



Funeral Planning Parties

A Stress-Free Way to Start Getting Your Affairs in Order
(and... with friends!)

Hostess Issue
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Sheila Burke, Death Doula

New program launches

The latest updates

Move Over Tupperware and say hello to the home Death Planning or Funeral Planning Party—a place to have a little fun and open up with others about a particularly important event in your life—your death.

The brainchild of Sheila Burke, an End-of-Life Doula in Northeast Ohio. Sheila became a death doula after the death of her husband Shane in 2020. “I had that calling everyone talks about. I was called to advocate for the dying, to educate, and to be this, sort of, spiritual sherpa.”

A few years ago, Sheila created the Exit Plan© which is a series of prompts to help folks answer questions about what exactly their final wishes are. It is included in Death Over Dinner, her educational booklet on the importance of discussing our inevitable demise.

Death Over Dinner

The Importance of Having Conversations
About Death and Dying and How to Start One



Based off the booklet Death Over Dinner.
(Part of the end-of-life series by Sheila M. Burke, Death Doula)

Amazon: <https://amzn.to/450RcPU>



What is the Concept?

Taking the idea a step further, she put together a template for anyone wishing to host a Funeral Planning or death-themed party to encourage friends and loved ones to normalize not only talking about death and dying but to prepare for it. It is often easier to have these discussions in a relaxed setting. And what better time than when you are healthy?

One of the greatest gifts we can give to our loved ones is pre-planning our own funeral. While we can do this planning at any point, the most ideal time is while we are healthy.

Some people think it's morbid or taboo to talk about death. But, just like talking about sex doesn't make you pregnant, talking about death doesn't make you die. Death is just part of life; everyone dies. So, like anything in life, we need to discuss it.

Although your home is the perfect setting for a Funeral Planning Party you can host one in any location! Your goal is to spend time with others and take the weightiness out of discussing your funeral wishes and the

importance of having Advance Directives. To accomplish this, you need to create the proper environment.

From invitations to parting gifts, everything will be centered around the topic of death. The idea is to make it fun because fun means light-hearted—and light-hearted means people will relax. When we are relaxed, we are open and our minds clear.

While there are suggestions for hosting a Funeral Planning Party, there are no requirements. It can be as simple or as elaborate as you like. Customize your event as you wish! If you would like an official printable Funeral Planner/Death Document© to hand out to your guests, you can print them off at endoflifedoula.com/exit

I would also LOVE to see photos of events you host and hear everything about them! Thank you for doing your part to bring discussions of death and dying to the forefront where they belong. Feel free to send your experience to my email at deathdoula@gmail.com



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Let's Talk about Invites!

Incorporate your theme from the beginning.

What better way to announce your death themed party than with appropriately themed invites? Whether purchased or you create your own, they are the first statement about what is going on and why. Simply explain in terms that make sense to you, the reason for this shindig.

“It's YOUR funeral, you might as well have a hand in planning it!”

- Sheila Burke, Death Doula



If you need some direction, you might use phrasing along the line of: “Do yourself and your loved ones a favor and figure out what you want your funeral to look like.” Or “We are having a party to plan our funerals! Come join the fun, it is going to be killer!” (a word from the 80s.)

Should they bring a dish or dessert? A beverage? Do you have a preferred dress code—black, for instance? Are you serving food? Snacks? Drinks?

Decorate!

This is your time to shine.

Decorations will set the mood, put everyone at ease, and get people talking. Using black as your color scheme is a great option for a party encouraging people to think, and talk, about death.

Suitable suggestions:

- Black balloons
- Skeletons
- Ghosts
- Black candles. White candles.
- Crafted gravestones
- Skull confetti
- Black tablecloth, tableware (check your local dollar-type store.)

Refreshments, Mmmm

Get creative with death themed desserts and snacks

Set up a refreshment table. Near the beverages, create a fun death-themed sign such as “Pick Your Poison.” Black cups are a great touch. Check your local party store for them, as well as black napkins, and plates.

There are several fun, “deathly named” ideas you can incorporate into your menu. Consider offering one or two at your party or get creative on your own!

