

Cooperative Funeral Fund Inc.

Talking About the D Word

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Hardwood Value Redefined

PAGE 58

INSIDE:

NFDA Preview

Must See Companies & Must See Products

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TALKING ABOUT THE “D” WORD

by Ann Marie St. George

life asked death,
"WHY DO PEOPLE LOVE ME
BUT HATE YOU?"
death responded,
"BECAUSE YOU ARE A
BEAUTIFUL LIE
AND I AM A
PAINFUL TRUTH"

Dead, deadweight, death, deathbed, deathblow, death notice, death penalty, death-rattle, death-sentence, death-squad, death-toll, deathtrap, decay, deceased, decedent, decomposition, demise, departure, die, dying, and died. Not to be confused with the “Big D” word Divorce. Which, as funeral directors, we have a higher than most incidence of; Some say a perk of the job.

Let’s talk about the “D” word Death; The reason we all do what we do. Often, we seem to focus on the negatives of our chosen careers, while forgetting some of the brighter aspects — like not being on either of lists of people below.

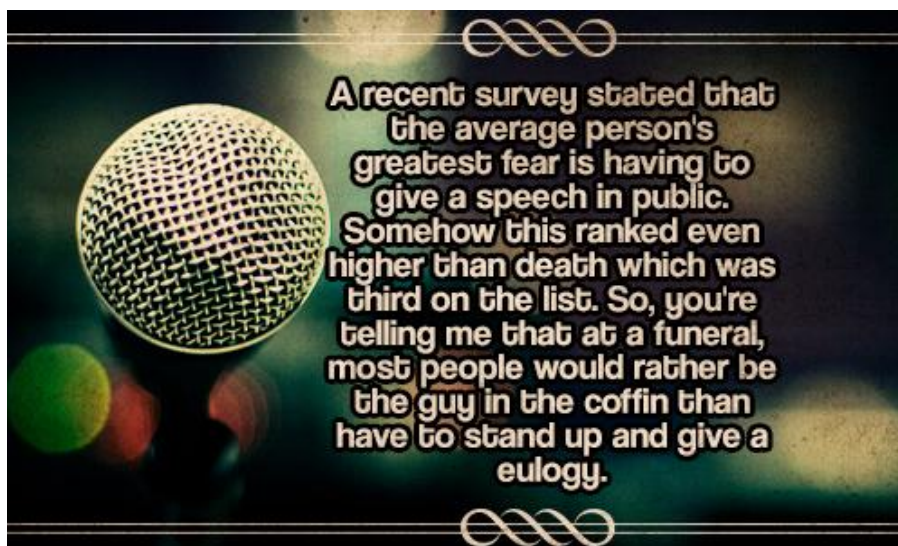
Top 10 jobs where you are most likely to die at work:

1. Fishers and related fishing workers
2. Logging Workers
3. Aircraft pilots and flight engineer
4. Structural Iron and Steel Workers
5. Farmers and Ranchers
6. Roofers
7. Electrical power-line installers and repairers
8. Driver- sales workers and truck drivers
9. Refuse and Recyclable Material Collector
10. Police & Sheriff Patrol Officers

Top 10 careers with the highest suicide rate:

1. Dentists
2. Musicians
3. Actors
4. Dancers
5. Authors
6. Photographers
7. Artists- sculptors and painters
8. Carpenters
9. Doctors
10. Performers- comedians

I believe we have truly dodged a proverbial bullet. Ironically, even though we are most likely not going to die on the job or because of our job, our mantra should be; “Talk about dying to everyone.” The general public still considers speaking about death a taboo. They would rather have a tooth pulled then discuss it with the ones they love — ultimately the ones making their end of life decisions. This off-limits belief is the basis for why we should focus on convincing the community where we live and work into having “the talk” with their own families and friends. This is a much different “talk” than the one our parents had with us as kids. I believe you may remember it as the discussion of the birds and the bees (baby boomers and older you know what I am talking about).



Death is one event we are never going to avoid. Most humans find this concept very worrisome. Based mostly on the ideas of Ernest Becker (The Denial of Death), three psychologists; Jeff Greenberg (University of Ariona), Sheldon Solomon (Skidmore College) and Tom Pyszczynski (University of Colorado), developed the Terror Management Theory (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/terror-management-theory>). The theory originates with the premise that humans who are both aware of their mortality and have a desire to live are often filled with terror/fear. The thought of fading away into oblivion does not give most of us the warm and fuzzies. So, in order to suppress this terror/fear, we deny what

we know to be inevitable and choose to not talk about it. If you don't talk about it, it won't happen.

One would think that the older you become, the more afraid of death one becomes. Oddly, enough quite the opposite is true. Maybe it is the reality that you have more years behind you than in front of you that helps one to develop an almost matter-of-fact feeling towards death. Rather than fearing death as other cohorts, individuals in the age ranges of 70's, 80's, 90's even 100's are more approachable in discussing their final wishes. This is your sweet spot when it comes to preplanning. Some would say it is your low hanging fruit. But, if you are like me, you enjoy a good challenge.

Our industry depends upon us reaching out across all generations, especially the middle-aged and younger generations where the fear of death is more evident. Explore creative ways to encourage people to discuss their final wishes. Whether by holding monthly discussion groups in your funeral home, local churches, or community centers or by bringing in subject matter experts into the local schools to talk to the students and their teachers. Talk to your local cemeterians, florists, clergy and combine your resources to offer end of life education. Many of your local, state and national associations offer materials and ideas to get you started. You are only limited by your willingness to be open-minded. So, get off your dead... and start building your individual thumbprint on discussing the "D" word, I dare you!! **FBA**



Ann Marie St. George, CPC, a first-generation funeral director has worked for the past 20 years as a Regional Manager for Cooperative Funeral Fund, a preneed and cemetery care fund management company. Thriving in the industry for over 35 years as a funeral director/embalmer she was pulled into the world of national disasters starting with 9/11 where she lived 11 blocks north of the World Trade Center. She is a Mortuary Officer for both DMORT Region II and Kenyon International Emergency Services. The devastation and grief she has been exposed to has contributed to her unique sense of humor which she does admit may also be due to genetics. She encourages anyone reading her articles to reach out by email at annie@cffinc.com or call (800) 336-1102.