

Death Over Dinner, Jewish Edition



The way we die is the most important conversation Americans are not having. Talking about death is not easy and we're not used to it, but we believe that this conversation ultimately helps us appreciate the fullness of life.

We have gathered rabbis, theologians, and medical leaders to transform this potentially difficult conversation into one of deep engagement, insight and empowerment that everyone can be a part of. We welcome you to invite friends and family to fill a table. Whether you are a Jewish insider, on the margins or Jewish-adjacent, we welcome you to tap into some age-old Jewish wisdom around grieving and ritual, living and dying.

What to jump right in with our DIY Toolkit and DOD-JE Conversation Cards? Use the link below for our tried and tested resources, along with individualized tools for specific communities (LGBTQ, interfaith, and more)!

[DOWNLOAD THE TOOLKIT](#)

[LEARN MORE](#)

[WHAT IS DEATH OVER DINNER?](#)

How death came to dinner

A couple of years ago at a REBOOT summit in the beautiful mountains of Park City Utah, we (Michael Hebb and Sharon Brous) sat down for a drink. Michael shared the story of a mysterious and unfamiliar feeling of connectedness he experienced the moment of his father's death when he was a child, and Sharon, a rabbi, said that she had heard many such inexplicable stories from congregants and friends in moments of loss. Michael spoke about the project of his life – a collaboration with his partner Angel Grant – www.DeathOverDinner.org – an effort to facilitate conversations about death... over dinner. After launching the website in 2012, nearly 250,000 death dinners had already taken place across the world, empowering people – young and old, healthy and ill – to talk about the most important and difficult topic – death.

We talked for hours about the desperate need to speak frankly and soulfully about death, and the great void in our lives when this conversation is left until it's too late. We both agreed that Jewish resources on death and dying were not easy to come by, and it was all too rare to find opportunities to talk about Jewish approaches to end of life matters, Jewish tools to hold grief and the survival of the soul.

The next day, we convened a session to see if others were as interested in this topic as we were. Participants filled the room, tears filled all of our eyes, and we collectively agreed that we needed to do something to help make it easier to have this critical conversation.

We and our team have spent the past year speaking with rabbis, theologians, doctors and palliative care experts, and curating the finest materials we could get our hands on for folks to read, watch and listen in preparation for their dinners. We thought about the best prompts from the Jewish tradition – Talmudic texts, Rabbinic wisdom, song lyrics and poetry – that would open up the conversation at the table. We designed this site to be the beginning of a conversation, not the end. We hope that your dinner will only open you up to deeper learning and engagement.

Why the dinner table? We have found that the dinner table is one of the most forgiving places for difficult conversations. The ritual of breaking bread slows us down, creates warmth and connection, and puts us in touch with our humanity.

So we raise a generous glass to you and your loved ones and humbly submit Death Over Dinner- Jewish Edition, a collaboration between Death Over Dinner, IKAR and Reboot. It is our hope that this project helps change the conversation about how we prepare for and spend our final days, and inspires us to live with more intention and gratitude.

Michael Hebb and Rabbi Sharon Brous

[PLAN A DINNER](#)

[WATCH VIDEO](#)

[WATCH TED TALK](#)

1

Photos by George Barberis

Who's Coming to Dinner?

Choose your own dinner adventure:

Our ready-made kit: With this link you'll get a conversation curated and tested by our team.

OR

Curate your own dinner: Follow these steps to personalize your dinner conversation.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Neighbors• Parents• Co-Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strangers• Community Members• Family Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grandparents• Total Mixed Bag• Friends
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Your Intention

Which of the following best describes you and your interest in this discussion? Your selection will determine the content provided for you in the following steps.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I think being prepared for end of life is really important. We NEED to have this conversation.• I recently lost someone close to me and I'm looking for wisdom from the Jewish tradition that could bring me comfort.• I am curious to learn about Jewish perspectives on death, dying and the afterlife.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Death freaks me out, but I understand that difficult conversations are often the most important.• I am caring for a loved one who is dying and I am eager to have a real conversation about death.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I'm interested in exploring alternative Jewish approaches to death rituals and traditions.• I am, or someone I love is, critically or terminally ill and I want to talk about what's happening openly, honestly and lovingly.
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Read/Watch/Listen

Please choose a short piece for you and your guests to watch, listen to, and read before coming together at dinner. Links will be sent in your dinner prep email.

