October 2026



Signature Sunsets

Initiatives To Advance Learning About End of Life

Wednesday, October 21, 7:00-8:15 pm, EDT

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SUNSET CAFETERIA

A sunset cafeteria is like a death cafe conversation, but begins with the introduction of a topic as food for thought. The menu for nourishing group interaction about end-of-life issues is diversified. Though one pre-selected subject serves as a catalyst for discussion, at any time the focus can shift to spontaneous comments reflecting whatever is on the minds of participants.



Springboard topic of the day:

Examining the Bones of Halloween



Is this haunting holiday a deterrent to death acceptance
or is it an opportunity to weaken resistance to death contemplation?



What Consumerism Did To Halloween– And Why You Should Think About It

Blog article by Meg Wade, Larkspur Conservation, Oct. 6, 2023

On a sunset walk in Nashville, Larkspur's Executive Director, John Christian Phifer, noticed an example of how Halloween contorts our relationship with death. Wrapped around the perimeter of a yard, as though it were a danger, a long string of yellow tape read: CAUTION: FRESH GRAVE SITE. Commercialism has spun burial grounds not into something sacred or holy, but into something scary and dangerous.

"It's no wonder our relationship with death is complicated; we're taught from an early age to fear it," John Christian notes. "We can build these extravagant displays in the front yard each year, but we can't have a conversation about death at our dinner table?"

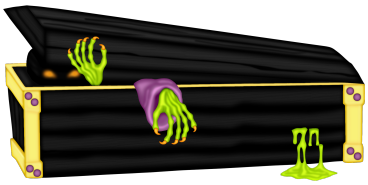
"The exploitation of death during the Halloween season makes it terrifying. It takes something that is inevitable in a human's life and morphs it into something grotesque; something that we should be afraid of or run away from."

"Cultural effects, such as the gruesome depictions we see in horror movies, haunted houses, and gaudy/gory decorations destroy our relationship with death—how we approach it, talk about it, think about it, and view it. We've allowed commercialism to miseducate us."

https://larkspurconservation.org/blog/what-consumerism-did-to-halloweenand-why-you-should-think-about-it?mc_cid=f1af1615f9&mc_eid=d191e2cbca

We'll discuss:

How can Halloween help us overcome aversive perceptions of death?



Consider the Mexican tradition of Day of the Dead that celebrates the lives of deceased loved ones. In a joyful spirit, families unite to build altars, share favorite foods, and pause to reflect on the lives of their dear ones. The tenor is more celebratory in the context of death.

Samhain (sah-vin), a Celtic tradition, marks the end of the harvest season and ushers in the "darker half" of the year. Rather than fearing what lies beyond, this festival honors ancestors and celebrates the cyclical nature of life and death.

Those festivities highlight the importance of celebrating the people who have died, promoting unbridled conversations about death and the afterlife, while acknowledging the natural cycles of existence. The fun of the occasion is akin to our Halloween happenings, but without promoting a fear of death.

How can the American society's ostensible festival of frights pose a learning opportunity for children, a springboard for education and discussion to reduce the fear of death?

"Because Oct. 31 is often a child's first explicit exposure to the imagery of mortality, it serves as a unique cultural sandbox for processing an otherwise taboo topic. These traditions offer a unique lens through which we can teach children about this profound subject." (*Brian Smith*) The holiday offers a chance to transform our society's narrative about death.

Please plan to have your camera turned on, as this will primarily be a discussion with face-to-face interaction rather than a presentation.

Registration (free):
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSepG2RWslQS0CMZBjPC45JhlCOH9uH67O9Fe8irqhC-aTNTKA/viewform?usp=publish-editor

or email ponderingleaves@gmail.com
simply stating "I plan to attend"



Join Zoom Meeting
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89088078046
Meeting ID: 890 8807 8046

Other ONLINE Offerings



Sunday, October 4, (2:00) 2:30-4:00 PM EDT



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Natural Organic Reduction/Human Composting

A hybrid in-person and online presentation (following a half-hour business meeting beginning at 2:00) about the ecological and energy-saving benefits of returning the body to the earth by natural organic reduction. The process will be described and questions answered.

Presented by Mike Reagan, a company CEO committed to revolutionizing the funeral industry. He envisions a future where families are empowered with dignified and ecological death care options aimed at changing the impact to our planet and communities.

