



## A FEW RESOURCES REGARDING THE END OF LIFE

### Compiled for OLOC's Death and Dying With Dignity discussion, May 3, 2021

#### **The National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization**

<https://www.nhpco.org/patients-and-caregivers/>

This organization provides free advance directives—a form in which you explain what you want done to save or prolong your life (or not) if you are unable to make decisions for yourself—and instructions for each state on its website. The directive is intended to advise your treating doctors and representatives in making appropriate choices for you when you cannot. It protects healthcare professionals and your representative from charges of neglect or mistreatment if they follow your wishes.

#### **Five Wishes**

<https://agingwithdignity.org/programs/five-wishes/>

The Five Wishes advance care planning program has helped improve end-of-life care for millions. Their Five Wishes form is available for \$5 and functions as an Advance Directive that uses more ordinary language and focuses more on personal and spiritual priorities.

#### **Preparing a Death Plan**

“Preparing a Death Plan” is Appendix 1, pp. 211-128, in *Advice for Future Corpses: A Practical Perspective on Death and Dying*, Sallie Tisdale, 2018, Gallery Books, New York. This is a concise, practical list of details that, if addressed before we are actually dying, brings peace of mind to ourselves and is a compassionate help to our loved ones, to those nearest to us who will be left, quite literally, holding our possessions and legacy when we do die. The document includes items ranging from a list of Emergency Contacts, Primary Care Provider, and Specialist Doctors through end-of-life wishes to wishes for giving away special possessions to special loved ones.

#### **Everplans.com**

The website, <https://www.everplans.com/>, has a free, comprehensive Important Documents Checklist you can download of essential documents, accounts, and types of information you should organize. Page six of this checklist is a one- page list for “Legacy/After I’m Gone” items.

#### **Don’t Leave a Mess**

“Don’t Leave a Mess,” Chapter One, pp. 3-12, is in *A Beginner’s Guide to the End: Practical Advice for Living Life and Facing Death*, B.J. Miller, MD and Shoshana Berger, 2019, Simon & Schuster, New York.

Succinct with directives such as:

1. Clean out your attic: So much stuff ... Who wants it ... What to do with family heirlooms ... Selling your stuff.
2. Clean out your emotional attic: Secrets and lies ... Designate a “cleaner/confidant” ... The importance of words ... Reconciliation.

#### **Death Café**

<https://deathcafe.com/>

Death cafés are local gatherings—formerly in coffee shops and now on Zoom—whereby participants can discuss all aspects of death and dying, to explore feelings about death and dying. This movement was started in England in about 2011 and is now worldwide. One can search on the website for a nearby death café.

## Compassion and Choices

<https://compassionandchoices.org/>

Compassion and Choices is an organization that promotes physician-assisted “right-to-die” legislation and helps people plan well during a serious illness or for the end of life. They empower people to get the care they want during a serious illness or at the end of life by offering excellent resources such as an End-of-life Decisions Guide and Toolkit and a COVID-19 Toolkit, in addition to advocating for right-to-die legislation. Currently medical aid in dying is authorized in ten states: Oregon, Washington, Montana, Vermont, California, Colorado, Washington DC, Hawaii, New Jersey, and Maine.

## Green Burial Council

[greenburialcouncil.org](http://greenburialcouncil.org)

Our mission is to inspire and advocate for environmentally sustainable, natural death care through education and certification.

This is a nationwide website to learn more about green burial and how to find certified cemetery stewards, funeral professionals, and funerary product sellers who share the commitment to create more sustainable after-death options for you, your community, and the planet.

This website has two maps giving you a quick and easy access to locate providers near you in North America. The two maps show **Green Burial Council-Certified Cemeteries and Products** and **Certified Funeral Homes Across North America**.

## Green Burial Massachusetts

<https://greenburialma.org/> (This website is included as an example of one green burial organization on the state level.) Our mission is twofold: to start the first green cemetery open to all in Massachusetts, and to educate the public about green burial. A green burial is one in which the body is not embalmed, the burial container—whether a box or a shroud—must be made of biodegradable materials. There is no vault or cement grave liner. Rather, the container or the body is placed directly within the soil to biodegrade naturally. Yes, green burial is legal. Massachusetts state law does not require the use of grave liner or vault. A cemetery’s Board of Directors or a city or town’s Cemetery Commission develop their own rules and regulations about the kind of burial that is allowed in their cemetery.

## A Lesbian Memoir that includes her end-of-life story

***Staying True: Musings of an Odd-duck Quaker Lesbian Approaching Death***, Lynn Waddington, 2012, Plain Speech Press, Berkeley, California.

“Bodily decline that can no longer be ignored coupled with undaunted spiritual perspective makes Lynn’s account of her journey through terminal illness searing and poignant ... Patients and families facing this phase of life will benefit greatly from her wisdom.”

Channet Francisco, Bereavement Counselor, Hospice of the Northwest.

## Miscellaneous Notes from the Event Day Chat

*Comments for resources/ideas not included in list above...*

- NOLO guides are also good and have state-by-state recommendations for wills, etc. Also available at libraries—<https://www.nolo.com>.
- Becky Bohan, *Light on Altered Land*—<https://nanbec.com/beckys-books>.

- I recently spoke with a counselor at Final Exit Network. She recommended a book (I haven't read it yet) called *The Inevitable*.
- Death doulas!
- *What Happened to You?* By Oprah Winfrey and Dr. Bruce Perry. Excellent read that all need to read to begin to deal with yourself.
- Two other book suggestions: *Journey of Souls* and *Destiny of Souls* by Michael Newton. I found these books very reassuring and informative in the way life after death was addressed.
- Also look for a Certified Thanatologist who helps with paperwork with death and dying.
- Final Exit Network.

### **Additional comments/questions**

- Yes, what do those Hospice folks see when they say, tonight is the night that she will die?
- Does your state have a Deed on Death? This is through the recorder's office and you name a person to inherit your property so it is not part of the will nor estate.
- Yes, but two different topics. Dealing with loss of others and dealing with our own death. Dealing with feelings/emotions/thoughts about death—not the paperwork!
- Suggested topic: for those of us who don't have kids and are single—how to find someone to handle our affairs and make sure our wishes are carried out.

“Thank you OLOC. These Zoom gatherings are one of the COVID-19 lifelines for many of us. Too bad we have to wait until 2022 to see one another in person, but better we're careful and live to see one another in person. For those who haven't been to National Gatherings ... it is a wondrous weekend and meeting one another in person and dancing, dancing ... Ok, there's only one dance on the weekend. All goodness 'til we meet again.”

**Note:** Also see “End-of-Life Planning, Home Funerals, Green Burial” at <https://oloc.org/more-resources-for-old-lesbians/#endoflife>.