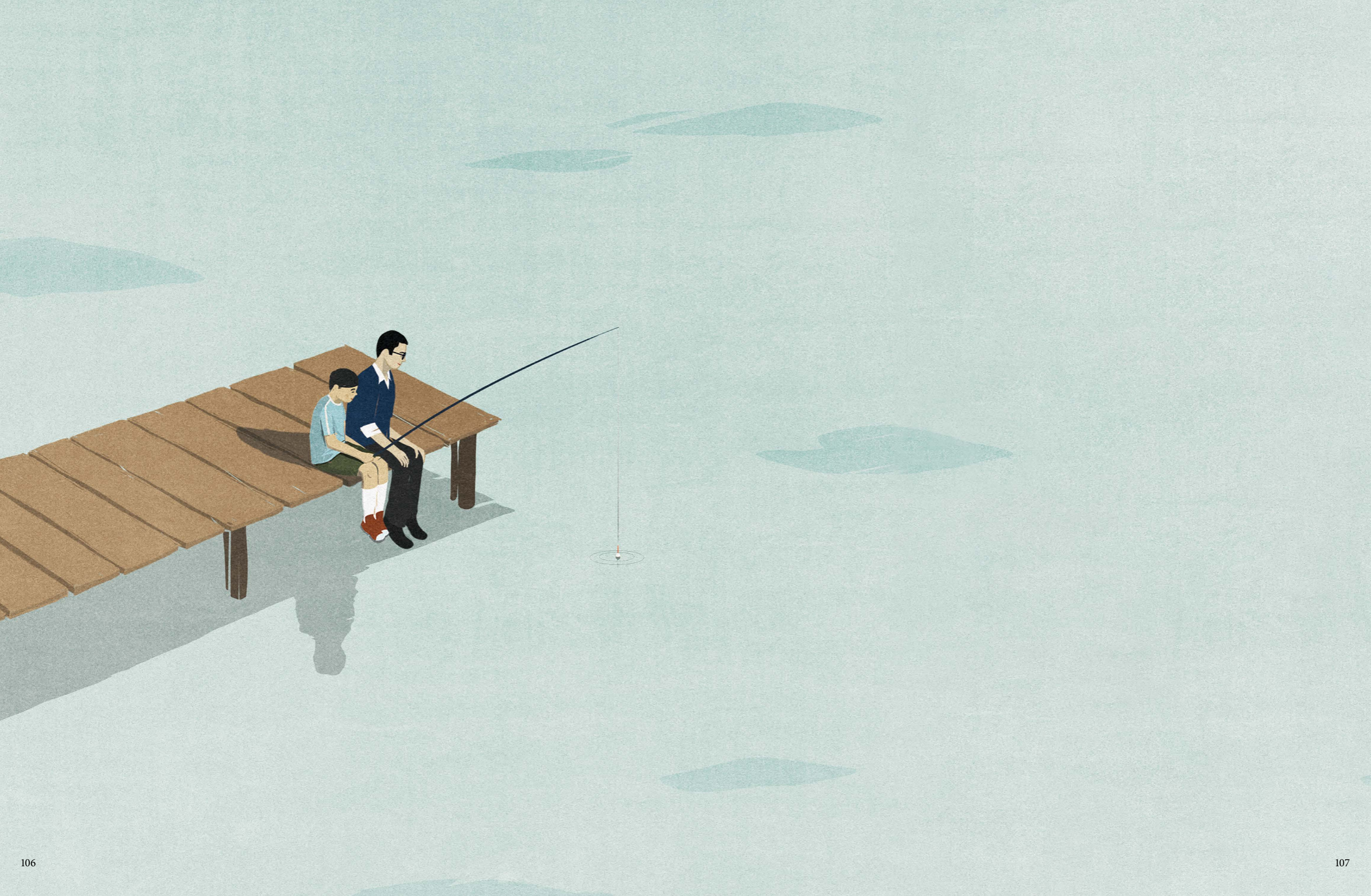


Saying

Section Three

goodbye



That ~~difficult~~ tender conversation

Dr Kathryn Mannix

Drawing on three decades of experience with patients at the end of their lives, palliative care pioneer Dr Kathryn Mannix explores how to discuss the topic of death with a loved one

“My mum has cancer and she’s not getting better. How can I find out what care she wants as her health gets worse?”

I’ve become an agony aunt for conversations about death: messages come from dying people who can’t get their loved ones to listen, from adults wondering how to broach the conversation with their elderly or sick relatives, and from parents asking how to explain the death of a cherished person to children. All are perplexed about how to approach it. All fear doing harm.

How can we talk about dying?

Let’s start by relaxing. Talking about death won’t make anybody die sooner. It’s safe to talk. Even if it feels sad to discuss these things, having important conversations now can reduce the level of distress that can often come later.

It’s helpful to think about this conversation as a process that is progressing a little at a time, rather than a bang-boom-done event. We don’t have to talk about everything all at once. We simply need to open up the possibility of talking. Conversation flows better if it’s by mutual agreement, so why not invite each other to the conversation?

“Mum, I’ve been thinking a lot about what might happen if you get sick in the future and the doctors ask me about how you want to be looked after. Do you think we could chat about that some time?”

“Kids, I’ve had a great life but I’m old and I won’t live forever. I want to talk to you all about how I’d like to be looked after at the end of my life. Can we arrange to talk?”

“Pals, you know my illness is getting worse and I’m worrying about my family. I’d like to talk to you about supporting us as I’m dying, and you keeping up your support for them afterwards. Could we mull it over?”

What do we need to talk about?

Start with what feels easier or more pressing. Many people feel more comfortable talking about events after their death than talking about dying itself. They may have opinions about their funeral – the venue and music – while others’ attitudes may be more “do what you like, I won’t be there”. Some people have a specific personal or practical concern they want to settle before they are too unwell to sort it out.

Once you’ve broken the ice, the follow-up conversations won’t feel as awkward. It’s good to plan something happy and distracting to talk about afterwards, too. Be creative!

There are practicalities, such as where to live during the last part of life. At home? With a relative? In a care home? A district nurse can provide useful insights into what extra care can be provided at home and where the local care homes are.

Details matter. Things such as preferences for company, music, pets, TV, fresh air, privacy, quiet. People can be surprised by our choices, so don’t expect them to guess. FYI, I’d like the window open and quiet talk radio – if you’re cold, put a jumper on.

There might be legacy conversations, with the subjects ranging from writing out recipes or recording an interview that hands down family stories, to writing a will or having the pleasure of gifting things while you’re still alive.

Just as important as the practicalities, though, are the “heartfelt conversations”. People want to say thank you to each other, to put old disagreements aside, to forgive and be forgiven. People want to express their love – our gift to them is to listen. Don’t let embarrassment shut these tender conversations down. They are words from someone’s heart, and giving people time and attention allows them to reach peace of mind.

Above all, let’s discuss what matters most dearly to us. Let’s help the people looking after us to prioritise our values.

What is dying like?

I've described this to thousands of people over my medical career. Its simplicity has often surprised them: they were expecting pain or horror. In fact, it's usually gentle. Provided the symptoms of the illness we are dying from are well controlled, it's not an uncomfortable process.

We become gradually more weary. We sleep more. Sleep gives us an energy top-up, but not for very long. In our final days we become unconscious. That's not like sleep – we don't notice as we lose consciousness. Initially, we dip in and out of consciousness, and we may wake up enough to chat from time to time.