Sponsored by the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Western Massachusetts

Registration (free):

Email fcawmass@gmail.com with your name and contact information, or call 413-376-4747 and leave a message or use the website's Contact form.

https://funeralconsumerswmass.org/annual-meeting-program/#:~:text=Save%20the%20date%3A%20Sunday%2C%20October,413%2D376%2D4747%20and%20leave%20a%20message

Please register in advance (by October 2 if possible) to help us respond to requests for the Zoom link

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Tuesday, October 6, 8:00-9:30 pm EDT

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Opening the Doors of Sacred Death Work to Younger Generations

Chevrah Kadisha, cemeteries, and other types of sacred end-of-life work is often imagined as something we inherit late in life, after decades of communal involvement, as we age. But death is not a subject that belongs only to those who are later in life, and neither is caring for the dead. This session explores what it looks like to open the doors of Jewish death practice wide: inviting people in at every stage of life, building pathways for newer and younger participants to find real ownership in this sacred work. We'll talk about what draws people to this work early and some concrete ways communities can lower barriers to entry.



Presented by Rabbanit Hadas (Dasi) Fruchter
Hosted by the Jewish Association for Death Education

Registration (free):
https://luma.com/f8nlxgxo

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Wednesday, October 7, 2:00-3:00 pm EDT

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Last Will & Testament

Planning for the future starts with understanding your options. This four-part estate planning series explores the fundamentals of estate planning, including wills, property transfer options, what happens when someone dies without a will, and Powers of Attorney. Join us for practical, educational workshops designed to help you plan with confidence.

Presented by LawNY

Sponsored by Lifespan

Registration (free):
https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/ev/reg/9b4q8sq



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Wednesday, October 7, 8:30-10:00 pm EDT

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'Prison Terminal' Screening and Discussion

A virtual screening of *Prison Terminal: The Last Days of Private Jack Hall*, followed by a discussion and Q&A with Humane team members and the film's director.

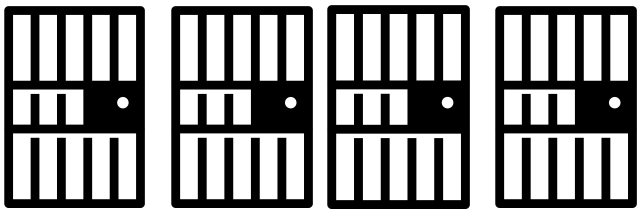
Directed by Edgar Barens, the Oscar-nominated *Prison Terminal: The Last Days of Private Jack Hall* is a moving documentary that tells the story of the final months in the life of Jack Hall, a terminally ill incarcerated person, and the incarcerated hospice volunteers who care for him at one of United States' oldest maximum security prisons. The film draws from footage shot over a six-month period at the Iowa State Penitentiary and provides a poignant account of how the hospice experience can profoundly touch the lives of people who are incarcerated.

Guests will leave with a better understanding of the reality faced by aging and terminally ill incarcerated people and some actions they can take to become involved or support this work.

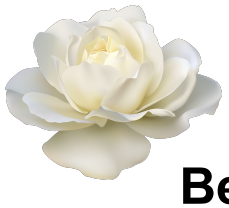
Presented by Humane Prison Hospice Project

Registration (free):
https://www.eventbrite.com/e/prison-terminal-screening-and-discussion-tickets-1986277539590

Welcome to attend on or off camera.



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Thursday, October 8, 1:00-2:00 pm EDT

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Beyond Bedside: A medical aid-in-dying panel discussion for end-of-life doulas

We invite end-of-life doulas from across the country to join us for this panel session featuring three experienced professionals who support medical aid in dying. During our time together, panelists will share stories, insight and knowledge for doulas at all levels - whether you are interested in learning more to offer accurate community education, considering how to incorporate medical aid in dying into your work, or preparing for it to be authorized where you live.

Please leave questions you have for panelists in advance and share a little information about your work, so we can customize the event for our audience members!



Presented by Compassion and Choices in partnership with the National End of Life Doula Alliance

Registration (free):
https://join.compassionandchoices.org/a/2026-beyond-bedside-maid-panel-eold?sourceid=1090513&utm_campaign=2026_september_ntl_newsletter&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_source=email&emci=3b24e1f4-a8b6-f111-a6a7-0022482a9a8d&emdi=96dfb385-57bb-

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Thursday, Oct. 8 12:00-1:00 pm EDT

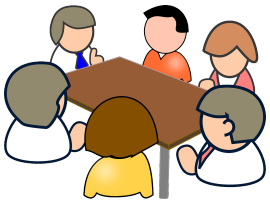
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End of Life Midwives in Conversation

A conversation on death, dying, and grief. Inviting questions, wonder, and stories, hosts will share insights from their lived experience as end-of-life midwives.

Dying is an important part of living, yet it is often hidden in the shadows and cloaked in fear, leaving us isolated as we care for the ones we love or navigate our own final days. With precious few tools to support our journey and very few opportunities for conversations, to learn or share skills and information, we find ourselves unprepared to support the experience of dying, death, grief, and caregiving.

Presented by Birgitta and Cheserae, who serve clients and families seeking support for dying, after-death care, and grief.



