



 Dying to 
Understand

THE BIG EVENT

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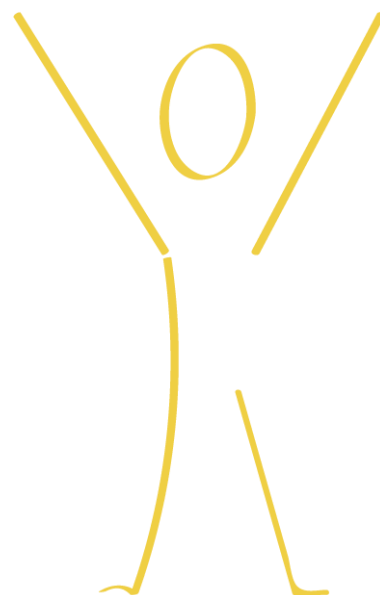
Life is full of big events.

We are celebrated at birth, and every year we remind ourselves and those around us of the greatness of *that* day. Add to these other big events such as graduations, weddings, engagements or the birth of grandchildren, and we soon realise that there is a lot to celebrate in life. The bigness of the event parallels the value we give to the occasion.

One of the biggest events we will have in life is a funeral. It is a solemn and sad affair where friends and family meet to remember and honour the recently deceased person. All the important people will be there except the guest of honour. The most important person won't be able to make it—death does that to you. Often the grief and loss at a funeral distract from being able to celebrate the life that was lost. In the general chaos of a funeral, things are often forgotten and words that were meant to be said are left unattended and slip away.

Rather than wait for the funeral, why not celebrate your life and be part of the celebration? I am sure there may be a hundred good reasons why not to do this—but they don't pass the test. The reason to celebrate your life is because you are worth it.

Even if the 'big event' is a coffee with one other person, we encourage you to celebrate your life; to give thanks for the good, to perhaps ask forgiveness for the not so good and to accept that *you do matter*. If your life, or the life of someone you know is ending, why not honour this life with a celebration.



The benefits of a Big Event

1. A Big Event is a celebration of life and, for the day, it puts death and illness on notice

Sometimes in illness (terminal illnesses in particular), there are fewer and fewer really good days. There may be times when life seems to be consumed with 'waiting to die'. Illness may take away pleasure or even the expectation of pleasure, so to have a good day requires some planning. Even with planning it may not be the best day, but it also won't be the worst day.

Why not plan for an 'illness-free' day where life is celebrated, and illness and all its limitations are put on hold? Why not plan for the best day on your terms and celebrate all the good things in life in defiance of all the bad things illness brings?

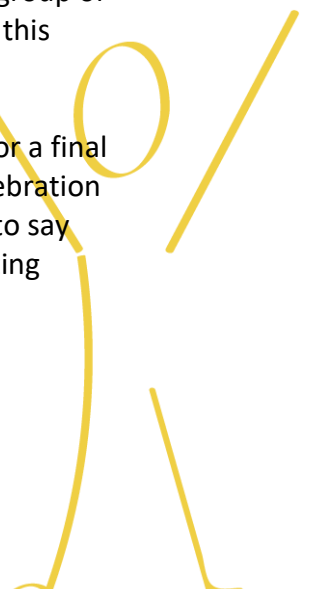
2. It is a celebration of your life

You matter and your life counts—with all its ups and downs. Regardless of your achievements or perhaps failures, there is an opportunity to have a day when you can celebrate life, celebrate being alive and being part of the world of the living. Dead people don't get to celebrate so why not make use of an opportunity to celebrate everything or anything good.

3. It is an opportunity to catch up with all those people who matter to you

When life is ending, one of the most difficult things to do is to say the goodbyes. Not everyone may deserve the honour to be invited, but if you have a group of friends or family members who mean a lot to you and who do deserve this honour, why not invite them to celebrate your life or life in general.

It also saves on time and the road-trip to get around to see everyone for a final goodbye. By inviting them to the *Big Event*, the tone can be set for celebration in preference to doom and gloom. The event may be the perfect time to say farewell in a positive and happy way. Leave your loved ones with a lasting impression of how well life can be lived.

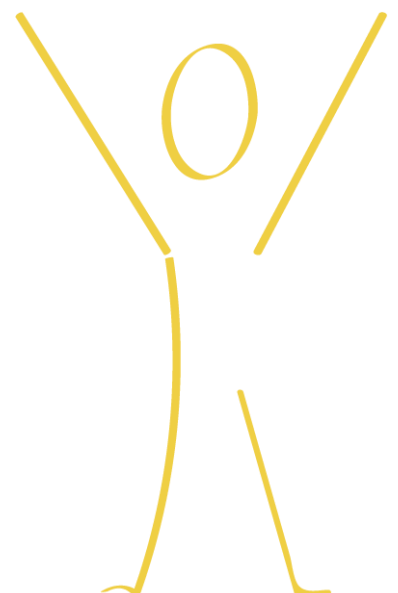


4. It will leave lasting memories

Funerals are sad occasions and people often don't remember much about the chaos brought about by a funeral. Often funerals are inconveniences in people's life. By having a celebration of life, people may remember your life for all the right reasons. If there are speeches and 'roasts' where everyone is having a fun, it may inspire a change in attitude towards death and dying, showing others how to get on with living.