Eventually, dying people are unconscious all the time. Their bodily organs are slowly shutting down. Their breathing begins to change, with cycles of fast-to-slow and deep-to-shallow respirations, sometimes quiet and sometimes noisy, all completely automatic and not caused by or causing distress.

Finally, usually during a period of slow breathing, there's a breath that just isn't followed by another one. No panic, pain or palaver. Sometimes it's so gentle the family doesn't notice for a while.

Knowing about this process helps everyone to be a little less anxious beforehand, and to recognise the stages of the process as it progresses. Knowing what to expect helps families to be assured that children won't see anything frightening if they visit; recognising the stages helps to gather the right people at the right time. Being aware of what to expect can help those tender conversations about what matters most, where we would like to be looked after, whose companionship we would like.

Remember to live

Dying people are simply living close to the end of their lives. They don't need us to have solemn faces or use special voices. They appreciate the normal things: contact, news, laughter, a cuppa. There's a freedom in knowing what's important, and dying people have usually worked out what that is. It's not money or stuff or status. It's people, relationships and love. Have the conversation. Unless you're immortal, of course.

“Above all, let’s discuss what matters most dearly to us. Let’s help the people looking after us to prioritise our values”

End-of-life discussions: *your checklist* *Dr Kathryn Mannix*

Since you've probably never died before, it can be hard to plan for. This list is a combination of things that families and individuals have found useful in end-of-life discussions, and things I've seen bring great consolation to people. It's not exhaustive, so please do add your own items. Good luck!

Funerals

What are the individual's preferences about burial or cremation, church or secular ceremony, music, readings, eulogy, celebrant, final resting place of body or ashes? Should the dress code be mourning or party colours? Should there be flowers or a collection for a good cause? Family only or open invitation? Which type of coffin should it be, what clothes should be worn in it, should any memorabilia be put in it? Is it possible to pay in advance? How much can you pre-plan things? Did you know that funeral directors, celebrants and clergy will all make home visits if you'd like to plan ahead?

Wills

If you don't make a will, the law decides who inherits everything you leave behind and that may not be the people you would have chosen. Even if you own very little and have no savings, it's easy and wise to make a will, and ensures the right people inherit the things you'd like them to have. Even better, give gifts to them in person before you die!

Place of care

Do you want to live at home? With a relative or friend? Is that practical? Think about the ease of getting a cup of tea, getting to the toilet, managing steps and stairs. Would you consider extra help at home? Or moving to somewhere that provides care? Perhaps it's worth checking out local care homes – their attitudes, their atmosphere, their charges.

What matters most to you?

Is it a place? People? A pet? A way of life? A spiritual practice? This is worth thinking about and telling your supporters. In the future, if you're too unwell to decide things, they can help to ensure the decision makers take your values into account.

Achieving a balance between comfort and treatment

Most of us prefer to be comfortable, but some medications used to manage pain or breathlessness occasionally cause drowsiness. Being drowsy may be acceptable or it may be something you really don't want. Where would you draw the line? Would you accept some drowsiness in order to be comfortable? Or would you prefer to accept some discomfort in order to be alert?

Finding the balance between quality of life and length of life

As our health deteriorates, previously helpful treatments that have side effects or require time in hospital may offer less chance of recovery. It's worth thinking about whether you want to live as long as possible, no matter how taxing the medical treatments to preserve your life may be, or whether you want to live as comfortably as possible, even if that means not living quite so long. Examples of this decision include whether or not you would accept a ventilator and admission to an intensive care unit; a treatment/operation that carries a significant risk of increased disability afterwards; or hospital treatment for an infection that is getting worse at home.

Decision makers/attorneys

Unless you take the correct legal steps, no one else can speak for you if you become temporarily or permanently unable to speak for yourself. You can appoint one, or several people, to be your attorney(s) and this gives them the legal power to decide about treatments and other care for you – but only if you can't do that for yourself. There's more information online for those living in the UK and Ireland:

England and Wales

gov.uk/power-of-attorney

Scotland

publicguardian-scotland.gov.uk/power-of-attorney

Northern Ireland

nidirect.gov.uk/articles/managing-your-affairs-and-enduring-power-attorney

The Republic of Ireland

citizensinformation.ie/en/death/before_a_death/power_of_attorney.html

Are there any medical treatments you want to avoid?

You can make an advance decision to refuse treatment (sometimes called a living will), which will protect you from unwanted medical treatments. Talk it through with your GP and make sure your closest supporters know your wishes. There's more information online: nhs.uk/conditions/end-of-life-care/advance-decision-to-refuse-treatment

Pets

Who will look after your pets if you need to be looked after away from home, and after you have died? Do you need to introduce them to their future carers so they can get to know each other while you're able to give advice?

Keeping people informed

Who would you like to visit you, and who would you like to keep informed but without them visiting? Is there a list of contacts your supporters can use to make sure your friends are updated, and also to let them know about funeral arrangements?

Peaceful-place kit

What would you like around you as the end of your life approaches? I've seen a lot of people arrange their precious things around them. This includes photographs of dear ones and pets; a cat on the pillow or a dog under the bed; the comfort of a familiar perfume or aftershave; scented candles or incense sticks; playlists featuring poetry, theatre, talking books, music of all genres; recorded messages from friends and family; specific flavour requests, such as "no liquorice" or "plenty of strawberries", gin and tonic ice cubes and chain tea-drinking; comfortable fabrics such as favourite PJs, home-made blankets, a treasured scarf, and reminders of loved ones, including photographs of those who have died and videos of family on the other side of the country or the world. What's on your list?