[WHAT'S YOUR INTENTION?](#)

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1

I think being prepared for end of life is really important. We NEED to have this conversation.

READ

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• My Mother's Death and Why Writing an Ethical Will is Important• The Moral Bucket List• The Space Between Mourning and Grief• Waking Up To Your World• To Be Happier Start Thinking More About Your Death• Jewish Burial Equals Green Burial	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What to Do When a Loved One is Dying: Jewish Resources• Forever Letters• Top Five Regrets of the Dying• Dying With Dignity and the Final Word on Her Life• Prayer at the Funeral of Someone Who Committed Suicide• In Search of a Good Death	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grief Landscapes• Getting Dead Loved Ones #Offline• The Bitter End• How Doctors Die• Ghosts in the Machine• Good Grief: Is There a Better Way to Be Bereaved?
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WATCH

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Saying Goodbye with Poetry• Before I Lost My Hair	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Death Rituals: Creating Jewish Life• A Strange Relativity: Altered Time for Surgeon-Turned-Patient	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A Good Goodbye• New Ways to Think About Death
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LISTEN

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ashes• Congratulations You Gonna Die• The Inevitability of	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Green Burial in Judaism and Catholicism• Culture of Dying	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In the Valley of the Shadow of Death• Funeral Exercise• Contemplating
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<p>Death</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Town Where Everyone Talks About Death	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Amen Effect• Breaking the Taboo Against Talking About Death	<p>Mortality</p>
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2

Death freaks me out, but I understand that difficult conversations are often the most important.

READ

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• My Mother's Death and Why Writing an Ethical Will is Important• The Moral Bucket List• The Bitter End• How Doctors Die• In Search of a Good Death• Reconsidering Kaddish: Four New Approaches to an Old Ritual• Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What to Do When A Loved One is Dying: Jewish Resources• Forever Letters• Waking Up To Your World• To Be Happier Start Thinking More About Your Death• Good Grief: Is There a Better Way to Be Bereaved?• Ten Commandments for the Caregiver	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grief Landscapes• Top Five Regrets of the Dying• Dying With Dignity and the Final Word on Her Life• Jewish Burial Equals Green Burial• The Unique Loneliness of Grief• Becoming a Friend to the End
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WATCH

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Saying Goodbye with Poetry• An overview of The Conversation Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Death Rituals: Creating Jewish Life• What Really Matters at the End of Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A Good Goodbye• Death Questions for Kids
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LISTEN

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ashes• Culture of Dying• Contemplating Mortality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In the Valley of the Shadow of Death• Funeral Exercise• The Town Where Everyone Talks About	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Congratulations You Gonna Die• The Inevitability of Death• Breaking the Taboo
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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cliffhangers	Death <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Death Shall Have No Dominion	Against Talking About Death
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3

I'm interested in exploring alternative Jewish approaches to death rituals and traditions.

[READ](#)

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• My Mother's Death and Why Writing an Ethical Will is Important• Jewish Burial Equals Green Burial• Prayer at the Funeral of Someone Who Committed Suicide• A Ritual to Remove a Wedding Ring	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grief Landscapes• Reconsidering Kaddish: Four New Approaches to an Old Ritual• Turn Into A Tree When You Die	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Forever Letters• Getting Dead Loved Ones #Offline• How Millennials Mourn
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[WATCH](#)

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Saying Goodbye with Poetry• Death Questions from Kids• Mushroom Burial Suit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An overview of The Conversation Project• Before I Lost My Hair	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What Really Matters at the End of Life• New Ways to Think About Death
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[LISTEN](#)

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Green Burial in Judaism and Catholicism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kodak Moments of the Dead	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is a Death Doula?
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4

I recently lost someone close to me and I'm looking for wisdom from the Jewish tradition that could bring me comfort.

