



says the new web content will further assist community to help them feel more comfortable thinking about—and talking about—death and dying as a part of life.

Professor Tieman says further studies using sentiment analysis could provide valuable insights into the way people feel about this issue, and other topics including [palliative care](#), advance care planning, voluntary assisted dying and COVID-19.

Co-author Flinders University Computer Scientist Dr. Trent Lewis says automated sentiment or emotional analysis of the words used showed a greater benefit for younger participants of the course who showed a bigger increase in pleasantness (valence) and dominance (power or control) by the end of the course, showing the benefit of gaining insights into becoming more emotionally accepting of death.

"It shows how the general public can gain an acceptance of death as a natural part of life by learning how to openly discuss and address these feelings and attitudes," he says.

The study also found differences between how course participants described the feelings towards death and dying of other people in the community compared to their own—with 'sad', 'fear', 'scary' and 'loss' more common than their own preference for less emotionally negative words such as 'inevitable', 'peace' and 'natural'.

"The assumption was that others feel more negatively about death than they do themselves," Dr. Lewis says.

"This could impact on our willingness to start conversations about [death](#) with others," adds Dr. Miller-Lewis. "Do we avoid it because we think others will get upset if we bring it up, and does this then leave important things unsaid?" she asks.

**More information:** Words describing feelings about death: A comparison of sentiment for self and others and changes over time, *PLOS ONE* (2021).

APA citation: How to talk about death and dying: Taking taboo from those dreaded conversations (2021, January 6) retrieved 20 April 2021 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-01-death-dying-taboo-dreaded-conversations.html>

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