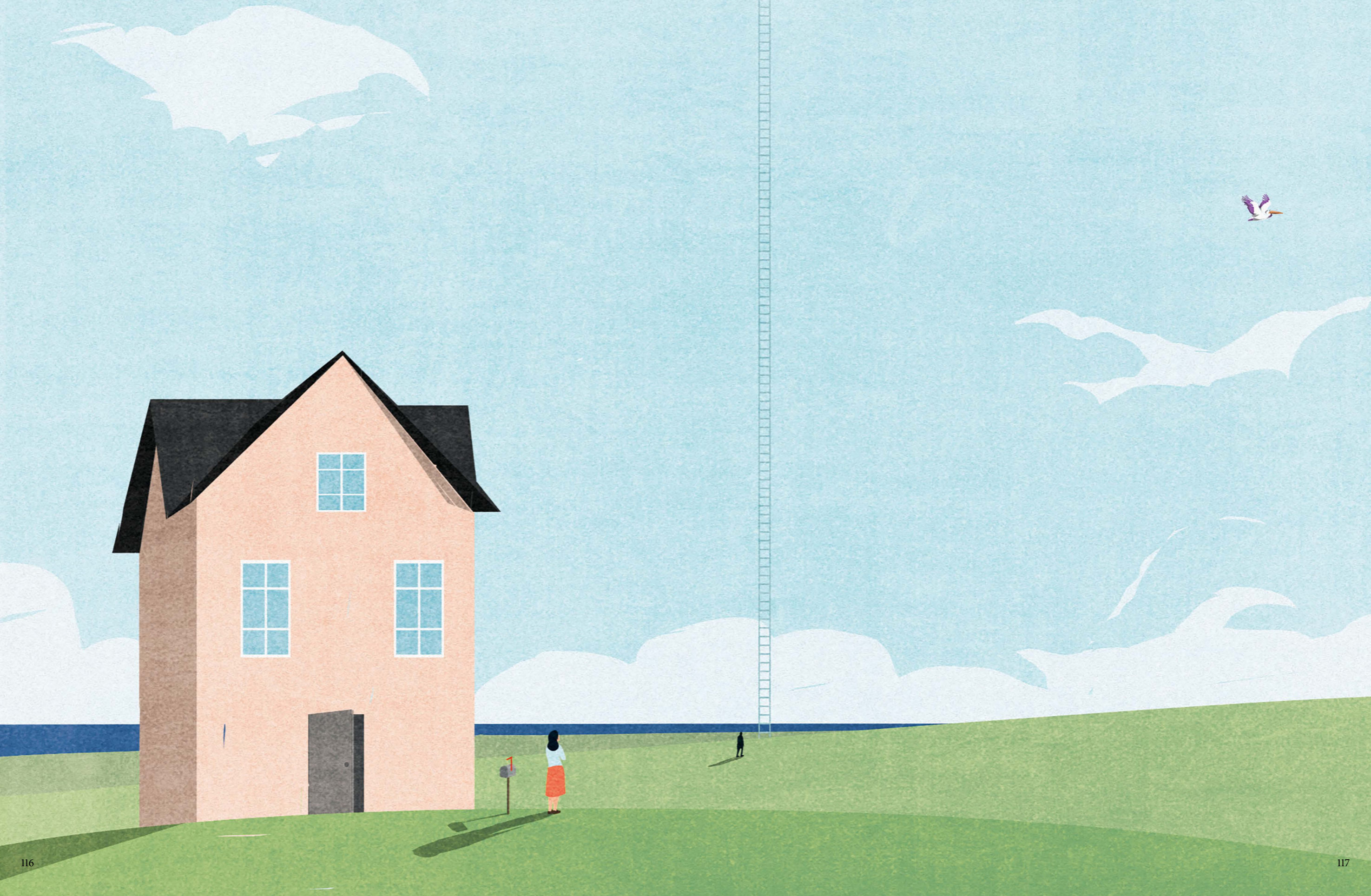
Farewell letter

There's a farewell letter template in my book, *With the End in Mind*, that readers are welcome to copy and use. I've heard from people who have used them to send their last messages to loved ones, and also from families who used them to tell the dying person exactly how and why they are so loved. What a lovely thing to do.

Wishing you well with your planning.

*"What matters most to you?
Is it a place? People? A pet?
A way of life? A spiritual
practice?"*





Saying goodbye

“At least two kinds of courage are required in ageing and sickness. The first is the courage to confront the reality of mortality – the courage to seek out the truth of what is to be feared and what is to be hoped. But even more daunting is the second kind of courage – the courage to act on the truth we find”

American surgeon, public health researcher and author Atul Gawande, *Being Mortal*

We’re fascinated by stories of death, but there’s still so much anxiety when it comes to the idea of accepting our own mortality. Even if we can get our heads around funeral planning, the concept of saying goodbye to our lives and embracing that final moment can often be too distressing to consider.

So how do we make the thought of saying goodbye easier to discuss? Firstly, it’s crucial to relax about it – contrary to superstition, talking about it won’t make it happen any sooner.

As with everything involved in planning what happens when you die, it’s important to remember that there’s no right or wrong way to say goodbye. You might hope to be able to say it face to face, to the people you care about most, but as the era of COVID-19 has proved, this isn’t always possible.

So, yes, your farewell will depend on the circumstances of your death. And while some of us won’t have the chance to communicate it in person, what we leave will count just as much. Our legacy – in whatever form it comes – is something that can live on and last longer than any words we might have prepared. However, for those in care or with advance warning, saying goodbye might mean considering what matters most to you and celebrating it one last time – a trip to your

favourite place with your favourite person, a karaoke session with your friends at your bedside, or being surrounded by creature comforts. This goodbye isn’t about “wrapping up”, but it can be the cherry on top of the colourful life you’ve led.

You may be curious about the physical and emotional changes that happen, too. As you approach the end, your body will look and feel different. Physical changes you might notice include a severe lack of appetite and a chronically dry mouth, as well as restlessness. It’s also very common to stop feeling the need to socialise and talk to people. Think also about whether you’d like to incorporate any religious, spiritual or personal rituals into your final days – these can help you to create an atmosphere that reflects your personality and the life you’ve lived.

Every farewell you make can help you come to terms with the fact that you will be leaving this world – and shape how you approach this physically, emotionally and spiritually. Learning about the inevitable changes is part of being prepared and can help you to cope with the thought of your own death. And even when you’ve finally let go and your heart has stopped beating, all those amazing moments you’ve experienced will live on forever.

Words at the Threshold

Linguist Lisa Smartt was fascinated by the words her terminally ill father was uttering as he was nearing the end of his life, and so started transcribing his conversations. This led to her investigating the final words of people on their deathbeds and the result was the 2017 book *Words at the Threshold*, which explores the linguistic patterns across 2,000 utterances from 181 people in their final days.



Writing your goodbye letter

“When you’re confronted with the prospect of your own death, putting your feelings into words can be one way to find clarity about the life you’ve lived”

“Acceptance is found only by wholly inhabiting our denial. Contemplating death is really contemplating resistance, and for a long time. How do we get ready to die? We start with not being ready. We start with the fact that we are afraid. A long, lonesome examination of our fear. We start by admitting that we are all future corpses pretending we don’t know”

Sallie Tisdale, *Advice for Future Corpses (And Those Who Love Them): A Practical Perspective on Death and Dying*

When was the last time you wrote someone a letter? No, not an email or a WhatsApp message, but a good old piece of writing that involved putting pen to paper. While somewhat obsolete now, and barely present in our everyday lives, letters can be a powerful tool for helping us to deal with our own mortality. It’s a centuries-old form that allows us to speak directly to our loved ones when approaching the end of life.

When you’re confronted with the prospect of your own death, putting your feelings into words can be one way to find clarity about the life you’ve lived. Before embarking on this, though, there are a few handy guidelines and resources to consider that will help you to put even the most difficult feelings onto paper. Firstly, of course, decide on the person you’re writing it for – it could be a family member, a partner or a friend, a community, or it might even be yourself. While writing the letter, make sure to think about the way the person you’re addressing it to makes you feel, as well as some specific moments you’ve experienced together. Don’t limit yourself to a letter format – it could be a poem, a drawing, an essay or maybe a diary entry reflecting on your past, present and future.

Putting pen to paper

Writing a letter to a loved one who is dying can be a great way to say goodbye. In 2016, Leonard Cohen wrote a goodbye letter to his former girlfriend Marianne Ihlen, the subject of his 1967 song “So Long, Marianne”. In the poignant missive, delivered to her deathbed, the songwriter wrote: “I’m just a little behind you, close enough to take your hand.”

In case you need some ideas or prompts for what you might like to say when writing your final words, Sallie Tisdale’s book *Advice for Future Corpses (And Those Who Love Them): A Practical Perspective on Death and Dying* has suggestions you can follow. Another great source of inspiration might be the late filmmaker and artist Derek Jarman, whose series of personal-diary entries written towards the end of his life got bound into *Modern Nature*, arguably one of the most significant pieces of queer British literature of the 20th century. But this isn’t homework – a goodbye letter might only need to be a few sentences and a doodle. Whatever you decide to do, remember that it might be impossible to say or show everything you want to. Your letter doesn’t need to be a definitive autobiography, but it can be some of the greatest hits you’ve created with the person it’s addressed to. Writing something like this isn’t just about making the other person feel good, though – it can also be used as a coping mechanism for the writer. In therapy, composing a farewell letter is a mourning technique used to overcome difficult life situations, such as losing a job or ending a relationship. It can help us to process complicated emotions caused by these big events, and may nudge us towards coming to terms with or finding new ways to express certain truths. Known as a piece of “transactional writing”, this letter might also be a chance to say thanks, to forgive or to ask for forgiveness.

