



Imagine living in a place and knowing that the people around you will be sustained by your way of going out from among them.

Stephen Jenkinson, *Die Wise*

PREPARING FOR THE DEATH YOU WANT

Everyone's definition of a "good death" will be different. But a common element that we all likely share is that we don't want to create unnecessary suffering for our loved ones or ourselves. One of the biggest ways to minimize this is to think NOW about what you can organize and put in writing NOW, so that the focus then can be on the most important things. We will all die, life depends on death, and it could happen at any time.

The suggestions briefly outlined below can be gathered into what I call your helpful yellow folder. This is a literal or virtual location that will have information your survivors will need to accompany you well in your last days, should you be granted a transition time, and then in the early days after your death. You'll want to review these every year and have conversations with loved ones about the contents. It won't be easy to do all the items listed below, but each will offer increased peace of mind both now and later.

- Prepare a will, power of attorney, healthcare power of attorney, living will, and desire for a natural death form.
- Fill out a "summary form" to have on your fridge (healthcare details, people to contact, any DNR scenarios, plus locations of vital documents and instructions folder).
- Review your beneficiaries on any financial accounts, and update annually. Check that your bank or credit union account is set up to be "payable on death" to avoid delays in availability of funds.
- Write Advanced Directives that include enough details about how you'd like your care to be handled in case you can't speak for yourself. These should include:
 - Medical intervention preferences (there are lots of forms and guidance available, Five Wishes, MOST/POLST forms from healthcare providers which vary by state, etc.)
 - Who to contact for prolonged care, with contact #'s

- Who to contact at death, with contact #'s
- Financial information - institutions, passwords, account numbers, don't forget your phone password! (It is especially important for the executor to have a list of all financial institutions that will need to be contacted. You could add subscriptions, utilities, and other important institutions.)
- Disposition of body - specify alternatives to quickly calling 911 or the funeral home.
 - Did you know that you can take your time at home, or can take a body home from the hospital? Easily for hours, and can use dry ice up to 3 days. Avoid embalming if at all possible (a bit gruesome and toxic).
 - Ask to be washed and dressed by loved ones. (This usefulness can lead to "post traumatic growth" instead of unexpressed grief.) You can specify by whom, or what you'd like to wear.
 - Consider having some quiet social time around the deceased, maybe telling stories, saying prayers, playing music, decorating burial items, even welcoming children so that they can see death as a part of life. This may be helpful to the dead as well as the living.
 - Give green burial location, plus shroud or cardboard or local pine box information, or cremation request.
- Give ideas for gatherings or more traditional service (shared storytelling time, specific songs, poems) or give permission to do what specified people prefer at the time. Include words of assurance that you appreciate whatever they decide.
- Maybe leave a ♥love note♥ to those most likely to find the folder, or most likely to need your loving, reassuring words.

TALK WITH YOUR LOVED ONES about all this so they'll know what is important to you and to avoid surprises and added anxiety. ***How you leave things, both in your dying itself and in the organization of your affairs, will greatly influence how your loved ones experience your death, and later even their own.*** Will your choices *now* favor calm and gratitude, or uncertainty even fractiousness? Good luck! You can do this.

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