READ

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grief Landscapes• Prayer at the Funeral of Someone Who Committed Suicide• Good Grief: Is There a Better Way to Be Bereaved?• The Space Between Mourning and Grief	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reconsidering Kaddish: Four New Approaches to an Old Ritual• How Millennials Mourn• The Unique Loneliness of Grief• Ghosts in the Machine	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Getting Dead Loved Ones #Offline• A Ritual to Remove a Wedding Ring• Ten Commandments for the Caregiver• Traditional Jewish Mourning Practices
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WATCH

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Saying Goodbye with Poetry• A Video Game to Cope With Grief	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Death Rituals: Creating Jewish Life• Jewish Mourning Rituals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the Kaddish?• The Grieving Process: Coping with Death
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LISTEN

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Culture of Dying• Finding the Lesson in Loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Amen Effect• The Show Must Go On	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• On Suffering, Beliefs, and Dying• Heaven and Earth
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5

I am caring for a loved one who is dying
and I am eager to have a real conversation
about death.

READ

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grief Landscapes• A Ritual to Remove a Wedding Ring• Traditional Jewish Mourning Practices• What to Do When A Loved One is Dying: Jewish Resources• Dying With Dignity and the Final Word on Her Life• In Search of a Good Death	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reconsidering Kaddish: Four New Approaches to an Old Ritual• Good Grief: Is There a Better Way to Be Bereaved?• My Mother's Death and Why Writing an Ethical Will is Important• Top Five Regrets of the Dying• How Doctors Die• Becoming a Friend to the End	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How Millennials Mourn• Ten Commandments for the Caregiver• Forever Letters• The Bitter End• To Be Happier Start Thinking More About Your Death
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WATCH

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Saying Goodbye with Poetry• What Really Matters at the End of Life• The Angels Everywhere• Having a Child Diagnosed with a Life Limiting Illness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A Video Game to Cope with Grief• Death Questions from Kids• When Should Dying Patients Stop Treatment• How Do we Heal Medicine	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An overview of The Conversation Project• A Good Goodbye• Find a Place of Rest
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LISTEN

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Culture of Dying• In the Valley of the Shadow of Death• The Kibitz Podcast Episode 27- Death	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• On Suffering, Beliefs, and Dying• Contemplating Mortality• Bedside Manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ashes• The Town Where Everyone Talks About Death• Death is Harder Than it Has to Be
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6

I am, or someone I love is, critically or terminally ill and I want to talk about what's happening openly, honestly and lovingly.

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7

I am curious to learn about Jewish perspectives on death, dying and the afterlife.

READ

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A Ritual to Remove a Wedding Ring• My Mother's Death and Why Writing an Ethical Will is Important• Getting Dead Loved Ones #Offline• Waking Up To Your World• Prayer at the Funeral of Someone Who Committed Suicide	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good Grief: Is There a Better Way to Be Bereaved?• Forever Letters• Ghosts in the Machine• Grief Landscapes• The Space Between Mourning and Grief	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Traditional Jewish Mourning Practices• What to Do When A Loved One is Dying: Jewish Resources• The Moral Bucket List• Ten Commandments for the Caregiver• Jewish Burial Equals Green Burial
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WATCH

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How Do we Heal Medicine• Saying Goodbye with Poetry• Can We End Aging?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mushroom Burial Suit• What is the Kaddish?• The Coffinmaker	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A Strange Relativity: Altered Time for Surgeon-Turned-Patient• Jewish Mourning Rituals
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Catholicism		Death
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Review and Edit

Make sure you have selected the right intention and homework for your guests.

Guests

- Invite Someone!

Intention

- What's your intention?