And then there’s the question of what to do with your goodbye letter. Do you keep it safely stored in a place where the addressee (if there is one) will find it once you’ve died? Deliver it in person, if that’s an option? Put it in the post? Perhaps you don’t want it to be seen by anyone but you. Obviously the choice is up to you, but bear in mind you might not get the response you expected – it’s an emotional moment, so don’t be offended if the person you’ve written your letter to chooses to read it in private, or finds it too hard to read straightaway but may cherish it as a keepsake in the years to come.



Your voice

While most people can't stand the sound of their own voice, there's incredible power in hearing that of someone you loved after their death. And in this era of apps and social media, there's no reason your best friend should be restricted to calling your voicemail in order to hear you speak one last time. Thanks to the technologies built into our everyday lives through smartphones and other devices, voice notes are now as easy to record as letters are to write. And as with letters, there are certain tips and tricks that will make the process of creating and sharing your audio or video farewells easier.

According to the psychologist Elaine Kasket, these posthumous audio messages should be treated as an extension of things you've said and done during your lifetime. You may wish to record your own goodbye note or just leave your phone on the coffee table during random chats with loved ones.

After deciding on the message you wish to leave and recording it, make sure to find the right medium to share it through. If you're not tech savvy, ask someone to help with the recording. In order to avoid your message being stuck in digital limbo, it's best to either send it directly or to a person who can pass it on. Another option is to use digital legacy services, which will then be responsible for sharing your message after death, but make sure to do plenty of research and get help with navigating tech-company protocol through the field's leading body, the Digital Legacy Association.

However, an audio message doesn't have to just be a recording of your voice. Phone apps such as Soal and Replika are taking this notion one step further by developing interactive memory banks to preserve your voice. While Soal helps to create soundtracks to imagery in your camera roll by overlaying it with

sounds, voice recordings or just your favourite music, Replika enables you to build a virtual version of yourself by exchanging hundreds of text messages with an AI bot that then learns your approach to different subjects. That may sound too gimmicky or unnecessarily 21st century to some, so feel free to keep things simple.

Songs and music are also a great way to pass on your voice to loved ones and future generations. Based in Yorkshire, The Swan Song Project is a brilliant service that allows those approaching the end of their lives to write and record an original song with the help of a professional songwriter as your final performance – no previous musical experience necessary. Read an interview with the project's founder, musician Ben Buddy Slack, on page 44.

“There’s an incredible power in hearing the voice of someone you loved after their death”

Your legacy



“By moving ourselves away from centre stage, we become aware of the vastness of creation and the universe: our personal part in the scheme of things becomes insignificant and our births and deaths become as important as the life cycle of a butterfly or an ant”

Bertrand Russell, philosopher

According to the *Cambridge English Dictionary*, the term legacy is primarily defined as “money or property that you receive from someone after they die”. This might only be a definition, but it’s undeniable that the pressure of leaving some money behind can loom large when you start thinking about what will happen when you leave this world. However, it’s important to remember your legacy is more than the total financial value of your possessions – it’s also words, photo albums, family heirlooms, good deeds, wild nights out, stories, laughter and other intangible moments. Each life is full of nuance and immeasurable impacts, so think of your legacy as an individual sum of the things and ideas you deem as representative of you and wish to leave behind.

According to Dr Kathryn Mannix’s checklist (page 112), it’s important to create a list both of the things that matter to you and the people you trust to be the flagbearers of your legacy, whatever that might be. For some people, their legacy will be their life’s work – the effect they had on their community as a teacher, or the ideas lying in that unpublished novel in their drawer. For others, family is important, and passing down their family history and traditions. You might want a bench or a street named after you – while it will cost you roughly £1,300 for a memorial spot in

Westminster, London, the latter might prove a bit trickier, as it requires a whole new street to be built first. There’s also the option of using your inheritance to fund a scholarship or charity that supports a cause you care about, or to start a non-profit organisation of your own. And there are many other ways of leaving behind some money for good, as outlined on page 25.

Artistic expression is another element you can utilise when considering your legacy as you face the end of your life. What about creating an artwork? A painting, a mural, a quilt or something more experimental? You might want to work on a scrapbook of drawings, words and photographs, or perhaps a cookbook of all your favourite recipes that can be enjoyed for years to come. Re-evaluating your legacy can be an opportunity to think of the people you’ve known as you face the end of your life – who has made an impact on you? Who have you made an impact on? Try making a list of 40 people who have touched your life – you may be surprised by who comes to mind. It’s also a chance to look back at the highlights you experienced. Your legacy can be as big or small as you wish, but don’t let any societal expectations affect the process of defining it.

Unusual legacies

When he passed away in 1982, the Polish composer André Tchaikowsky left his skull to the Royal Shakespeare Company to be used as a stage prop – as indeed it was by David Tennant when he played Hamlet in Gregory Doran’s 2008 production. Similarly, in the US, stagehand John Reed requested in his will that his skull be gifted to Philadelphia’s Walnut Street Theatre, where he had worked for decades in the 1800s.

Your digital death

“Of course, there’s also the option of continuing your journey in the online realm post-mortem. Scheduling tweets for years into the future”

Tweet, text, email, download, post, story, share... As we continue to spend a huge chunk of our waking hours online (25.1 per week on average in the UK), it’s inevitable that an increasing part of our identities has been uploaded into the digital realm. Instead of photo albums there’s your Instagram account and the numerous selfies stuck in your smartphone’s camera roll, and in place of the box of letters your grandmother kept in her attic, your Gmail account is overflowing with cherished in-jokes shared with your pals and newsletters you accidentally subscribed to six years ago. But what happens to all of this when you’re gone? The remnants of your virtual self don’t just vanish when you physically shuffle off your mortal coil. Digital afterlives are very much a natural consequence of the 21st century, and therefore an important aspect to think about when you’re reflecting on what you’re leaving behind.

The main question is, do you want your digital footprint to be eradicated or not? Before making this big decision, it might be helpful to read *All the Ghosts in the Machine: The Digital Afterlife of Your Personal Data* by Elaine Kasket, in which she asks all the right questions about dying in the digital age and provides a plethora of answers. The key thing to remember is that you shouldn’t leave things to the last minute – whatever decision you make, it’s important to share it with someone you trust, along with all the information that will help the nominated person access your accounts once you’ve left this world. Netflix, Amazon, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Gmail, LinkedIn, even online banking... The list goes on and needs to include all the digital services you use in your everyday life without even thinking about them – remember, they will exist even when you no longer do.

Your digital afterlife

Companies such as MyWishes, Gone Not Gone and SafeBeyond help you to leave goodbye messages that are posted to social media accounts after your death, giving you an afterlife in the digital realm. Posts can be scheduled for key dates in the future, too, meaning you can still play a part in birthdays, anniversaries and holidays from beyond the grave. You might want to warn your loved ones of your plans in advance, though.

With the mission of simplifying this process, the Digital Legacy Association has created a template for a social media will, which isn’t a legally binding document, but rather a part of your personal statement that enables you to clarify what you want to do with each account, as well as who you want to manage it.

