait at least an hour, then write a paragraph explaining what it was like to write about your own death.