

FUNNY FILMS FOR SERIOUS SUBJECTS

Presented by Gail Rubin, CT, The Doyenne of Death®

Laughing in the Face of Death: Funny Films for Funeral Planning

This upbeat talk illustrates funeral planning issues with clips from comedy films and television programs. Learn what you need to know before someone dies to reduce stress and conflict, save money and create a “good goodbye.” Just as talking about sex won’t make you pregnant, talking about funerals won’t make you dead – and your family will benefit from the conversation. Films include *Death at a Funeral* (U.S. version), *Undertaking Betty*, *The Six Wives of Henry Lefay*, *The Big Lebowski* and *Elizabethtown*.

The Many Faces of Grief: Mourning in the Movies

Grief and mourning takes people on a journey with twists and turns. It's a process that takes on many faces. Using clips from Hollywood films to illustrate and lighten the conversation, attendees will learn about different grieving styles, length of mourning, disenfranchised grief and other elements of thanatology, the study of death, dying and bereavement. Film clips will include scenes from *The Big Lebowski*, *Elizabethtown*, *Walk the Line*, *Gravity*, *A Single Man* and *The Jane Austen Book Club*.

The Funeral Director on Film

Watching scenes from comedies and dramas focused on funeral directors throughout history, learn the history of U.S. undertaking, perceptions of funeral directors and funeral planning tips. With humorous insights, Gail Rubin educates and entertains with Hollywood portrayals of “the last man to let you down.” Films include *The Shootist*, *The Loved One*, *About Schmidt*, *Get Low*, *Bernie* and the TV series, *Six Feet Under*.

Office Morale in the Movies: Communications and Change

Change is stressful, and communication is key to helping employees cope. Learn thanatology-based frameworks to recognize and effectively respond to loss and changes. Learn motivation strategies as illustrated in films and TV shows such as *Nine to Five*, *Office Space*, *Working Girl* and *Mad Men*.

“Doctor, How Long Do I Have?”

Having a serious healthcare conversation with your doctor and family takes effort to ensure clear communications. Learn how to ask questions and be involved in treatment decisions by watching dramatic and comedy films depicting doctor-patient-family conversations. Films include *Patch Adams*, *The End*, *Wit*, *The Shootist* and *The Descendants*.

Ashes to Ashes, Dust in Your Face: Cremation, Comedy and Creativity

Cremation is the fastest growing disposition method in the U.S. Watching funny and serious film clips, you’ll learn about what you need to know **before** there’s a death in the family, including choices to make and disposition options. Films include *Elizabethtown*, *The Big Lebowski*, *Due Date*, *The Bucket List*, and *The Descendants*.

Estate Planning: Hollywood Myth versus Facts

The way the movies portray it, wills are supposed to cover funeral plans in addition to the distribution of assets. Unfortunately, family members may die before doing any estate planning. Even with a will, plans can go awry. Clips from comedies including *Carpet Kingdom*, *The Six Wives of Henry LeFay*, *Eulogy*, *Bonneville*, *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir*, *Grand Theft Parsons* and other movies illustrate the need to do estate planning TODAY.

Jewish Funeral Traditions on Film

Jewish traditions regarding death and dying, the funeral, the treatment of the body, burial, mourning, and annual remembrances are very different from Christian practices. This talk illuminates the differences and similarities of these funeral traditions – highly beneficial for interfaith families. Scenes from two comedic films from Mexico, *My Mexican Shivah* and *Nora's Will*, as well as American movies *This Is Where I Leave You* and *The Cemetery Club* illustrate Jewish funeral, burial and mourning traditions.

Everybody Dies: Lessons from *Six Feet Under*

From 2001 to 2005, the HBO cable television series *Six Feet Under* took viewers behind the scenes at Fisher & Sons Funeral Home. This upbeat talk uses clips from this award-winning series to illuminate funeral planning issues for those who don't plan to die. Topics include funeral consumer issues, cremation, traditional and green burial, developments in the funeral industry, and aspects of contemporary grief and mourning.

Hollywood's *Visions, Trips and Crowded Rooms*

Dr. David Kessler's book *Visions, Trips and Crowded Rooms* shares the personal stories of medical and hospice professionals who witness death. Some of the dying see remarkable visions, some speak of going on a trip, and others see people who they knew in this lifetime crowding the room. Hollywood films provide a concrete way of looking at this phenomenon when someone dies. This talk opens the door to discussing mortality issues.

Film Appreciation Presentations

These one to two-hour film clip talks on Hollywood giants make great spouse programs. "Hallmarks of Hitchcock" identifies top thematic elements of Alfred Hitchcock films. "All Singing, All Dancing: Storytelling in Busby Berkeley Musicals" showcases his elaborate production numbers. "John Ford: When the Legend Becomes Fact, Print the Legend" identifies thematic elements of this master director's Westerns.

Other film clip talks include **A Funny, Fractured History of Funerals on Film**, **Exit Strategies: On Choosing to Die** and **The Viking Funeral on Film**.

(bio on next page)



Gail Rubin, CT, The Doyenne of Death[®], is author of the award-winning book *A Good Goodbye: Funeral Planning for Those Who Don't Plan to Die* and The Family Plot Blog. Host of **A Good Goodbye** television series and Internet radio program, she's a Certified Thanatologist (a death educator) and a popular speaker who uses humor and films to get end-of-life conversations started.

She's a member of the Association for Death Education and Counseling, the International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association, Toastmasters International and the National Speakers Association New Mexico Chapter. President of the New Mexico Interfaith Dialogue, she's a Certified Celebrant who also serves on the cemetery committee for Congregation Albert and volunteers with the *Chevra Kaddisha*, which ritually prepares bodies for Jewish burial.

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