Read

- Please Select Your Media

Watch

- Please Select Your Media

Listen

- Please Select Your Media

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Activate

You are now ready to Activate your invitation! After you enter your email, click Submit. We will send you—and only you—a personalized email with invitation language to send to your guests, the read/watch/listen homework, post-gathering next steps, your conversational prompts, and a quick overview on hosting and moderating this important discussion.

First Name *

Last Name *

Your City *

Your State *

Zip Code *

Your Email *

[SUBMIT](#)

More actions

Will you share your story?

We'd love to hear about your dinner experience and, if you'd like, feature them on the Stories page of our website.

[SHARE YOUR STORY WITH US](#)

Want to bring this conversation to your community?

[Sign up here](#) and our team will contact you.

Check out our FAQ page.

Dinners often beget more conversations, [use our FAQs](#) or feel free to continue browsing our [resource library](#).

Need help with the conversation?

The Conversation Project has helped thousands of individuals and families spark a conversation about end of life wishes with an easy step-by-step guide to facilitate the process. Download their Starter Kit below, and jump in.

[CONVERSATION PROJECT STARTER KIT](#)

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Get prepared

Are you an organ donor?

In about 47 seconds, you can register as a donor at ORGANIZE. Take a look at their remarkable work and learn more about how we all can help revolutionize the system.

[BECOME AN ORGAN DONOR](#)

Are your wishes & documents in order?

Future File helps you gather your wishes & documents in one place—contacts, wills, passwords, social media access, funeral plans, aging care wishes & more.

[GET YOUR FUTURE FILE SYSTEM](#)

Tackling an end of life to do list?

Together with Everplans, we have created a custom mini-workbook which addresses such topics as choosing a health care proxy, writing a living will, and information on becoming an organ donor.

[DOWNLOAD EVERPLANS WORKBOOK](#)

[PREVIOUS](#)

Library: Read

- [A New Vision for Dreams of the Dying](#)
Dreams and visions of the dying have captivated cultures for thousands of years, including numerous accounts throughout Rabbinic literature. Explore what anthropologists, theologians, and sociologists have learned from these “deathbed phenomena”.
- [Becoming a Friend to the End](#)
The greatest kindness (hesed) we can offer is to participate in the burial process. But we can also bring holiness and comfort to someone approaching death. A story of an unlikely friendship.
- [In Search of a Good Death](#)
In order to honor a dying person until the last moment, it helps to know what that process will look like. Jane Brody describes the potentially confusing final hours or days when a person is “actively dying”.
- [Jewish Burial Equals Green Burial](#)
Each year, more than 90,000 tons of steel and over 2700 tons of copper and bronze are made into caskets. That’s enough metal to build a Golden Gate Bridge. But Jewish burial, like green burial, fosters returning to the earth as naturally as possible.
- [A Ritual to Remove a Wedding Ring](#)
The process of removing a wedding ring after the death of a partner is a significant milestone in the journey of grief. This Jewish ritual draws on traditional liturgy to make that moment meaningful.
- [How Millennials Mourn](#)
Was shiva ever meant to be sat alone? A twentysomething with no kids, no partner, and few adult obligations reflects on coping with parental loss without a conventional family structure in place.
- [Ghosts in the Machine](#)
A profound and unanticipated side effect of technology is that death no longer obeys any laws of finality. Funneled through social media, death lingers longer than a traditional Jewish mourning period of 30 days or 11 months might prescribe.
- [Prayer at the Funeral of Someone Who Committed Suicide](#)
When someone commits suicide, most people struggle to know what to say. Rabbi Joseph Meszler composed this prayer – the words we say when we have no words.
- [To Be Happier Start Thinking More About Your Death](#)
Every year, Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) pushes us to consider, “What if this is it? Have I made the most of my time?” Like Buddhist death meditation, these questions can help us reconnect with our existential goals. Arthur Brooks asks, if we

applied the “last-year test” to our lives, how much less time would we spend doing bupkes and how much more would we nurture relationships or nourish the soul?

- [Turn Into A Tree When You Die](#)

From the earth we were created, and with these burial pods developed by Anna Citelli and Raoul Bretzel, to the earth we can truly return. You can even choose the type of tree your seed pod will nourish.