To delete accounts on most major social media platforms, as well as the email or Dropbox of someone who passed away, the next of kin will primarily need a copy of the death certificate along with a signed statement. Many of these digital services also offer the option of compressing your profiles into downloadable content that can then be part of your physical legacy. Who knows, one of your tweets just might end up in the history books one day. Interestingly, only 27% of social media users in the UK want their profiles to be deactivated after their death.

Of course, there’s also the option of continuing your journey in the online realm post-mortem. Scheduling tweets for years into the future or developing a bot that will do it for you are both legitimate options that are easily accessible. Facebook allows for your profile to be “memorialised” after you die by turning your wall into a page where people can leave comments.

The Digital Legacy Association has detailed guidelines for each big platform, as well as a checklist for leaving your mobile phone (and everything that’s on it) behind. However, don’t get wrapped up in polishing your digital legacy to perfection – just like during your lifetime, the people who really matter will remember the good times you shared in person rather than the things you tweeted.

Pets and death



“Heaven goes by favour. If it went by merit, you would stay out and your dog would go in”

Mark Twain, writer

With recent figures indicating that there are about 51 million pets spread across 12 million households in the UK, the conversation about what to do with your favourite non-human is an important part of planning your farewell. And while they might be your best friend, a pet is legally considered to be the property of their owner, which means they’ll need to have a new home arranged for them through your will after your passing. For that reason, it’s essential to have these discussions with the people you’re thinking of leaving your furry, feathered or scaled companion with in advance. You might think someone is a dog person because they like to walk yours from time to time, but have you checked whether their partner is allergic?

Almost a third of people in the UK have made provisions for a pet in their will. This is a fairly simple process, and you can even name a substitute beneficiary in case the first is unable or unwilling to take on your pet in the event of your death. But remember that having a pet can be expensive – the average lifetime cost of owning a dog is about £17,000. Though you can’t leave money in your will to a pet, setting up a discretionary trust is a good way of securing the funds for the chosen guardian. Alternatively, you can also leave a cash gift that would cover the cost of food and vet’s bills through your will.

If you don’t have anyone in your close circle who can take care of your pet, you can register them with one of the charities that help to take care of and rehome pets after their owners’ death. The Cinnamon Trust works with the elderly across the UK with the mission to respect and preserve the treasured relationship between owners and their pets. Through its large network of more than 17,000 community volunteers, it arranges everything, from walking the dogs of housebound owners to fostering the pets of those who are hospitalised or have died. Other charities that offer pet-care schemes include the RSPCA, Cats Protection, the Dogs Trust and the Blue Cross. This is something else not to be left to the last moment, though – make sure to plan ahead so that your BFF’s future will be as happy as it was when you were there with them.

Wealthy pets

Though pets can’t inherit money directly, trusts can be set up for their care, meaning wealthy owners can ensure the continuation of the lavish lifestyles of their beloved pets after they pass away. When he died in 2019, the iconic fashion designer Karl Lagerfeld reportedly left a sizeable chunk of his £153 million fortune for the care of his Birman cat, Choupette, who has her own agent, personal chef and Instagram account. Another wealthy pet was the English cat called Blackie, who reportedly inherited a £7 million fortune from his owner, a wealthy antiques dealer, in 1988.

Interview with *Carole Walford* *Chief clinical officer of Hospice UK*

With her extensive experience in palliative care, Hospice UK's chief clinical officer discusses why dying matters

A senior clinician with rich experience in the field of palliative and end-of-life care, Carole Walford started her career as a nurse at London's St Bartholomew's Hospital, working with people who, at that time, were given the diagnosis of being terminally ill. More than 34 years later, she has become a figurehead for the sector, leading Hospice UK's clinical team to support and train those specialising in end-of-life care in hospitals, hospices, care homes and the community.

Q What took you into the field of palliative care?

A I trained as a nurse in the early 1980s and quickly became a sister on a haematology ward, looking after people with blood cancers mainly. The treatments were still developing at that point and we were still learning a lot about what worked and what didn't. People would come in for treatment and care and sometimes the treatments wouldn't work, and it would then be about looking after them until they died.

Palliative care in that setting was often handed over to the skill of the nursing team. It was very much, "It's up to you and your team sister, you look after them." I knew that we had to do more for these people. At that point, there were the beginnings of palliative care and end-of-life care teams in the acute hospitals, bringing hospice principles to hospitals and community settings. I was successful in my application to join the palliative care team at St Bartholomew's Hospital in London. We worked in the hospital and community, supporting people with the principles of good end-of-life care, and holistic care, which basically means physical, emotional and spiritual support, as well as all the practical and medical things that need to be sorted out when someone is no longer going to be cured of their illness.

Q What are some of the key principles of end-of-life care?

A I believe there's an acuteness to offering good end-of-life care. We only have one chance to get it right. There were specialist skills I needed to [have to] work in haematology and to give chemotherapy, and similarly there's a specialist knowledge and approach to looking after people at the end of their lives. Good communication and listening are essential. It's important to ask people questions like, "What matters to you?", rather than, "What's the matter with you?" This isn't a question just to be asked in the last weeks and days, it's asked at the point of diagnosis, especially if it's known that life

is going to be shorter than it could have been. When I was a nurse specialist, I would say to people as an opening question, "How are things?", because they'll tell you what's at the top of their head. If you ask about pain, they'll tell you about pain, but they might not tell you that their biggest worry at the moment is who's looking after their budgie at home or how they're going to tell their children what's happening.

In this job, we're in a privileged position to be alongside people as they face their mortality, offering support at a time of personal challenge and helping them to find their way through their reflections to make their own choices. Our role is to help them by giving them the tools and information they need to make the decisions that are right for them. You might have someone who decides that they want to die at home, and you might look at that situation from an assessment [point of view] and think, "Oh gosh, I'd far rather you were safer somewhere else," but you support them as far as you can to die where and how they wish. There's a quote from Dame Cicely Saunders [the nurse, medical social worker and physician who founded the modern hospice-care movement] that says, "We add days to life and life to days." Hospice care isn't about a building or care setting, it should be a living movement, responding to society and supporting people to live and die in ways that they choose.

Q You've worked in the field of palliative care for more than 30 years. What can you share with us about dying?

A We have two certainties in life – we know that we'll be born and we know that we'll die. Life and death are intrinsic to nature and the human condition, but we don't know the time frames of when they're going to happen. For me, it's about being aware of the value of the everyday, taking joy in your relationships now and looking at what we have today. It's something we've all learnt in the COVID-19 pandemic, to stop and smell the roses a bit.

What I can share with you about dying is that we all do it our own way. When you're expecting a baby, you might have a beautiful birth plan with a birthing pool, music, candles, a partner rubbing your back, but then a situation changes and you end up having an emergency C-section. It's [the same with death]. We're living with the fact of an

unknown time frame – sometimes we can plan and anticipate, at other times people don't have that opportunity. That's quite a big, grown-up thing to think about, however old you are.

Q Within the hospice movement, how are people's different end-of-life wishes met?

A It comes back to what matters to you. Right now, it's about society having a voice and the importance of having a choice about how you die. Young people in their twenties and thirties are quite vocal about what they want – it's a generation that openly talks about identity and gender and has [spearheaded the] Black Lives Matter movement. They're vocal, so it's a great opportunity to have conversations about what's important to them about the way they live and the way they would want to die, as well as their wider belief systems.

