END-OF-LIFE GUIDE
Secular Grief Resources in the Twin Cities, MN

The End-of-Life Team is composed of members of the First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis and HumanistsMN. We saw a need in our secular communities to offer events, share resources, and provide information that supports individuals and their loved ones through this stage of life.

While our perspective is secular, these resources are gathered to support anyone seeking practical, compassionate, and meaningful end-of-life guidance. This list contains a mix of local events we host, as well as online resources for end-of-life related matters. We hope this helps open conversations, ease planning, provide awareness and useful information, and offer comfort.

Our Events

The events in this section are free to attend and all are welcome.

Death Cafes

Death Cafes are informal, participant-centered gatherings where people drink tea, eat cake, and discuss death in a relaxed, agenda-free setting to help make the most of their finite lives. For several years we've been hosting in-person Death Cafes approximately once a month from September through April.

End-of-Life Planning Programs

End-of-Life programming does not currently have a set or regular schedule; we try to respond to what our members are most interested in. Previous programs have included:

- The Purposeful Purge: Turning Stuff into Support for Local Causes (presentation)
- What is a Death Doula? (panel discussion)
- Natural Options After Death (presentation)
- Legacy Letters (presentation & workshop)
- Estate Planning Essentials (presentation)
- Health Care Directives (presentation & workshop)

Check either of our calendars for upcoming dates of either of these events:

https://meetup.com/humanism-166/events/
https://firstunitarian.org/calendar/

We do maintain two email lists to announce when new Death Cafes and End-of-Life Planning programs are scheduled. Use this Google form to manage your notifications about these events.

Secular Grief Support Group

This grief group is for those who have experienced the recent or not-so-recent death of a loved one. It is a peer-led group (not professional grief counseling) for people with no belief in a higher power or the afterlife. Meetings are currently online and occur approximately monthly.

Check either of our calendars for upcoming dates:

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Grief Teas

The FUS Congregational Care Team occasionally hosts Grief Teas to bring people together for shared comfort and gentle reflection.

Blue Holiday Service

This intimate gathering, held in December, sets aside time to name that grief, ennui, or discontent that, for some, is acutely felt at this time of year. Folks who have experienced loss, are going through significant transitions, or who find this to be a painful or lonely time of year, will have an opportunity to light candles, to name what they're carrying (if they want to), and to hear words of comfort and beautiful music.

Check the FUS calendar periodically for upcoming dates, or contact the FUS office to find out what might be coming up.

https://firstunitarian.org/calendar/

Other Resources

Inclusive / Non-Denominational Twin Cities Resources

- **Downtown Minneapolis Coalition for Grief Support**
  A free, non-profit peer support and grief education resource for adults dealing with the death of a someone. The group explicitly welcomes people regardless of religious affiliation. Holds weekly Saturday meetings that rotate around meeting spaces in downtown Minneapolis.
  https://mplsgriefsupport.com

- **Brighter Days Family Grief Center**
  Offers grief support programs, peer connections, and resources for children, teens, and families navigating a loss. While community-oriented, their family and youth programs focus on practical coping rather than religious instruction.
  https://brighterdaysgriefcenter.org

National Online Secular Resources

- **Grief Beyond Belief**
  An online community and curated directory specifically built for people navigating grief free from religion.
  https://griefbeyondbelief.org/resources

Future Guides

Our intention is to develop additional End-of-Life Guides to provide resources for all the major aspects of end-of-life preparations, services, and care/support. In the meantime, here's an overview of topics you may wish to learn more about on your own.

Legal and Advanced Care Planning

For individuals looking to secure their autonomy.

Advance Directives & Living Wills	Documenting healthcare preferences and appointing a healthcare proxy or durable power of attorney for healthcare.
The Minnesota Health Care Directive	Providing direct access to state-specific statutory forms.
Financial & Estate Planning	Wills, statutory short-form durable power of attorney for finances, trusts, and transfer-on-death (TOD) deeds.
Digital Estate Management	Managing digital assets, online accounts, passwords, and instructions for legacy data or account deletion.

Medical Care & Personal Autonomy

Choices that prioritize comfort and self-determination.

Hospice vs. Palliative Care	Palliative is comfort care alongside treatment; hospice is comfort care when curative treatment has stopped.
VSED (Voluntarily Stopping Eating and Drinking)	Resources and clinical support frameworks for those choosing this path to accelerate a terminal timeline.
Medical Aid in Dying (MAID) Advocacy	Educational updates on the status of legislation like the Minnesota End-of-Life Option Act and national advocacy groups.
POLST (Provider Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment)	Explaining how this actionable medical order differs from a standard health care directive for those with advanced frailty or terminal illness.

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Body Disposition & Eco-Friendly Options

Green options, consumer rights, and environmental impacts.

Green Burial / Natural Burial	Conventional options that focus on returning the body naturally to the earth (forgoing toxic embalming fluids, concrete vaults, and metal caskets).
Alkaline Hydrolysis (Aquamation / Water Cremation)	An eco-friendly alternative to flame cremation, and uses water and alkali.
Natural Organic Reduction (Human Composting)	Tracking the legislative status of human composting in Minnesota and out-of-state options.
Conventional Burial and Cremation Consumer Rights	Links to the FTC's "Funeral Rule" to prevent hidden fees and connects users with regional consumer advocates.
Anatomical Donation	Donating one's body to science (e.g., the University of Minnesota's Anatomy Bequest Program).

Emotional, Communal, and Secular Support

Addressing the human element without religious frameworks.

Secular Grief Support	Resources for navigating grief from a secular / humanist / agnostic / atheist worldview; free from religious language.
Death Cafes & Death Literacy	Normalizing conversations about mortality in non-judgmental community settings.
Death Doulas, End-of-Life Companions, and Humanist Chaplains	Non-medical emotional, spiritual (or secular/meaning-making), and practical support before and during active dying.
Legacy and Ethical Wills	Writing an "ethical will" or legacy letter to pass down personal values, life lessons, stories, and wishes to future generations.

Practical: Immediate Post-Death Care & Logistics

What to do in the first 24 to 72 hours.

Home Funerals & Family-Led Death Care	Information on Minnesota laws regarding a family's right to care for their own dead at home without using a traditional funeral director.
Immediate Checklist Upon Death	A step-by-step practical guide on what entities need to be notified, immediate logistics, and how to obtain death certificates.