- [How Doctors Die](#)

The Torah instructs us to “choose life.” But is that referring to quantity or quality? Ken Murray, MD shares why most doctors choose little end of life treatment for themselves, and are able to die gently.

- [Dying With Dignity and the Final Word on Her Life](#)

In the book of Samuel, King Saul asked his armor-bearer to help him die mercifully. Jane Lotter writes her own raw and poignant obituary before using Washington’s Death With Dignity Act to die peacefully.

- [Waking Up To Your World](#)

When Rabbi Eliezer told his students to repent one day before they die, they asked the obvious question: “how do we know when that day is?” Of course, we never know how much time we have left to fulfill the potential of our precious human birth. Given this, Pema Chodron asks us to consider, what is most important?

- [The Bitter End](#)

The students of Rabbi Judah the Prince desperately prayed that he should be stay alive, but a handmaid saw his suffering and intervened to help him die peacefully. Sometimes, as Jesse Ellison describes with her 92 year old grandmother, the most graceful thing one can do with death is accept it. But is this possible in America’s health care system?

- [Ten Commandments for the Caregiver](#)

Rabbi Earl Grollman offers ten practical and compassionate commandments for concerned caregivers.

- [Reconsidering Kaddish: Four New Approaches to an Old Ritual](#)

Esther Kustanowitz interviews four people who are adding their own spin to the traditional practice of reciting the Mourner’s Kaddish.

- [It’s Time We Talk](#)

In this exceptional Yom Kippur sermon, Rabbi Ed Feinstein implores us to do the hard work – have the difficult conversations, draft wills, complete advanced directives – in order to leave gifts of peace, wholeness and gratitude in death.

- [Sabbath](#)

In his deeply personal style, neurologist Oliver Sacks traces the ways in which the Jewish Sabbath helped instill a sense of purpose and peace in his life, even and especially in the face of death.

- [The Space Between Mourning and Grief](#)
Jewish tradition tells us we must mourn in community, but it likely never anticipated the complexities of mourning in an age of social media. Claire Wilmot explores how to grieve empathically in the digital world.
- [Getting Dead Loved Ones #Offline](#)
At Jewish funerals, dirt is tossed on the coffin to symbolize the finality of a life lived. But with social media today, further steps are required to ensure the finality of one's digital footprint. This practical guide offers instructions on what to do with the online accounts of a loved one who has died.
- [Forever Letters](#)
Writing 'forever letters,' Elana Zaiman says, brings people face to face with their values and what they've learned through the years.
- [The Unique Loneliness of Grief](#)
With loss, immense loneliness and isolation often follow, Perhaps that is why Judaism has laid out such a detailed and structured mourning process. This secular article expands on the loneliness precipitated by the death of a loved one and offers some thoughts on how best to navigate that trying time.
- [The Moral Bucket List](#)
Upon our arrival at the gates of Heaven, Judaism tells us that our entry is determined by the content of our character rather than our achievements. David Brooks asks, by what values are we living our lives, and are they what ultimately matter in life?
- [Grief Landscapes](#)
Here, an artist captures personalized grief through photography, as a source of healing for those experiencing loss.
- [What to Do When A Loved One is Dying: Jewish Resources](#)
In addition to the medical issues that arise as someone is dying, we are often worried about what we should say and do. Regardless of how religious the dying individual is, there is often comfort in traditions that have been Jewish practice for centuries. This article offers some Jewish traditions and resources to help guide you through this difficult time.
- [My Mother's Death and Why Writing an Ethical Will is Important](#)
After the deaths of his parents, Rabbi Jon Rosove reflects on how he wishes they had left him an ethical will.
- [Navigating Grief's Wilderness](#)
Using Kubler-Ross' formulation of the five stages of grief, Brenner maps "the wilderness of grief", and the sukkot, temporary dwellings, we inhabit in each.
- [Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night](#)
Poet Dylan Thomas offers a hypnotic composition about the dying process. His chutzpadik charge rails against more conventional approaches.