Different cultures also have different values around end-of-life care and death. Some see admission or referral to a hospice or hospital as failure, as they believe they should be looking after their own communities. Some see death as part of the natural cycle of life and have rituals associated with this that are important to those left behind. It's about understanding what's important to each person. This has been one of the big challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, as people haven't been able to be there with loved ones when they died, and laying-out ceremonies and funerals have taken place without people being able to attend. That's a concern for the bereavement care of the families afterwards, because they haven't been able to fulfil the usual rituals that enable them to say goodbye.

Q Working with a coalition of individuals and organisations, Hospice UK runs the Dying Matters campaign. What are its main aims?

A We're a campaign to change public attitudes towards death, dying and bereavement and to promote and actively engage the general public in starting those conversations that are difficult. It's [about creating] that open culture to talk about death and dying, listening to people and harnessing their stories to make the experience of death relevant and relatable. It's pointless talking to someone in their twenties about what it's like to die at 70 or 80. They want to know what happens if they get advanced cancer in their twenties, what if the relationship with their husband falls apart or their identity or sexuality is compromised. The 17th-century French writer François de La Rochefoucauld said, "Death, like the

sun, cannot be looked at steadily." Though the sun is there, and you feel its warmth, you can't and don't want to look at it the whole time. It's the same with death, it's always there, and there are times to talk about it and times not to. I think it's about making the most of living as well as having an open culture where people feel listened to and supported to talk about death.

Q How early should we start those conversations about death?

A I don't think there's anything wrong with talking about death in schools. Especially in this current COVID-19 climate, lots of teachers are going to be facing students who have lost Granny or an auntie or uncle. Death is part of life and, through the joy of having a goldfish or a hamster, children learn that life is finite. There's a lot of information on the Hospice UK and Dying Matters websites, as well as [the site for the children's palliative care charity] Together for Short Lives, to support parents and teachers to have those conversations.

Q What are some of the most common final wishes that people have at the end of their lives?

A It's usually about wanting to leave a legacy – parents wanting to write letters to their children for their future 18th birthdays – and there are often quite a lot of weddings, too! Sometimes there are reconciliations between families and sometimes not – sometimes people are born angry, they live angry and they die angry, and you're not going to see the television-drama tearful reunion before a final breath. At the end of life, there's definitely a sharpening of focus, a redefining of what's important. In terms of the children's sector, there's the Winston's Wish [childhood bereavement] charity and Dreams Come True, through which children [with life-limiting conditions] can go to Disneyland or meet their favourite football star. People often ask to eat their favourite foods, maybe taste a malt whisky from Scotland, visit a special place or even sometimes have an anniversary brought forward in the calendar. It's just the simple pleasures, and again, adding "life to days".

The hospice movement

The hospice or palliative care movement, which refers to the development of end-of-life and palliative care over the past 50 years, is considered to have been founded by nurse Dame Cicely Saunders. She founded St Christopher's Hospice in London in 1967, bringing a large number of terminally ill patients together for the first time, with medical staff committed to treating them at the end of their lives and managing their pain and symptoms.

“For me, it's about being aware of the value of the everyday, taking joy in your relationships now and looking at what we have today”

“I don’t think we confront death with the optimism and confidence that we confront other subjects with because we’re nervous about upsetting people. But the fact of the matter is that we can’t avoid death, it’s not an option”

Journalist and broadcaster John Stapleton, from an interview as part of Lost for Words, Royal London’s 2020 exhibition in collaboration with RANKIN

Interview with *Judith Moran* *Director of Quaker Social Action*

The director of the anti-poverty charity speaks about Down to Earth, an initiative that seeks to battle funeral poverty

As director of the 154-year-old anti-poverty charity Quaker Social Action (QSA), Judith Moran has overseen many successful projects, though one holds special significance for her. Launched in 2010, Down to Earth began as a grassroots initiative to support members of the community who were facing funeral poverty, but it soon became clear that this was by no means an issue restricted to those living around QSA's home base of east London. Now, mostly through word of mouth and some clever digital signposting, Down to Earth has become a national helpline. Its small team helps those struggling to pay for a funeral by offering advice on how to keep costs down and navigate funeral planning, and by giving gentle, caring guidance on how they can make sure the funeral is affordable but still meaningful.

Q You're part of a grassroots organisation that offers advice to low-income individuals and families who are struggling to pay for funeral costs. Why aren't funerals affordable?

A The challenge, if you live in poverty, is often that your finances are precarious. You're just about managing and it's touch and go. The thing that's difficult or catastrophic is if you have an unexpected expense. This could be a small thing, like needing to buy new school shoes for your children or having to replace your cooker. Or it could be a larger thing, like a funeral. Where do you go for help if you need to pay for a funeral? We did some research and realised that the cost of funerals was going up and the support from the government was plateauing.

As a country we're not very funeral savvy – why would you know how much a funeral costs? What do we know about funerals before we have to plan one? You know how much a washing machine should cost because you see them in shops or know someone who's bought one, but you don't walk past a funeral directors and see prices in the window. The industry is still shrouded in this mystery. We felt the best help we could offer was providing advice for people to think about the cost of the funeral, to get the cost down and get more financial support. Initially, because it was such a weird idea, we thought no one would come! We started with the local hospice in Tower Hamlets, where we're based. Now, having had no intention of growing, we are a national helpline.

Q Why do you think the Down to Earth initiative has had such wide appeal?

A Death is an unspoken subject and so is money. It's a double whammy – death and money are the two

things we least like to talk about in our society. And where do they interact? In funerals. When somebody has to sort out a funeral it's at precisely the time they've got all of these emotional challenges connected with grief. They're vulnerable, paralysed and uncertain, and a little bit like a rabbit caught in headlights. One of the phrases used quite often is "a good send-off". It seems to matter so much to people that they give someone a good send-off, and people will be very sensitive about being judged for not giving someone a good send-off when it's not really clear what a good one is. We conflate the idea of a good send-off with a "spend-off", and we think we have to spend a certain amount of money. Funerals are usually held within a week [of the person dying], so a funeral director needs to understand the family's wishes and make it happen. But there's a cost to that and that's not always affordable. At Down to Earth we try to understand what somebody really wants, what they need and what they can afford. You don't have to have all of these big things, actually – what matters are those feelings and that sense of saying goodbye to someone in a dignified way.

Q Down to Earth is working to change the industry as well, right?

A We've worked with some amazing funeral directors who've gone above and beyond the call of duty to support people. For many it's a vocation. But at Down to Earth we believe the funeral industry is one that needs to open up. We don't tend to use the word "consumer" in the context of buying a funeral but it can be helpful to do so – as consumers we tend to be more aware of our rights to demand and expect a good service. So, yes, we wanted to work with the industry and influence the government and see what we can do.

Have you ever thought about how there's no minister of death? There's nobody responsible for the one thing that's guaranteed to happen to all of us. As people say, there are only two things certain in life – death and taxes – and think how big HMRC is. The lack of an overall strategy leads to regional differences, which is why public health funerals can be a bit of a postcode lottery, depending on what your local authority allows or doesn't allow for your funeral. We absolutely felt that the industry was doing a good job in many ways but could be more open, less paternalistic and certainly could have greater price transparency. So we set up the Fair Funerals pledge and asked funeral directors to sign up for free.

Q How does the Fair Funerals pledge affect everyday people?

