

# **A LIGHT TOUCH ON DISCUSSING DEATH, DOWNSIZING AND GRIEF**

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

## **Hidden Grief in the Workplace**

The widespread losses incurred during the coronavirus pandemic can negatively impact employee productivity. Help your employees understand reactions to losses, recognize different grief manifestations, and utilize tips to cope with grief and stress. Film clips make the information presented memorable and entertaining.

## **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. Available both with and without film clips.

## **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.

## **Your Customers are Discussing Death, Where are You?**

For those in the insurance, estate planning, funeral and cemetery businesses, this talk has insights into death discussion movements that have sprung up in the US, the UK, and worldwide over the past 10 years. Tens of thousands of participants flock to these events. They include: Dying Matters Week; Death Cafes; Before I Die Festivals; Death Over Dinner; Death Salons; and Reimagine End of Life Festivals. Are you aware of these opportunities to engage with customers? Learn three tips to plan events that will help get end-of-life planning conversations started and generate sales.

## FUNNY FILMS FOR SERIOUS SUBJECTS

### **Not Planning to Die with *The Kominsky Method***

As the saying goes, getting old ain't for sissies. Aging holds challenges for all of us: physical declines, beloved people and pets dying, and unrelenting changes, many not for the better. With video clips from the Netflix series, *The Kominsky Method*, laugh and learn about planning ahead for end-of-life. (Warning – there's some adult language in a few of these clips.)

### **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.)

### **Going Home: Taking Death Out of the Hospital**

Even though 75% of Americans say they want to die at home, less than 25% of us actually do. Using comedic and serious movie clips, learn about ways to de-medicalize our final days. Really – you can laugh about death while learning about the benefits of hospice.

### **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 both movies and TV shows.

### **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 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 Shivah* 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.”

### **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 present film appreciation talks on Hollywood auteurs including the suspense films of Alfred Hitchcock, Busby Berkeley musicals, and the hallmarks of the films of John Ford.

### **The Newly-Dead Game®**

Based on the classic television program, *The Newlywed Game*, The Newly-Dead Game tests couples on how well they know their partner's last wishes. Gail Rubin also created an Individuals Edition so that everyone, not just couples, plus the audience can play along. It's an upbeat way to start end-of-life planning conversations.

### **About Gail Rubin, CT**



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 award-winning **Before I Die New Mexico Festival** and a pioneer of the Death Cafe movement in the United States.

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 and grief 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. *Albuquerque Business First* named her one of their Women of Influence in 2019.

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."

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