- [Top Five Regrets of the Dying](#)

So long as we are living, we are capable of reflection and growth. Having worked for many years with patients in the final weeks of their life, Bronnie Ware shares the five most common regrets she encountered and the life lessons gained from facing one's own mortality.

- [Traditional Jewish Mourning Practices](#)

The Kavod v'Nihum society explains the stages of mourning in the Jewish tradition, from the moment of death through the yahrtzeit, the annual anniversary of death.

- [Good Grief: Is There a Better Way to Be Bereaved?](#)

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross famously changed the conversation around grieving when she articulated the stages of grief, yet in Western cultures, we don't know how to grieve anymore. Meghan O'Rourke says we underestimate the power of ritual and community in the grieving process.

Library: Watch

- [An overview of The Conversation Project](#)

Dr. Kate Lally discusses Care New England role as a pioneer sponsor of The Conversation Project as well issues around end-of-life care, palliative care and hospice. The Conversation Project is dedicated to helping people talk about their wishes for end-of-life care. This nationwide campaign is focused on starting that conversation early so that they can take place at the dinner table, not in the intensive care unit. In order to become conversation-ready, Care New England has developed a conversation nurse model. That model consists of nurses that are employed and trained by Care New England to have these conversations with patients. After meeting with the patient, these nurses become advocates, and use their knowledge to consult on the patient's case. Since its collaboration with the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, The Conversation Project has been devoted to the improvement of care for all patients at the end of life.

- [New Ways to Think About Death](#)

For thousands of years, sacred space has played a central role in Jewish tradition. But when was the last time you considered the importance of where we die? In this short, provocative talk, architect Alison Killing looks at the buildings where death and dying happen, and asks us how where we die impacts how we die.

- [How Do we Heal Medicine](#)

Our medical systems are broken. Doctors are capable of extraordinary (and expensive) treatments, but they are losing their core focus: actually treating people. Doctor and writer Atul Gawande suggests we take a step back and look at new ways to do medicine — with fewer cowboys and more pit crews.

- [A Strange Relativity: Altered Time for Surgeon-Turned-Patient](#)

The Jewish calendar challenges us to sanctify and mark the passage of time. In this video, neurosurgeon Paul Kalanithi, MD, describes how his perception of time as a neurosurgeon, cancer patient and new father changed when he was diagnosed with lung cancer in his mid-30's and had to face his own mortality.

- [Before I Lost My Hair](#)

In this heartwrenching interpretation of the Psalm 90, Rachel Lopez Rosenberg reflects on her cancer treatments.

- [A Good Goodbye](#)

Certified thanatologist Gail Rubin delivers a humorous but insightful Jewish approach to mortality and end-of-life planning.

- [Having a Child Diagnosed with a Life Limiting Illness](#)

Jewish tradition offers a meaningful process for mourners after someone dies. But

what about the grief that inevitably comes when a loved one is diagnosed with a terminal illness, and particularly when it is one's child?

- [Mushroom Burial Suit](#)

Jewish burial seeks to return us simply to the earth. Artist Jae Rhim Lee wants us to go further: can we commit our bodies to a cleaner, greener Earth using a special burial suit seeded with pollution-gobbling mushrooms?

- [Before I Die I Want To...](#)

It's the greatest Yom Kippur exercise ever. In her New Orleans neighborhood, artist Candy Chang turned an abandoned house into a giant chalkboard asking a fill-in-the-blank question: "Before I die I want to ___." Her neighbors' answers — surprising, poignant, funny — became an unexpected mirror for the community.

- [The Coffinmaker](#)

For Marcus Daly, building coffins is his avodah, his sacred service, a deeply personal and religious craft of love.

- [The Grieving Process: Coping with Death](#)

This highly accessible guide to mourning gives advice that we all could stand to be reminded of, whether we are the bereaved or in the role of comforter.

- [Find a Place of Rest](#)

Frank Ostaseski, Founder of the Metta institute, discusses the power of finding a Shabbat-like place of rest amidst chaos and activity, and in this case, right on the cusp of death.