Hosted by Bridging Traditions

Registration ($0-$36.):
https://letsreimagine.org/76768/end-of-life-midwives-in-conversation-46

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Tuesday, October 13, 8:00-9:30 pm EDT

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Facing Death While Living Life

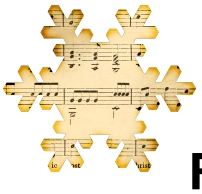
Come explore Jewish texts that place us at the intersection of the reality of death and the peak of life. What does it mean to be prepared for the possibility of death, especially at a young age, when preparing for the future? Engage with Jewish text and rituals that encourage forethought, planning, and realism in the face of mortality; our own and that of our loved ones.

Presented by Rabbi Eden Glaser

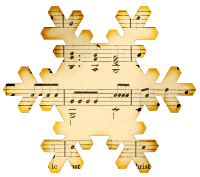
Hosted by the Jewish Association for Death Education

Registration (free):
https://luma.com/5a7hitoi

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Thursday, October 15, 7:00-8:00 pm EDT



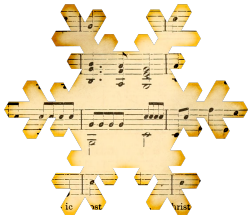
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Reimagine Virtual Summit: Grief in Our Time

Navigating personal and collective pain through creativity and connection

More than sixty voices, more than thirty sessions, exploring conversation, music, art, ritual, and movement.

Throughout the day, we'll explore many pathways toward healing and growth: conversation, music, art, writing, ritual, movement, mindfulness, and community.



Featured speakers include Meggan Roxanne of The Good Quote, Kelly Cervantes, author of Normal Broken, Miguel Cervantes, Broadway's Alexander Hamilton, and three-time Emmy winner Keltie Knight.

Sponsored by Reimagined

Registration (free):
https://letsreimagine.org/76768/reimagine-virtual-summit-2026-grief-in-our-time

Come for the whole day or just one hour.

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Friday, October 16, 2:00-3:00 pm EDT

Monday, October 19, 2:00-3:00 pm EDT

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Talking about why we talk about illness, grief, and loss with children

An interactive discussion on talking about illness and death with children. A universal truth of parenting is that the work of parenting never stops. Even when you need a pause, even when hard things are happening.

Together, we will explore why these conversations during challenging moments are so necessary, how to navigate through these conversations, and developmentally what to expect as children receive them.

Sponsored by Mettle Health

Registration (free): Oct. 16
https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_yE0XwTceTOKS68WJMgPigA#/registration

Registration (free): Oct. 19
https://www.mettlehealth.com/events/talking-to-kids-deep-dive



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Wednesday, October 28, 7:00-8:00 pm EDT

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Death Literacy as Climate Action: Moving from Stigma Toward Stewardship

Climate action isn't just about energy, infrastructure, or policy; it's also about how we relate to mortality. From panic buying and overconsumption to environmentally harmful burial defaults: when we avoid conversations about death it quietly shapes our choices.

This webinar explores how building death literacy in our communities can interrupt fear-driven cycles and move us toward effective climate action. By increasing understanding around death, dying, and end-of-life options, we can reduce reactive consumption and frame green burial as a clear response to the climate crisis.

Featured Speaker: Melissa Meadow, The Modern Mortician, a seasoned death educator, and founder of The Modern Mortician, a consulting and education platform dedicated to increasing transparency and environmental responsibility in end-of-life care. With over a decade of experience in conventional funeral service, Melissa transitioned her work toward green burial advocacy after witnessing firsthand how fear, stigma, and lack of education shape environmentally harmful defaults in death care. Her work bridges practical funeral knowledge with climate-conscious stewardship, reframing green burial not as an alternative niche, but as a practical response to the climate crisis.

Presented by the Green Burial Council

Registration (free):
https://www.eventbrite.com/e/death-literacy-as-climate-action-moving-from-stigma-toward-stewardship-tickets-1983912657163?aff=ebdsoporgprofile

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Wednesday, October 28, 6:00-8:00 pm EDT

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Shared Grief, Living Tradition: Writing the Contemporary Elegy

In this reading and writing workshop, we will explore the distinct force of elegy, poetry of mourning and memory. We will slow-listen to the undermusic in elegiac traditions and hear their contemporary resonances. And we will engage these traditions to better know our own experiences of struggle and express our own commitments to others. How can these past voices guide our own ways of understanding loss and bearing witness to one another's grief? How might our poems circulate among others, in shared acts of memory, gratitude, and grief?

Participants will read and discuss several inspiring poems, free-write, compare ideas in small groups, and shape our own poetic language. We will also have time to share our writing with the full group and consider next steps for building out our poetic practice.

