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## About this eBook

The purpose of this eBook is to provide information and suggestions necessary to assist in the most essential and considerate task of preparing for death in a responsible way.

The information and suggestions include:

- The importance and benefits of preparing responsibly for death.
- How to prepare responsibly for death, the practical aspects and the spiritual and psychological aspects.

This information is gathered from extensive research by the author on this subject, from the author's personal experience when loved ones have died and from interactions with various organisations in the field of death, loss, grief and bereavement.

Included are comments and opinions based on the author's many years of involvement in the field of grief and bereavement support.

## How to prepare responsibly for death – Importance and benefits

In society today death is no longer a ‘silent’ subject. Over the last few years, more people of all ages are becoming increasingly conscious of their responsibility to prepare for their own death or the death of a loved one.

### Why we need to think seriously about death

Many people are aware of the need to have a will and final testament. Others are pre-paying for their funeral or taking out an insurance policy to cover the expense of their funeral. However, because death is final, it is not easy to think seriously about our own death for several reasons.



#### IMPORTANT GUIDELINES

#### Reasons we don’t like to think seriously about death

Situation	Reason
Fear of facing our vulnerability	When we think about death we are reminded about our personal vulnerability.
Fear of the unknown	What lies beyond is unknown and beyond the ability of scientific knowledge. Therefore, most of us find it inconceivable to imagine our own death.
Advances in medical science and technology	In our sophisticated society, medical and technological advances are moving so rapidly that cures are continually being discovered for illnesses and injuries which in the past were terminal.
Increase in life expectancy	As a result of the medical and technological advances the expected life span of humans, particularly in the developed countries of the world, has increased dramatically.

Dwelling too much on the inevitability of death is unrealistic and would adversely affect our enjoyment of life and leave us in a constant state of anxiety. It would affect our ability to function properly in many ways. For instance, we might:

- become afraid of leaving the house because of the possibility of meeting with a fatal accident



- become reluctant to form relationships because of the possibility of getting hurt when the other person dies
- dread going to bed at night in case we die in our sleep.

Spending too much time dwelling on such negative thoughts is obviously unwise and unhealthy. On the other hand, refusing to contemplate life's uncertainties and the inevitability of death is no less unrealistic. We all live with life's vulnerabilities as well as its possibilities, and sooner or later we all have to face death.

### Advantages of preparing responsibly for death

Although we cannot be equipped for every eventuality, we can at least prepare for our death in a responsible way so as not to leave our loved ones totally at a loss about what needs to be done when we die.

What needs to be done to prepare responsibly for death varies from person to person. A myriad of emotions will be experienced when addressing the practical, deeply personal and spiritual issues that are involved in this preparation. It takes courage and strength and a willingness to face the issues head on. However, making these decisions in advance has many benefits.



#### IMPORTANT GUIDELINES

#### The advantages of preparing responsibly for death

Situation	Advantages
Making arrangements in the calm of today.	This will bring about the satisfaction of knowing that we have done our best to reduce the anxiety and stress and confusion that the family usually experiences when someone dies.
Having worked through and decided on exactly what we would like to happen when we die.	Gives us a sense of security and peace of mind for ourselves and for our entire family.
Taking the opportunity to discuss these issues with the family members.	Our loved ones will have the satisfaction of having input in making these decisions.
Leaving clear instructions for the family.	This will lift the burden of having to make these decisions from our loved ones at a time when they are in a state of grief.  Not having to worry about these decisions gives them more time to deal with their own feelings of grief.
Putting things in order with regard to personal records and documents.  Getting rid of unnecessary possessions.	This will make it easier when the time comes to finalise our affairs.