Desserts:

- Death by Chocolate
- Devil's Food Cake
- Angel Food Cake
- Black frosted cake
- Cakes with tombstones on top

Ghostly Desserts

Ghost brownies:

brownie squares drizzled in white icing topped with a marshmallow Use icing to make a face.

Ghost Cake:

top a frosted cake with dollops of meringue (ghosts). Using icing to create a ghost face on the dollops.

Ghost Apples:

dip whole apples into melted white chocolate and let set. Add face with icing or dark chocolate.

Cookies

- Frosted cookies with a skelly face or RIP created from frosting.
- Skull-shaped cookies
- Ghost-shaped cookies
- Gravestone-shaped cookies

Be creative with your beverages as well, give things a fun name. Zombie coffee or tea; a signature death-themed drink (either cocktail or mocktail!) is always fun!

Search the internet for recipes and variations.



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Party with a Purpose

We are gathered here today

Thinking about your own death or the death of a loved one is not easy, but it is a must-have conversation. Your party might include several aspects from learning about Advance Directives to planning a funeral. As the host, it is up to you what to include.

Advanced Directives are legal documents each of us should have. They are ONLY used if you cannot communicate your own wishes and can be changed at any time if you are able to communicate your wishes.

The two most well-known are Medical Durable Power of Attorney and a Living Will. We should also consider organ/tissue donation and DNR orders as Advance Directives.

Other important documents you should have prior to death are a legal Will (Last Will and Testament) and a Durable Power of Attorney for Finances.

I do not recommend your party cover making wills or legal documents. Your party should only cover fun funeral planning as described BELOW

A Durable Power of Attorney for Finances is a legal document naming someone to make financial decisions for you, but ONLY if you are unable to. This is different from a Medical Durable Power of Attorney.

If you opt to download the Death Document there will information included for your guests touching on what these documents are and the importance of having them.

Games

Love em or hate em.

People either love or hate party games, but for a death-themed event a party game just might be what you need to break the ice and get everyone loosened up.

Try to keep games around thirty minutes so as not to distract from the party's purpose. You can always play more games near the end of your event.

How about a nice round of Death Bingo? And who wouldn't enjoy a nice game of Pin the (heart of bone) on the Skeleton? One of my favorite games is The Death Deck.



Find it on Amazon:

<https://amzn.to/3KuxQu2>

I've created two free downloadable games: Death Bingo (12 separate cards) and a Death Word Scramble.

Get them at endoflifedoulacle.com/exit



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Well, It's YOUR Funeral!

The nuts and bolts of this party

One of the most important parties or events you will have in your life is your funeral. *Why not* plan it? *Why not* go out in your own way? How would you like your funeral or celebration of life to look? Something big and fancy; something thrifty? In between?

The whole purpose of a funeral/celebration is to honor the life of the deceased. This is no time to be humble. It will take place anyway so why not have a hand in planning it? At the very least, give your loved ones some idea of your wishes and of the things that matter to you. This will help them plan a beautiful tribute for you if you haven't done so already. In doing so, it will help them grieve the loss of you.

Planning your own funeral will also ease the burden of loved ones, avoid conflicts of those planning, and it will ensure your final wishes are followed.

Things to cover during your party

- What to do with my body after I die.
- Options for cremains
- Pick a theme
- Let's plan that funeral!
- Venues
- Fun Extras
- Music and words
- Obits and Legacy

Funeral and Remembrance ideas

If you are short on time and don't want to put this together on your own, I've created a packet called The Death Document. You can download for a small cost and print yourself for each party guest. It includes all the above topics in detail, as well as information they can read later regarding Advance Directives (what they are and why they should create one.) This document is fun, colorful, and a great tool!



“Hands down, this is the best party I've ever thrown!”

- Says EVERYONE

Download easy, pre-made, fun forms detailing these topics. **Look for “The Death Document” at the link below.** You can reproduce the forms **ONLY** for use during your death-themed party, as is, without altering. You can find this download at endoflifedoulacle.com/exit

And Etsy:

<https://tinyurl.com/FuneralFun01>

