

Why Don't We Spend More Time Preparing for Death?

If I told you a hurricane was certain to strike your neighborhood in five days, what would you do in those five days?

You probably wouldn't spend that time thinking about what to do if you got in a car accident. You wouldn't spend them planning for career contingencies. You wouldn't spend it thinking about your dream vacation, or buying domain names for a project you may do someday, or planning your kids long-term education.

All those things are fine activities, but they involve preparing for something that might happen. Meanwhile the hurricane is guaranteed to happen. It would be weird to spend all your energy on many things that could happen and ignore the one thing that absolutely will happen.

We will all die.

Death is the only fact of life that is utterly and inescapably universal.

We know it's coming. It will happen. It's the only guarantee in all of life.

Yet it seems like the thing we spend the least time and energy preparing for. We do more planning for totally unlikely events like winning the lotto, or global apocalypse, or contracting a rare disease, or becoming famous than we do for the sure thing that is death.

Death denial is widespread. Not just stuff like preparing a will or getting life insurance or creating succession plans. Many people (though not as many as would seem prudent) do these. They kind of check them off the list then try to never think about it again. Like maybe if we don't confront it, it won't happen? But it will.

It would seem normal to spend more time contemplating and preparing for death than anything else. It has a 100% probability of happening. How many things in life can you know with such certainty? It's a huge leg up and ought to make prepping for it easier. Why not pre-death counseling, to emotionally prepare for it? Why not study all theories related to the process of dying, biologically and spiritually, and theories on what might happen next? Why not plan for death like we plan for less sure things?

I'm not sure why we don't. I've been thinking more about death. And, like almost everything, it seems way more scary when avoided than when confronted. I used to think people or religious traditions that talked a lot about death had some unhealthy obsession. Now I wonder if it's those who don't that have the bigger problem.