- [Can We End Aging?](#)

If you could maintain optimal health up until the day you die, would you? Or is that playing God? Biomedical gerontologist Dr. Aubrey de Grey makes the case that aging is a disease that we can and should try to cure.

- [Jewish Mourning Rituals](#)

Jewish mourning rituals are a powerful guide through the darkest days. Learn the basics of the traditional Jewish mourning process in this short animated video from BimBam.

- [When Should Dying Patients Stop Treatment?](#)

In the mi sh'berakh – the prayer for healing – are we creating false hope? At what point should we stop asking for healing and focus instead on the end? In this video, Dr. Atul Gawande has a candid and intimate conversation with the widower of a deceased patient and apologizes for avoiding the reality of the imminent end.

- [Taking Comfort in Ancient Wisdom – A Jewish Mourning Story](#)

When Jana's father passed away, she was worried that her connection to Judaism and spirituality would disappear. Instead, the traditions of shiva, the traditional seven day period of Jewish mourning, brought her that much closer.

- [Death Rituals: Creating Jewish Life](#)
Jamie Sarche, a funeral director, tells us how her knowledge and comfort around death led her to connect to her Jewishness through one of Judaism's heaviest and most difficult rituals.
- [The Angels Everywhere](#)
Rabbi Ed Feinstein shares how his personal experience with cancer shaped the way he sees others.
- [Saying Goodbye with Poetry](#)
When Susan's husband, Morton, passed away, a group at her synagogue stepped up and offered support during an incredibly difficult time.
- [A Video Game to Cope With Grief](#)
When Amy Green's young son was diagnosed with a rare brain tumor, she made up a bedtime story for his siblings to teach them about cancer. What resulted was a video game, "That Dragon, Cancer." In this beautiful talk about coping with loss, Green brings joy and play to tragedy.
- [What is the Kaddish?](#)
While to many Jews, the Kaddish is known primarily as the prayer recited at funerals, that wasn't always the case. Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg offers some background.
- [What Really Matters at the End of Life](#)
At the end of our lives, what do we most wish for? For many, it's simply comfort, respect, love. BJ Miller is a palliative care physician who thinks deeply about how to create a dignified, graceful end of life for his patients. Take the time to savor this moving talk, which asks big questions about how we think on death and honor life (TED Talk).
- [Death Questions from Kids](#)
Caitlin Doughty, from Ask a Mortician, fields questions from kids about death and dying.

Library: Listen

- [Death Shall Have No Dominion](#)

Judaism asserts that death is not the end, since the memory of the deceased lives on as a blessing in the world. In this eerily beautiful poem, Dylan Thomas explores the mystery of eternity, adamant that death does not have the final say.

- [The Town Where Everyone Talks About Death](#)

In this community, talking about death is a comfortable conversation — neighbors kibbitz about who on the block hasn't filled out their advance directive.

- [Contemplating Mortality](#)

Dr. Ira Byock is a leading figure in palliative care and hospice in the United States. He says we lose sight of “the remarkable value” of the time of life we call dying if we forget that it's always a personal and human event, and not just a medical one. From his place on this medical frontier, he shares how we can understand dying as a time of learning, repair, and completion of our lives.

- [Death is Harder Than it Has to Be](#)

In his book *The Best Care Possible*, Dr. Ira Byock argues that the way most Americans die is a national disgrace — an ethical, moral and economic crisis that will get a great deal worse as the baby boomers age. How can we transform end of life care?

- [The Amen Effect](#)

Why can't you say Mourner's Kaddish alone in your living room? Rabbi Sharon Brous argues that the word “Amen” is one of the most powerful healing agents in the grieving process, and saying Amen to someone else's Kaddish could very possibly change both of your lives.

- [Cliffhangers](#)

The great lesson of Yom Kippur is that we are standing at the edge of the abyss — something we could use to be reminded of even without a diagnosis. This could be paralyzing or liberating — let's let it free us to become who we can be.

