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HOW TO DIE IN DALLAS

EAT CAKE
AT AN OAK LAWN DEATH CAFE

TRANSITION WITH A DEATH DOULA

CLEAN HOUSE
LIKE YOUR LIFE DEPENDS ON IT

BUTTON UP
YOUR ESTATE

HOLD A FUNERAL AT HOME

PLAN FOR A GRACIOUS GOODBYE SO YOU CAN LIVE IT UP TILL TIME RUNS OUT.

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Your Kids Don't Want Your Sh*t

She who dies with the most toys fills
a larger dumpster after her funeral. *By Lisa Kanarek*

When my husband and I looked closely at the floor-to-ceiling shelves in our garage, he saw the perfect chance to give his four children his grandma's dishes, old photo albums, and sports equipment. I saw something else. Looking deep into his blue eyes—our marriage was still relatively new—I said these six magic words: “Your kids don't want your shit.”

As a former professional organizer for 15 years, I've worked with clients who had felt comfortable surrounded by items from their past but had reached a point where they were finally ready to make a few changes. But not everyone is open to letting go. Sometimes it takes extra motivation to put our possessions in perspective and make decluttering easier.

Enter Swedish death cleaning. In her bestselling book, *The Gentle Art of Swedish Death Cleaning*, Margareta Magnusson describes the process as “removing unnecessary things and making

your home nice and orderly when you think the time is coming closer for you to leave the planet.” In other words, clear out your stuff so others don't have to deal with it after you die.

You don't have to be facing your own mortality to cull through your collections, but keeping the end of life in mind at any age can be a strong incentive to clear out your home. Consider these tips for getting started.

BEGIN WITH BIG ITEMS Take a close look at the main living areas in your home. Are you ready to part with a bulky entertainment center or a china cabinet? What about other outdated or broken furniture relegated to the garage years ago? Some DIYers thrive on repurposing pieces, but if sanding and staining aren't your forte, why not rehome them? You can list them on Facebook Marketplace or Nextdoor, or donate them to a charity like the Dallas Furniture Bank, an organization that will pick up furnishings for \$50 and give them to people in need. Sure, check with family members first, but don't be offended if they don't want your furniture. “Young people aren't looking for the same types of things that our parents had,” says Anne Baron, owner of Settle in Solutions, a company specializing in helping seniors downsize and relocate. “So it is harder and harder to get those things placed into a new home.”

ILLUSTRATION BY MARYAM AZIZ

CULL THROUGH YOUR CLOTHING When I worked with clients, many had trouble parting with clothing they hadn't worn in years but were holding on to "just in case." We laid their clothes on the bed, and, piece by piece, separated them into two groups: keep and donate. "How do you feel when you wear this?" I'd ask, or "How comfortable are those shoes after an hour?" or "Do you really need six little black dresses?" Exhausted after the third hour of sorting, they increased their decision-making skills along with their bags to donate. A few places to drop off gently used clothing include donation centers like The Family Place Resale Shop (11722 Marsh Ln., Ste. 354) and thrift shops like the Genesis Benefit Thrift Store (3419 Knight St.). Finding your local Buy Nothing group (buynothingproject.org) is another good way to give back to the community. And to reduce clothing and other textile waste in landfills, you can order Trashie's "The Take Back Bag"; fill the pre-labeled \$20 bag with unwanted clothes, shoes, and linens, and mail it in for the contents to be reused or recycled (shop.trashie.io).

DECLUTTER YOUR KITCHEN Without fail, each time I helped a client organize their kitchen, I heard, "I've been looking for that!" There's nothing wrong with keeping useful and meaningful items as long as you can find them when needed. But do you need three sets of silverware, a dozen baking sheets, and enough mugs to open a coffee shop? Be ruthless, especially with countertop appliances that serve little purpose other than taking up space.

TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR BOOKS Although traveling with an audiobook or e-book saves space, I still like the feel of paper. I also like to hang on to my favorite titles. Cull through your collection and place the books you no longer want into two boxes: one for donation—don't forget about Little Free Library (littlefreelibrary.org)—and the other to pass along to someone who would enjoy its contents. As for cookbooks, keep the ones you use often. Before you donate the rest, scan the recipes you like and either store them digitally or print them out and slip them inside clear sheets in a binder.

PARE DOWN PICTURES Considering the memories they can evoke, photos can be the hardest to part with. Invite your family over for dinner and make an evening of sifting through pictures. Or pick your favorites and scan them on your own or send them to be digitized. The same goes for old videos. My mom spent a week going through boxes of old photographs, and when each of us visited her, she handed us an envelope stuffed with our childhood memories.

Paring down your possessions takes time, but rather than dread the process, consider the time you spend weeding out, tossing, and making decisions about what you own as a parting gift. You're giving your loved ones time they can spend doing anything other than trying to figure out what to do with what you've left behind. Best of all, they won't have to make up excuses for why they don't want your stuff.

BUILD AN ETHICAL WILL

Whether you're a fat cat or fiat broke, you can still pass along the wisdom you've gleaned during your turns around the sun. Lacy Buynak of The Art of Dying has started on her own "ethical will" in the form of handwritten letters to her kids, each of which explores a value she holds high and how it has played a role in her life. "That actually ended up alleviating more of my fear [about death] instead of just going, 'I don't like that. I'm not going to think about it,'" Buynak says. Google Docs, voice memos, video recordings—there are myriad ways to record your life lessons. And you don't have to wait for your own demise. When her son went to college, Lacy sent him with envelopes marked with such missives as "In the Time of a Bad Breakup" and "In the Time of Feeling Lost."

Your Death Prep Checklist

When my father died four years ago, he left a file folder filled with the documents I needed to manage his care and settle his estate. The information saved time and money. Do your family a favor by completing these documents and sharing them via Google Docs. You can also store information in your own notebook, or one like The Deadbook binder (thedeadbook.co) or Nokbox filing system (thenokbox.com). —L.K.

Durable Financial Power of Attorney.

This document allows the person you appoint to manage your finances if you become incapacitated and cannot make decisions for yourself.

Healthcare Proxy or Durable Medical Power of Attorney.

Authorizes the person you appoint the ability to make healthcare decisions if you become incapacitated and can't make them yourself.

Living Will. Details the treatment you do or do not want to receive from your doctor when you're terminally ill and unable to make your own decisions. Note: the person you designate as your healthcare proxy or durable medical power of attorney must abide by any treatment limitations you identify in your living will; the two documents together form your Advance Directive.

Do Not Resuscitate Order (DNR). Makes it clear that no lifesaving measures will be taken to prolong your life. Make sure the person who serves as your healthcare proxy has a copy and that it's part of your medical record.

Last Will and Testament. A last will and testament provides instructions regarding how you want your property distributed after your death. (You can find information and simple will forms at txcourts.gov/forms.)

Revocable Living Trust. Allows individuals to own and control their property while alive. After their death, it transfers to the person they've specified in advance, allowing it to pass outside of probate.

Quitclaim Deed. A quitclaim deed is used to transfer properties in non-sale situations, for example, between family members.

Life Insurance Policy Information. Lists policy numbers and contact information.

Financial List. Includes bank and investment accounts, account numbers, login information, and safe-deposit box information.

Funeral Plan. Include details for any arrangements you've made or want for your burial, cremation, or memorial service.

List of Items to Leave and to Whom. Instructions can potentially keep family from fighting over your possessions.

Contact: Lisa Kanarek is a Dallas-based writer and death doula who visits hospice patients with Gaia, the other half of her therapy animal team. Find her on Instagram @finalpathdoula.