5. It is great to have something to look forward to

In the same way that every great meal requires a little dessert or cheese and wine to round it off, we all need a little something extra occasionally to make life sweeter. Having something exciting and enjoyable on the horizon is good for us. A *Big Event* may be just what the doctor ordered, especially if someone else organises or plans it for you.



The preparation

1. *Have a can-do attitude*

Illness will demand that you say NO!

There will be every excuse not to have a *Big Event* – it's too costly; too difficult; not enough time and so the list can go on and on. With a *can't-do* attitude a big event will become a non-event.

We encourage you however, to be bold, to stare death in the eye if you must, and celebrate life. Make the event as big or as small as you like, but the important thing is to *plan* for it.

2. *Pick a date*

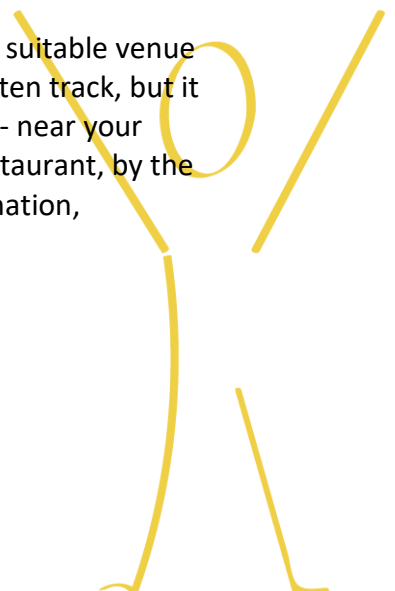
The first step is to select a date—even if it changes, but the sooner you start the better.

This may be a meaningful date such as a wedding anniversary, a birthday or another significant day or just a date that looks good to you. Pick a day that is convenient for you and that will most likely suit guests (particularly those who need to travel) and one that is suitable in terms of medical appointments or other commitments.

Once the date is set, the party can almost begin.

3. *Pick a venue*

Here lies a world of endless possibility. The easiest way to find a suitable venue is to look somewhere local, near home and not far from the beaten track, but it doesn't have to be. Options can include whatever you so desire - near your children (let them do the heavy lifting), on a cruise, a train, a restaurant, by the beach or in the garden. The only ingredients required are imagination, convenience and cost considerations.



4. *Paying the bill*

Money matters even if you cannot take it with you. Plan a budget and if the budget and costs blow out, why not ask the guests to contribute—they most likely will. Another option, if you want to be extravagant, is to create a Go Fund Me campaign. People do care and you will be surprised how willing people are to support a good cause.

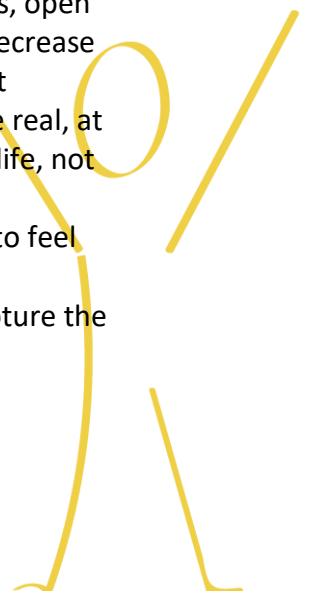
5. *Pick those you want to invite*

It is essential that you control the list of invitees. Don't invite enemies, those you don't like or those who do not matter. It is your day and it should be about you having fun and spending quality time with those you love. Make sure those you invite are the ones you love and care about, those you want to honour or want to spend this time with. Apart from that there are no rules.

The day

Make the day count. Here are our suggestions for a successful day.

- ✓ Dress nice, get your hair cut and look your best. When you look good, you feel good
- ✓ Make sure you have enough medication, pain meds or otherwise, on board to see you through the day
- ✓ Keep it short if needs be. You don't have to turn a party into a marathon
- ✓ Have a plan B. If you feel unwell, don't suffer through it and forget to enjoy. If needs be excuse yourself and leave the guests to party on
- ✓ Say something - people hate doing speeches, but it is an ideal opportunity to share what's in your heart with those you love. They will be grateful for the speech, we guarantee
- ✓ Be prepared for the emotional toll – saying goodbyes are difficult so make it easier on yourself. Have your support person with you, pop balloons, open some champagne, recall a fun story or have some other device to decrease the tension if emotions are running high. Dancing on the table is not recommended, but defusing emotions is handy. While emotions are real, at this stage keep the mood positive so you are truly celebrating your life, not death
- ✓ Get a teammate or a support person to carry the load, people love to feel useful so don't do it all yourself
- ✓ Remember to get a photographer, professional or otherwise, to capture the event as this will be invaluable



The day after

Rest, you will be exhausted but hopefully equally delighted by the success of the *Big Event*. Don't be afraid to express any emotion you have associated with it. Why not send a small gift to family and friends....perhaps a photo of you and them as a keepsake of the fun that was had. Perhaps you can create a photo album of the day for all to share in.

Do it now

To plan for a Big event requires a single word—Yes! Give yourself permission to celebrate life while you are alive. Make it count even if it is on a small scale. Pick a day for fun; to be a little irresponsible and wild. We only live once, so there's no better time to make it matter.

We would love to celebrate with you. Why not share your event on www.dyingtounderstand.com.

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