A Many people struggle to pay for a funeral and it used to be that if you wanted the cheapest funeral you sort of had to ask for it. It's like going into a restaurant you can't really afford, being given the menu and having to ask, "Have you got anything that's really cheap?" How would that make you feel? The Fair Funerals pledge simply asks funeral directors to display all of their prices upfront and in all of their literature – that felt reasonable. We created an interactive map and got a huge swathe of funeral directors signing up across the UK. We're only in this game to protect people who would end up in debt and distress as a result of not being able to pay for a funeral.

Q Can you give some examples of good and bad practices for public health funerals?

A The starting point is how you find out about them. Most people need to ring their local authority or look on the website for a number. Then it's about the kind of response you get when you get through to somebody. Sometimes you get through to someone who is warm, kind and welcoming, and sometimes you don't. Good practice is real clarity about what is and isn't permissible and how flexible councils can be. The best practice is when it's really easy to find out how to get in touch, you're dealt with compassionately all the way through, you absolutely get the ashes, it's not a stigmatising experience and the whole thing is handled really delicately. The opposite of that is it's impossible to find out how you access them, you're told [only] what you can't do and have, including about the ashes, and you're dealt with like you're a burden.

Public health funerals

A public health funeral is a no-frills funeral that's paid for by local councils for people who have died in poverty with no next of kin, or who have relatives who are unable or unwilling to make funeral arrangements. Between April 2018 and April 2019, local councils in the UK spent a total of £6.3 million on public health funerals.

Q Is whether to embalm the body or not an issue?

A A funeral director we know told us about how she talks about embalming to people, which was really helpful. She explained how the view that it's the norm buys into this idea that the person is somehow still there, because they kind of look like they're there, which is a real comfort for some people. And there can be a fear that if you look at somebody who hasn't been embalmed it's going to be horrific. This funeral director said she helps people understand that, instead, [decomposition] is a really gentle and natural process, and helps people reframe their thinking. Someone who is cynical about embalming would say it's a nice little earner for the funeral industry. Yet it's actually quite an invasive process and I think if this were spelled out, a lot of people would say "Don't bother." But of course, all options are sad for the bereaved family to think about in the moment. Like all things related to dying, it's much easier to think about these things when you're not immediately facing them.

Q Why do you think we struggle to talk about death and funerals in advance?

A It's so important to know that the sky doesn't fall in if you talk about death. You don't jinx things if you talk about death. There's a certain amount of superstition and suspicion, and we'd all benefit from more down-to-earth discussions about death. We'd all benefit from being better informed about funerals before being faced with them. You're so vulnerable when you're bereaved, and anything that gives people a bit more knowledge or confidence is really valuable – they're all little bricks of support. And let's face it, unless we die very young, we're all going to be bereaved and organising a funeral at some point – it's about being as well-equipped as we can be to face that.

“It’s so important to know that the sky doesn’t fall in if you talk about death... There’s a certain amount of superstition and suspicion, and we would all benefit from more down-to-earth discussions”

*TV presenter Gloria Hunniford,
from an interview as part of
Lost for Words, Royal London's
2020 exhibition in collaboration
with RANKIN*

“I believe that when you lose a child, it’s the deepest sense of loss that you can ever face. I’d personally lost parents, I’d lost a former husband and yes, it’s all relative to the situation and the person, but I think to lose a child sends you into the darkest black hole imaginable, and one that I thought I would never get out of”

Interview with *Hasina Zaman*

Funeral director and CEO of Compassionate Funerals

The funeral director and CEO of Compassionate Funerals talks about organising unusual funerals, hosting a London Death Cafe and how she copes with an emotionally taxing career

Hasina Zaman is a funeral director and the co-founder of Compassionate Funerals. A former artist, lecturer and teacher, she opened the business in 2012 to serve the diverse communities of east London. With a person-centred ethos, Zaman and her team organise custom-made funerals shaped to individuals' wishes and different cultural traditions, which often sees her planning unique services. The team also hosts a Death Cafe, where, as part of an international network of volunteer-run support groups, founded by the late Jon Underwood in 2011, people are invited to get together to have open discussions about death and tear down "the last taboo".

Q You're one of the few female CEOs in London working specifically within the field of death and loss. Why do you think that is?

A I think it's partly historical, it's the way it's been. Before the turn of the [20th] century, funerals, much like births, were held within the home, and it was women who saw people into the world and out of it. It would often be the same women within that particular community who handled births and deaths. But then funerals became industrialised, alongside things like joinery and carpentry. That's how it became male-dominated. The funerals went from being in the home to outside it, and men took charge of that role.

Q What's your approach? What does it mean to have a "compassionate funeral"?

A It's to have compassion infused into every single process, practice and conversation. We start off with being compassionate to ourselves. It's really important, particularly during a hard situation, rather than switching into negativity around grief. It's about just being kind to yourself. When we're engaging with the bereaved, it's about being soft – soft tones in our voice, the way we move – and being tender. We spend a lot of time listening to what the bereaved are looking for, what kind of funeral the person who passed away wanted, did they leave instructions? What's this funeral going to look like? Coming from a compassionate blank space really is about having a clean slate, where everything is new. It's about empowering families in a subtle way.

Another big part of having a compassionate funeral is the care of the deceased. I'm really strict when it comes to any dressing or preparing around the deceased, or even just moving them around the mortuary. That's done silently, and we only talk in really low tones and with the highest regard.

I believe in the soul. Even when someone's dead they can hear you and feel you – why would you want to sabotage your relationship with that person, even if they aren't physically alive? When it comes to the actual funeral it's again about making sure that the family and friends receive the funeral they want. It's not about rushing – if it takes five hours, and it runs over, we just go with it.

Q What are some unique requests you've received or funerals you've put together?

A There's a lot that comes to mind. There was this lady who was an animator, who did Disney animations. She had an interesting ethnic background, a mixture of Italian and German. She deliberately didn't have any contact with any of her blood family. Her "new" family were creatives in and around London, and she had asked them to arrange her funeral. She was such an amazing artist and showed us drawings of how we should dress her prior to her death. She wanted to be mummified and she also created this death mask out of hair. She made her own jewellery, which was Egyptian-inspired. She had very specific instructions – there was text and visual references. We got the widest bandages you could buy, and we started with her legs, then arms, then torso. Each process was photographed, so each time I finished one, I had to take a photograph. There were really detailed instructions on how to mummify her and put all of her jewellery on. There were lots of other personal items we had to put in with her, such as a moulding of Stonehenge. But what amazed me [the most] was the jewellery – it was large and there was lots of beading – it must have taken her hours to make. It was really important that we got it right, it was like doing a piece of art, really. She trusted us to do this and we did it. As part of her funeral-planning wishes, she wanted to be buried in a natural burial cemetery in Cornwall. We had to drive at 4am to get to the cemetery. That was a very specific funeral.

We need to talk about death

Death Cafes are held as part of an international network of volunteer-run gatherings where strangers come together to talk about death over cake and tea. Established in 2011 by Jon Underwood, who died suddenly in 2017 at the age of 44, the initiative is a non-profit that aims to increase awareness of death and help people to make the most of their finite lives. To date, more than 11,750 Death Cafes have been offered across 74 countries.

Q The funerals you organise cover different belief systems. Did you have to study the traditions and practices that these require?

A Absolutely. I didn't have a clue at first. I'm really fascinated by different cultures and religions. I know about my own Muslim faith and have found out [about others] from the various communities I've worked with. There's no one cap that fits all. If you're working with the Irish community, who are very closely linked to a particular church, it's really important you follow all the funeral rites of their religion. When I started doing Hindu funerals, which I found so fascinating, I discovered not everyone follows the same practice. It's important not to make any assumptions. We can only do what's best practice and what the family feels is right, and at times the family is governed by cultural and regional practices, and this is where nuances matter.

