

FUNNY FILMS FOR SERIOUS SUBJECTS

Presented by Gail Rubin, CT, The Doyenne of Death®

Laughing in the Face of Death: Funny Films for Funeral Planning

This upbeat talk illustrates funeral planning issues with clips from comedy films and television programs. Learn what you need to know before someone dies to reduce stress and conflict, save money and create a “good goodbye.” Just as talking about sex won’t make you pregnant, talking about funerals won’t make you dead – and your family will benefit from the conversation. Films include *Death at a Funeral* (U.S. version), *Undertaking Betty*, *The Six Wives of Henry Lefay*, *The Big Lebowski* and *Elizabethtown*.

Laughing in the Face of Death: Movies, Medicine and Mortality

Medical personnel face The Grim Reaper in hospitals every single day. With film clips from *Patch Adams*, *Wit*, *Little Miss Sunshine*, *The End*, *Critical Care*, *The Doctor*, and *Death Becomes Her*, this talk offers a lighter look at the dark side of death in hospitals. We also look at ways medical personnel can deal with their on-the-job stress and grief.

Movies, Media and the 2016 Presidential Election

The 1976 film *Network* predicted the rise of reality television and the populist chant, "I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take this anymore!" This film clip-illustrated talk explores how art imitates life and vice versa regarding the media and the 2016 presidential election. Watch scenes from *Citizen Kane*, *All The Kings Men*, *A Face in the Crowd*, *Good Night & Good Luck*, *Being There*, and other films that offer perspectives from the 20th century that resonate today. Gail Rubin majored in TV & Film at the University of Maryland and was a producer at C-SPAN for five years before becoming an accomplished public relations professional and a pioneering death educator.

Everybody Dies: Lessons from *Six Feet Under*

From 2001 to 2005, the HBO cable television series *Six Feet Under* took viewers behind the scenes at Fisher & Sons Funeral Home. This upbeat talk uses clips from this award-winning series to illuminate funeral planning issues for those who don’t plan to die. Topics include pre-need planning, cremation, traditional and green burial, and aspects of contemporary grief and mourning.

Ashes to Ashes, Dust in Your Face: Cremation, Comedy and Creativity

Cremation is the fastest growing disposition method in the U.S. Watching funny and serious film clips, you’ll learn about what you need to know **before** there’s a death in the family, including choices to make and disposition options. Films include *Elizabethtown*, *The Big Lebowski*, *Due Date*, *The Bucket List*, and *The Descendants*.

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“Doctor, How Long Do I Have?”

Having a serious healthcare conversation with your doctor and family takes effort to ensure clear communications. Learn how to ask questions and be involved in treatment decisions by watching dramatic and comedy films depicting doctor-patient-family conversations. Films include *50/50*, *The End*, *Wit*, *The Shootist* and *The Descendants*.

Jewish Funeral Traditions on Film

Jewish traditions regarding death and dying, the funeral, the treatment of the body, burial, mourning, and annual remembrances are very different from Christian practices. This talk illuminates the differences and similarities of these funeral traditions – highly beneficial for interfaith families. Scenes from two comedic films from Mexico, *My Mexican Shiva* and *Nora's Will*, as well as American movies *This Is Where I Leave You*, *Two Weeks*, and *The Cemetery Club* illustrate Jewish funeral, burial and mourning traditions.

The Many Faces of Grief: Mourning in the Movies

Grief and mourning is a process that takes on many faces. Using clips from Hollywood films to illustrate and lighten the conversation, learn about different grieving styles, length of mourning, disenfranchised grief and other elements of thanatology, the study of death, dying and bereavement. Film clips include scenes from *The Big Lebowski*, *Elizabethtown*, *Walk the Line*, *Gravity*, *A Single Man* and *The Jane Austen Book Club*.

Estate Planning: Hollywood Myth versus Facts

The way the movies portray it, wills are supposed to cover funeral plans in addition to the distribution of assets. Unfortunately, family members may die before doing any estate planning. Even with a will, plans can go awry. Clips from comedies including *Carpet Kingdom*, *The Six Wives of Henry LeFay*, *Eulogy*, *Bonneville*, *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir*, *Grand Theft Parsons* and other movies illustrate the need to do estate planning TODAY.

The Funeral Director on Film

Watching scenes from comedies and dramas focused on funeral directors throughout history, learn the history of U.S. undertaking, perceptions of funeral directors and funeral planning tips. With humorous insights, Gail Rubin educates and entertains with Hollywood portrayals of “the last man to let you down.” Films include *The Shootist*, *The Loved One*, *About Schmidt*, *Get Low*, *Bernie* and the TV series, *Six Feet Under*.

Hollywood's Visions, Trips and Crowded Rooms

Dr. David Kessler's book *Visions, Trips and Crowded Rooms* shares the personal stories of medical and hospice professionals who witness death. Some of the dying see remarkable visions, some speak of going on a trip, and others see people who they knew in this lifetime crowding the room. Hollywood films provide a concrete way of looking at this phenomenon when someone dies. This talk opens the door to discussing mortality issues.

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Office Morale in the Movies: Communications and Change

Change is stressful, and communication is key to helping employees cope. Learn thanatology-based frameworks to recognize and effectively respond to loss and changes. Learn motivation strategies as illustrated in films and TV shows such as *Nine to Five*, *Office Space*, *Working Girl* and *Mad Men*.

Film Appreciation Presentations

These one to two-hour film clip talks on Hollywood giants make great spouse programs. "Hallmarks of Hitchcock" identifies top thematic elements of Alfred Hitchcock films. "All Singing, All Dancing: Storytelling in Busby Berkeley Musicals" showcases his elaborate production numbers. "John Ford: When the Legend Becomes Fact, Print the Legend" identifies thematic elements of this master director's Westerns.

Other film clip talks include **A Funny, Fractured History of Funerals on Film**, **Exit Strategies: On Choosing to Die** and **The Viking Funeral on Film**.



Gail Rubin, CT, The Doyenne of Death[®], is author of the award-winning book *A Good Goodbye: Funeral Planning for Those Who Don't Plan to Die, Hail and Farewell: Cremation Ceremonies, Templates and Tips*, and *The Family Plot Blog*. Her newest book is *Kicking the Bucket List: 100 Downsizing and Organizing Things to Do Before You Die* (October, 2016, Rio Grande Books)

Host of **A Good Goodbye** television series and Internet radio program, she's a Certified Thanatologist (a death educator) and a popular speaker who uses humor and films to get end-of-life conversations started. Her 2015 TEDx talk (<https://youtu.be/r9qR4ZiGX2Y>) focuses on the importance of starting end-of-life conversations *before* there's a death in the family.

She's a member of the Association for Death Education and Counseling, the International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association, Toastmasters International and the National Speakers Association New Mexico Chapter. Past president of the New Mexico Interfaith Dialogue, she's a Certified Celebrant who also serves on the cemetery committee for Congregation Albert and volunteers with the *Chevra Kaddisha*, which ritually prepares bodies for Jewish burial.

Her motto is: "Talking about sex won't make you pregnant. Talking about funerals won't make you dead."

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