- [The Inevitability of Death](#)

When the death of a loved one reminds us of our own vulnerability and mortality, how do we choose life?

- [Funeral Exercise](#)

Dr. Stephen Covey asks us to visualize our own funeral, as a reminder of what's most important in life.

- [Heaven and Earth](#)

On Yom Kippur, the line between this world and the next is as fuzzy as it will be all year, especially during Yizkor, the memorial prayer. How can we touch the closeness?

- [The Show Must Go On](#)

Singing of his furious desire to live in spite of diminishing strength, this Queen song is

an ode to Freddy Mercury's terminal battle with HIV/AIDS, and resonates with the Jewish charge to "choose life!"

- [Bedside Manner](#)

It is still beyond human capability to predict when a person will die. So for doctors who must deliver that fatal news to patients, it can be a difficult and complicated conversation. Dr. Pauline Chen discusses.

- [What Doesn't Kill You](#)

Tig was diagnosed with cancer. A week later she went on stage in Los Angeles and did a now-legendary set about her string of misfortunes.

- [Finding the Lesson in Loss](#)

Shiva and the Jewish mourning process is meant to help us grieve healthily. Actor Alicia Coppola describes the challenges and importance of grieving for herself after the death of her father.

- [On Suffering, Beliefs, and Dying](#)

Author Christopher Hitchens, diagnosed with cancer and chronicling his illness, reflects on prayer, solidarity and the cosmos.

- [Don't Freak Out About Dying](#)

To everything there is a season. For 89 year old rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, entering "the December of his years" means thinking deeply about this final stage, and sharing his wisdom with the rest of us. Start at 8:50.

- [Culture of Dying](#)

With speech, the world was created. But if language is so important, why are we as Americans afraid to call death by its name? Stephen Jenkinson explains what this fear is doing to our culture and how we can change it. Listen from 8:30 – 25:00.

- [Congratulations You Gonna Die](#)

British philosopher and Zen Scholar Alan Watts delivers a series of humorous yet thoughtful musings on death with a particular dry and lucid wit. Nothing particularly Jewish here, except for the idea that a death dinner ought to make you laugh.

- [Breaking the Taboo Against Talking About Death](#)

Michael Hebb, founder of Let's Have Dinner and Talk About Death, says how we want to die represents the most important and costly conversation Americans aren't having. He explains how this project gives people the tools to move through these conversations.

- [In the Valley of the Shadow of Death](#)

Rabbi Sharon Brous reminds us that talking about dying, death, grief and what comes after can imbue our lives with meaning, purpose and love.

- [Green Burial in Judaism and Catholicism](#)

Rabbi Stewart Kelman and Father Charles Morris discuss the place of religion and

spirituality within the green burial movement. From the Chevra Kadisha Society's annual conference.

- [Ashes](#)

How writer David Sedaris and his family reacted when Sedaris's mother—a lifelong, unrepentant smoker—developed lung cancer. After a lifetime of barbed, funny remarks, no one in the family is prepared to talk about their feelings.

- [What is a Death Doula?](#)

Emily Pinzur discusses how, as a Death and Mourning Doula, she supports people during or after the death of a loved one. On the Jewish Sacred Aging Podcast.

- [Kodak Moments of the Dead](#)

Ira Glass explores how technology might evolve how Americans typically do funerals, which haven't changed much since the Civil War.

- [The Kibitz Podcast Episode 27- Death](#)

Is there something peculiar to Judaism that makes us think about death differently? With no proscription for a definitive heaven or afterlife, how does that affect how we live our lives and think about death? Are Jewish rituals an effective way of dealing with grief? Are there better ways to think and talk about death with friends and family? In our final episode from season 2 we address these questions with British comedian David Baddiel (who you might remember from this season's atheism episode), Rabbi Amichai Lau-Lavie from NYC's Lab/Shul, founder of Death Over Dinner and DoD Jewish Edition Michael Hebb and Dan Crane's 97-year-old nana.