Q You run a local Death Cafe group, which is a social safe space for people, often strangers, to come together and have an open dialogue about death. How did you get involved?

A So, the late Jon Underwood was the founder of the movement. I met him early on while setting up Compassionate Funerals. Jon encouraged me to run a Death Cafe and said, "I want you to take Death Cafe to your communities or the BAME community," and I was thinking, "OK, I'll do that." The ethos behind Death Cafe was really about dealing with the greatest taboo – how do we actually start talking about death? How can we make this a normal subject? Let's talk about the death we've experienced – what is death? What are the barriers to talking about it and experiencing it? That's how I started [holding] Death Cafes, mainly in east London.

What I find, and what's most fascinating, is that I move my position on certain things when I go to the Death Cafe. It's like a checkpoint and I don't know what I'm going to feel or think about this time round. It's like going to a mass therapy session, though it's not therapy, it's just engaging in conversations about death and dying. It's a safe space, a confidential space and at any time you feel that you want to leave, it's completely up to you. You're not under any obligation to stay. I think once you start setting the parameters – to stay as long as you want or say as much as you want, but also, just listen – you can be healed. We learn from listening. At the moment we're looking to do more targeted work around how different communities experience death, dying and loss, so I think we've evolved.

Q Does dealing with death and dying every day ever take its toll on you?

A Normally we have about 20 calls per month, but just as we went into lockdown with the coronavirus pandemic, I had around 30 phone calls in one day and it really, really affected me. I think, initially, I experienced so much of [the callers'] shock that I just went quiet and I didn't know what to do. I think, after death, shock is one of the first feelings that you experience, so I went into a bit of daze for that day but carried on. I remember the following day I just cried, but I still came to work. I thought I could either stay in bed and cry or go to work and carry on. I just cried and cried, did my meetings and cried. I didn't feel like I could just stay in bed. The work was far more important than my pain and I just needed to do this. My team saw me at my most vulnerable. They kept saying, "Why don't you go home?" I said, "No, I feel like I need to be here." I speak Bengali and a lot of these calls were from [people with] a Bengali background. Some of the families I was dealing with had only arrived in the UK recently, so I felt that my skill set was required.

Q COVID-19 aside, does the industry have an emotional impact on you generally?

A Definitely. When I've had back-to-back funerals, I tend to go away, get a massage, look after myself, go for walks. I've become quite good at self-care and am into walking and meditation. Praying makes a big difference. You put your head down to the ground and you feel completely vulnerable. I think what makes prayer good for me is it makes you feel like you're quite insignificant when all these big things are going on. It makes you very grounded. It's OK to call yourself out and say when you're feeling quite shit. We can recover.

“A compassionate funeral is to have compassion infused into every single process, practice and conversation”

Further resources

Here are some websites, articles and templates to provide you with further information and guidance on how to say goodbye to a loved one who is dying and how to plan for your own death

Talking about death and saying goodbye

Deathbed etiquette

The initiative The Art of Dying Well has a guide to saying goodbye to a loved one who's dying, based on the advice of leading palliative care consultants, nurses, chaplains and families. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, an updated version has been created for saying goodbye to a loved one when it's not possible to be there in person.

artofdyingwell.org/caring-for-the-dying/deathbed-etiquette/etiquette

artofdyingwell.org/caring-for-the-dying/deathbed-etiquette/deathbed-etiquette-and-the-coronavirus-covid-19

Saying goodbye with a song

The Swan Song Project is an organisation that supports those with terminal illnesses to write and record an original song.

swansongproject.co.uk

Talking about death and dying

The campaign Dying Matters offers practical guidance, information and resources on how to say goodbye, the importance of good listening skills, and what the dying may experience as death approaches.

dyingmatters.org/page/TalkingAboutDeathDying

Ways to say goodbye

The charity Marie Curie has put together a guide for saying farewell to a loved one without words.

mariecurie.org.uk/blog/ways-to-say-goodbye/200035

Digital legacy

In the age of the internet, the way we plan for death, say goodbye to loved ones and are memorialised is changing. Below is a list of organisations, information and guidance that explain how to manage your digital legacy.

Digital Legacy Association

An organisation that supports the general public and end-of-life, palliative and social care professionals with information about how to plan for death and grief, and remember the deceased, in the digital sphere.

digitallegacyassociation.org

Should we leave goodbye messages?

Marie Curie has a helpful article on the implications of leaving video wills and final messages for family and friends by counselling psychologist Elaine Kasket, the author of *All the Ghosts in the Machine: The Digital Afterlife of Your Personal Data*.

mariecurie.org.uk/blog/should-we-leave-goodbye-messages/273552

Social media accounts

Marie Curie also has a guide to protecting your digital legacy after you die.

mariecurie.org.uk/help/support/terminal-illness/planning-ahead/social-media-online-accounts

Social media will template

The Digital Legacy Association has a template for a social media will that helps you detail what you want to happen to your social media accounts after you die and who you'd like to appoint as your digital executor.

digitallegacyassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Digital-Legacy-Association-Social_Media_Will_Template-EDITED.pdf

Pets

The following organisations will be able to help answer any questions you have about how to continue the daily care of your pet if you become ill, as well as find a loving home for them in the event of your death.

Blue Cross

A charity providing support for pet owners who can't afford private veterinary treatment and help to rehome a wide range of pets, including horses.
bluecross.org.uk

Cats Protection

This is the UK's leading feline charity that rehomes cats, including in the event of ill health or death of their owners. For those who pre-register, it supplies an Emergency Cat Care Card to keep in your wallet, which tells emergency service workers who to contact so that your cat is brought into its care.
cats.org.uk

Dogs Trust

This UK-based animal-welfare charity finds new homes for dogs and also provides a Canine Care Card for your wallet, which provides information about what should happen to the care of your dog when you die.
dogstrust.org.uk

Home Forever

A programme offered by the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ISPICA) that rehomes pets if their owner passes away.
ispca.ie/ispca_home_forever_programme

Home for Life

An RSPCA scheme that cares for and rehomes pets in the event of their owners' death.
rspca.org.uk/whatwedo/care/homeforlife

Lifetime Pet Care

The animal sanctuary Pet Samaritans offers emergency pet rescue across the UK for owners with terminal illnesses or in the case of their death.
petsamaritans.co.uk/pet-care-help-elderly-terminally-ill

Rosie's Trust

A Northern Irish charity that helps people and their pets stay together through illness and disability in old age. It has a network of volunteers across the country that helps owners with the day-to-day care of their pets.
rosiestrust.org

The Cinnamon Trust

A UK charity that has a huge national network of volunteers who help with the day-to-day care of pets. It also provides a fostering service for pets whose owners have to spend long periods of time in hospital and an adoption service in the event of an owner's death.
cinnamon.org.uk

How to write a goodbye letter

Templates and inspiration for writing a goodbye letter to a loved one, which can help people find peace before they die.

Goodbye letter template

A free template for writing a goodbye letter from palliative care doctor and author Dr Kathryn Mannix.
static.rasset.ie/documents/radio1/2020/04/farewell-letter-waived-kathryn-mannix.pdf

Last Goodbye Letters

A website that collates inspiring goodbye letters, poems, drawings and farewell tributes.
lastgoodbyeletters.com