Taught by Karen Elizabeth Bishop and David Sherman, co-directors of The Elegy Project, a public poetry initiative that distributes poems in public places for strangers. Since 2022, TEP has left thousands of poetry cards in libraries, subways, post offices, bars, and bookstores, as well as on countless utility poles and park benches. This initiative is an attempt to make the world more interesting and grief less lonely. Karen Elizabeth Bishop is faculty in Spanish and Comparative Literature at Rutgers University and author of several books, including the poetry volume the deering hour. David Sherman is faculty in English at Brandeis University.

Led by David Sherman

Hosted by Evermore in partnership with The Elegy Project and KE Bishop

Registration ($15.):
https://secure.everyaction.com/_xFtVHKY3kiGOZvczkJkRg2

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Thursday, October 29, 11:30 am-1:00 pm EDT

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Nature Heals: Reconciling Your Grief Through Engaging with the Natural World

When we're grieving, we need relief from our pain. Today, we often turn to technology for distraction when what we really need is the opposite: generous doses of nature. Studies show that time spent outdoors lowers blood pressure, eases depression and anxiety, bolsters the immune system, lessens stress, and even makes us more compassionate.

When you attend this webinar, you'll learn:

- Why Engaging with the Natural World Is So Effective at Helping Reconcile Grief
- Tips for Bringing Short Bursts of Nature Time (indoors and outdoors) Into Your Everyday Life
- How to Actively Mourn in Nature

Based on *Nature Heals: Reconciling Your Grief Through Engaging with the Natural World* by Alan D Wolfelt, PH.D.

To learn about his work: http://www.centerforloss.com

Sponsored by AARP of Texas

Registration (free):
https://events.aarp.org/event/TX-1029-Nature/register?eventId=3d24ce19-e4dd-4607-b4e5-33ac264edb01&i=3WpMM13Ec0qJhHBKcKPPOg&rp=420a3e8f-ee60-477f-8200-d328be5dc64e

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Friday, October 30 - November 2, 12:00-2:00 pm

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The Flowers of Our Ancestors



A three-day gathering weaving anthropology, ethnobotany, ritual, memory, and remembrance to explore ancestral relationships and the living legacy of love our ancestors continue to carry through us.

Across Día de los Muertos, we will look at the flowers, offerings, stories, and practices through which communities have tended relationships with their dead—while turning toward our own lineages and the ways memory continues to live within the body, family, land, and everyday life.

Throughout the gathering, participants will be invited to tend a living altar of their own—bringing photographs, flowers, foods, candles, or objects that connect them to those they wish to remember.

Hosted by Passages

Registration ($15.-$50.):
https://letsreimagine.org/76768/the-flowers-of-our-ancestors

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Saturday, October 31, 7:00 pm EDT

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At the Threshold of the Dead: Samhain, Liminality, and the Journey Between Worlds



What if the boundary between the living and the dead were not a wall, but a threshold?

Samhain arrives at a peculiar moment in the year. The harvest is ending. The days are growing noticeably shorter. The landscape itself seems to be withdrawing. For centuries, this seasonal turning has been associated with gatherings, fires, divination, the dead, and encounters with forces beyond the ordinary human world.

We will begin with Samhain itself, looking at its historical and folkloric roots while also untangling some of the modern ideas that have become attached to it—including the familiar claim that the “veil between worlds” becomes thin. From there, we will move into the larger and much older human fascination with crossing the boundary between life and death.

Myths are filled with people who approach the realm of the dead. Orpheus descends in search of Eurydice. Odysseus seeks knowledge from those who have died. Persephone moves between worlds. Psyche is given a task that requires her to enter the Underworld and return. These stories remind us that crossing a threshold is rarely casual. There are guides and guardians, offerings and instructions, things that must not be touched, questions that must be asked, and rules for finding one's way home.

These stories also give us a way to think about liminality: the strange state of being between one thing and another, when an old order has loosened but what comes next has not yet fully taken shape.

Our evening will culminate in a guided Samhain ritual of threshold, descent, and return. We will approach the boundary symbolically rather than attempting to summon or contact the dead. Participants will be invited to listen, remember, and consider what they themselves may be carrying into the darkness of the year—and what they wish to bring back.

- Suggested Items:
  A candle — to mark the opening and closing of the ritual and serve as a light at the threshold.
  A small bowl or glass of water — representing the boundary between worlds, reflection, and passage.
  A small offering — such as bread, fruit, herbs, flowers, or another simple biodegradable offering. This need not be intended for a particular ancestor or spirit.
  A small stone — something tangible to hold during the ritual and ultimately carry back as a symbol of return.
  A journal and something to write with — for reflection before and after the ritual.

Samhain lecture and ritual presented by Dr. Selena Madden, a mythologist, educator, and ritualist whose work bridges movement, myth, and depth psychology.

Registration (free):
https://www.morbidanatomy.org/events-tickets/p/thresholdofdead

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