

Thinking of Death

Jeanne May, 2008

Death is a topic many people try to avoid thinking and talking about! I know it's uncomfortable, emotionally laden, and it isn't the easiest to contemplate. But the fact is, no matter how much you try to avoid it -- it will eventually find you! No one escapes!

I'm a psychologist, and was a loss and grief counsellor and educator for 15 years... so I'm well aware of how death is not the most popular conversation item!

But the thing is... when you are faced with the imminent (or sudden) death of someone you love you are most likely experiencing a multitude of thoughts and emotions. And then you may have to make decisions about things, like the funeral, which are highly charged emotional stuff ... and it can turn into an emotional nightmare if nothing has been discussed.

Now I'm not saying that talking about death, making your wishes and desires known, finding out what your loved ones want as well, will take away the pain of bereavement... but it can go a long way to help people deal with what is already a difficult time.

And remember that by talking about death, by making a few decisions now, by doing a few things now, will not make your death happen any quicker!

What are a few things you can do now?

1) Have you got a will? Too often people don't make a will... it's something they don't get around to doing; they have a belief that if they write a will they are also writing their death sentence (I've had that said to me a number of times); or they argue what's the point in writing a will when they haven't got anything to leave. A will is important. And they are easy to do -- they don't have to be complicated. Forms are available so you can even do it yourself.

2) Once you have made your will -- put it in a safe place and let people know where it is. I have seen a number of families not able to begin to deal with things (the practicalities involved after death) because they do not know where the will is and often nothing can move forward until the will is read.

3) Update your will particularly when your circumstances change e.g. birth of a child, a divorce, change in asset wealth, death in the family.

4) Do you know what funeral director you would like to be used? This is something that you can make a decision about now without making any commitment (e.g. outlaying money). I know many people say they don't care and that it can be decided by families when the time comes, but it is much easier for those left if they can be guided by what you would like.

5) Do you know whether you want to be buried or cremated? Again this can be a difficult decision for families to make particularly if there are differing views within the family. If they can be guided by your wishes it can make the decision easier.

6) If you're going to be cremated... do you know where you would like your ashes to be put? In reality, your physical body won't know a thing about it (note I said physical body) but if you have a favourite place it can be useful for family to know. On this point... be careful about saying things like you want to be put under the orange tree in the back garden. If ashes are placed at a home it can be difficult for family members to move away from the home e.g. if the house needs to be sold at some stage.

7) Have you thought about this scenario... if you die a long way from home e.g. overseas, interstate, do you want your body returned home for the funeral? This can place a huge burden, both financial and emotional, on family members. Let people know if it is okay for them not to bring your body back but maybe your ashes.

8) Have you thought about organ donation? If you die suddenly, in an accident for instance, your family may be asked to consider donating your organs. Now that can be an enormous decision for family members to make particularly if they have got no idea how you feel about that! Organ donation is a major issue in Australia because there are nowhere near enough organ donors. Many people I have spoken with over the years have said that they would like to donate their organs but they haven't told anybody or made it official!

These are just a few practical things you can begin to think about and do. It is not morbid to begin to plan for your death... death is a reality. And once you have done these things, and let your thoughts and wishes known to people concerned, you don't have to think about it again. And it is easier, much easier, for family members in the long run. I know because I went through this just recently with my dad.

Jeanne May of Aspirations Plus, works with spiritually minded people providing them with information, inspiration, guidance and support to achieve their goals and dreams. Receive a complimentary copy of "**#1 Ingredient To Fast Track Your Success!**" by subscribing to Aspirations Plus at <http://www.aspirationsplus.com>