

Face Down Your Future—Fearlessly

Most people find death too depressing to talk about. But that denial has a huge price, and it's loved ones left behind who will pay.

By Amy Pickard

The biggest lesson I learned when my mom died unexpectedly was that we were equally unprepared for her demise. The daunting task of dismantling her life fell solely to me. When I was in this wilderness of grief, the last thing I wanted to do was figure out what bills needed paying. But my mom wasn't there to answer the million questions that came up, like where was her car title? What was her iPhone lock code? How could I get into her bank account to pay for her cremation?

I knew I had to prevent others from going through what I went through, so I created an advance planning company—I call it Good to Go!—to try to change how we view death preparedness. With potluck dishes and cocktails (talking about the hard stuff means you need to drink the hard stuff), I guide people through the paperwork they will leave their loved ones, from medical directives to social media passwords. I now sell a “Departure File” (\$55; goodtogopeace.org) that helps you compile personal information all in one place.

My healthy 71-year-old dad came to a Good to Go! party. A year later, he was admitted to the ICU and died after six days. During his hospital stay, I didn't have to make a single gut-wrenching decision, because I knew his wishes. His willingness to face the uncomfortable topic of dying in

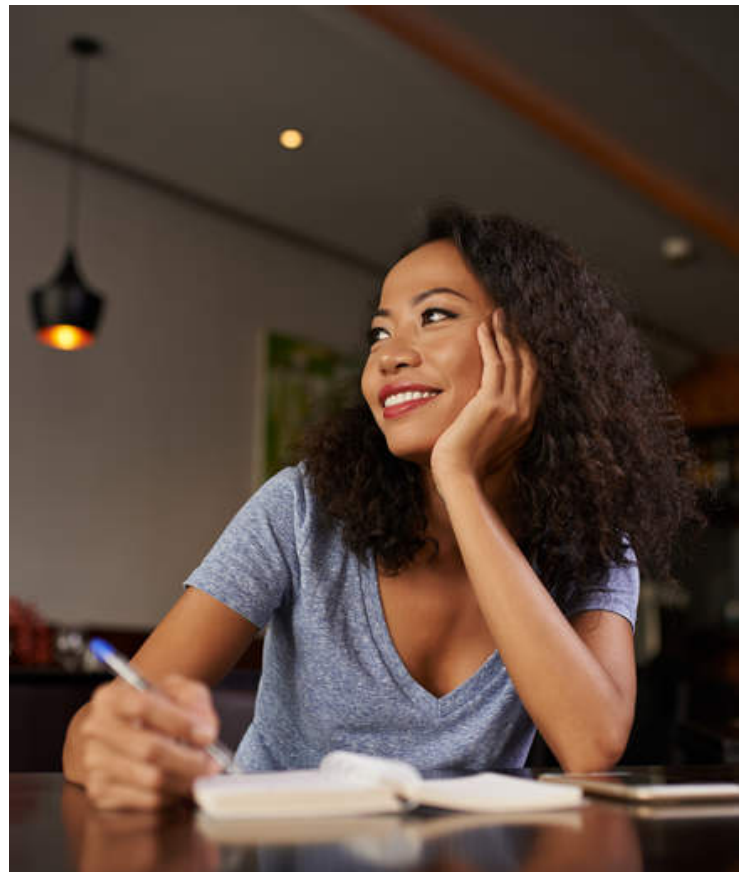


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advance allowed me the emotional space I needed to focus on his life and his love for me. He even wrote his own obituary.

My dad and I had a lot of laughs while we prepared for his death. As we went through his bills, listening to '50s music and eating pizza, I asked him if there was anything in his house that he wanted me to keep after he died. He said, "Not really. You can get rid of it all." And with that, he eliminated any guilt I might have faced about selling his home after he died.

Write down your own wishes. Talk about them with loved ones. No one regrets the decision to plan for their death.