

## TALKS THAT BRING A LIGHT TOUCH TO DISCUSSING DEATH

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

### **Kicking the Bucket List: Downsizing and Organizing Things to Do Before You Die**

Do you plan to live forever? Do you ever plan to move? Depending on where you're going, you can't take it with you. This talk focuses on practical ways to downsize excess goods without being overwhelmed by the job, what you need to know to organize your information for your executor, and how to plan for end-of-life issues. Film clips add to the wealth of information in this talk.

### **We Can Do That? New Trends in Death Care a.k.a. Green/Natural Burial Options**

The modern funeral is changing. Learn about new death care trends in the United States, including green burial, DIY/home funerals, alkaline hydrolysis and other developing body disposition methods, rising cremation rates, and how to make a memorial service all about the person who died.

### **Laughing and Learning: A Practical End-of-Life Workshop**

Even though humans have a 100% mortality rate, only 25% of us do any end-of-life planning. The Laughing and Learning workshop will give you the tools and the inspiration to take practical steps for outlining your funeral plans/memorial celebration, drafting your own obituary and/or famous last words, and preparing advance medical directives.

### **What are Your Ethical Will Life Lessons?**

In a Last Will and Testament, the Ethical Will was the Testament portion of this important end-of-life planning document. An Ethical Will enables us to speak words of truth before the end of our days on earth. We can share the life lessons we've learned, passing along our values and wisdom to our loved ones and the world. This can be a short talk or a longer participatory workshop.

## FUNNY FILMS FOR SERIOUS SUBJECTS

### **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*.

### **Lessons on Grief and Mourning in Cartoons**

Animated movies designed for children can also address the grief of adults. This presentation incorporates clips from popular cartoon films that illustrate and instruct about mourning losses. From the death of loved ones to significant life changes, we can learn about resiliency and the rebirth of joy by watching characters address their challenges.

## **Answers to Your Burning Questions on Cremation — a.k.a. 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, learn about what you need to know about cremation **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*.

### **“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*.

### **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*. (Warning – there's some strong language in a few of these film clips.)

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

Medical personnel face The Grim Reaper in hospitals every single day. This presentation looks at ways medical personnel can deal with their on-the-job stress and grief, and families can cope with a dying loved one. It features film clips from movies and TV shows including *Patch Adams*, *Wit*, *Little Miss Sunshine*, *Critical Care*, *Scrubs*, *The Doctor*, and *Death Becomes Her*.

### **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 and dramas including *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.

### **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.

### **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. (Warning – there's some strong language in a few of these film clips.)

### **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.

Other film clip talks include **A Funny, Fractured History of Funerals on Film**, **Hearses Through History**, **Exit Strategies: On Choosing to Die**, and **The Viking Funeral on Film**. She can also do film appreciation presentations on Hollywood auteurs including Alfred Hitchcock, Busby Berkeley, and John Ford.



Gail Rubin, CT, The Doyenne of Death®, is author of the award-winning books *A Good Goodbye: Funeral Planning for Those Who Don't Plan to Die*, *Kicking the Bucket List: 100 Downsizing and Organizing Things to Do Before You Die* (Rio Grande Books), and *Hail and Farewell: Cremation Ceremonies, Templates and Tips*. She is also the coordinator of the Before I Die New Mexico Festival.

A doyen is a woman who's considered senior in a group who knows a lot about a particular subject. Gail is a Certified Thanatologist (a death educator) and 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. Her motto is: “Talking about sex won't make you pregnant. Talking about funerals won't make you dead.”