

Sail the  
7 C's  
of  
Graceful  
Departures



*Keys to Navigating from Here to the  
Afterworld with Ease and Tranquility*

Kevin J. Haselhorst, MD



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No man is an island,  
Entire of itself,  
Every man is a piece of the continent,  
A part of the main.  
If a clod be washed away by the sea,  
Europe is the less.  
As well as if a promontory were.  
As well as if a manor of thy friend's  
Or of thine own were:  
Any man's death diminishes me,  
Because I am involved in mankind,  
And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;  
It tolls for thee.

**John Donne**

This resounding poem provides great awareness of the tremendous toll that death imposes on humankind. Its invocation is a reminder to be more concerned with one's own death than the death of others. The final passage shared by all is to break free from this continent and not live indefinitely. *If a clod be washed away by the sea*, how do we collectively honor or forsake a person drifting out to sea? Some people recognize the end-of-life journey as a final blessing, while others perceive it as a catastrophe.

*FRONTLINE: Facing Death* was a program broadcast on PBS that presented striking facts and figures about how Americans die:<sup>1</sup>

## How We Die

- *Nearly half of all Americans die in a hospital.* Centers for Disease Control (2005)
- *Nearly 70 percent of Americans die in a hospital, nursing home or long-term-care facility.* Centers for Disease Control (2005)
- 7 out of 10 Americans say they would prefer to die at home. Time/CNN Poll (2000)
- Only 25 percent of Americans actually die at home. Centers for Disease Control (2005)
- More than 80 percent of patients with chronic diseases say they want to avoid hospitalization and intensive care when they are dying. Dartmouth Atlas of Health Care (2005)
- Hospitalizations during the last six months of life are rising: from 1,302 hospital admissions per 1,000 Medicare recipients in 1996 to 1,442 in 2005. Dartmouth Atlas of Health Care (2005)
- ICU stays of longer than a week have been increasing. In 1996, 10 percent of Medicare recipients spent at least a week in an ICU during the last six months of their lives; by 2005, the number was 14.4 percent. Dartmouth Atlas of Health Care (2005)
- The 10 leading causes of death in America are (in order): heart disease, cancer, stroke, chronic lower respiratory disease, accidents, Alzheimer's, diabetes, influenza and pneumonia, kidney disease and sepsis (infection). Centers for Disease Control (2007)
- 7 out of 10 Americans die from chronic disease. More than 90 million Americans live with at least one chronic disease. Dartmouth Atlas of Health Care (2005)
- Almost a third of Americans see 10 or more physicians in the last six months of their life. Dartmouth Atlas of Health Care (2005)

- Only 20 to 30 percent of Americans report having an advance directive such as a living will. Associated Press, 2010
- *Even when patients have an advance directive, physicians are often unaware of their patients' preferences. One large-scale study found that only 25 percent of physicians knew that their patients had advance directives on file.* Critical Care Journal (2007)

We may not receive what we want due to being at a loss for words, lack of direction or blatant negligence. When end-of-life wishes are reasonable, suffering is minimized and harm averted. When wishes gravitate to prolonging life indefinitely, the hope and dream for a peaceful transition through actually dying in one's sleep become thwarted. The primary goal of advance care planning is to align dignity with dying. How we get to the afterworld is anyone's guess or simply a matter of personal responsibility and will.

## Any getaway prompts excitement and proper planning.

After years of practicing emergency medicine, I realize the importance of effective communication along with proper discharge instructions. People need both a back-up plan and follow-through course of action. Aside from empathy, I often have little to offer patients and their families near the end of life other than a poor prognosis. Presently, I propose patients approach the last leg of their journey with smooth sailing aboard Graceful Departures.

The prospect of Graceful Departures promises to be all-inclusive, all-too-inviting and tempting. Ending life with ease and tranquility might seem like selling out to some, while to others it is a well-deserved reward. Nevertheless, the final blessing of Graceful Departures offers an easier way out of a burdensome do-or-die situation. As a farewell gift, the comprehensive package inclusive of compassion and comfort is a gracious act of kindness and appreciation.

## Love knows no bounds when given freely from the heart.

Mastery gained from sailing the 7 C's of Graceful Departures provides:

- End-of-life predestined passage towards enticing final destination
- Mutual understanding between patient, healthcare provider and caregiver

- Ways and means to honor personal promises held close to the heart
- Heaven on earth prior to death
- Lasting peace for grieving survivors

With the real intention of safeguarding your passage to the end-of-life, this is the time to come aboard and explore the itinerary and escapism inherent to Graceful Departures.

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# Introduction

## Let the Journey Begin

From the moment we are born, we begin to die. **Janne Teller**

**F**rom the moment of birth a ticking clock is set for your lifespan. Before the clock runs out, I would like you to consider treating yourself to a virtual destination vacation, compliments of Graceful Departures. I promote this cruise package as being the virtual Disneyland Cruise and ultimate getaway with no expectations, responsibilities or rules.

The pervasive question posed when confronted by an overwhelming realization is, “What are you going to do now?” The reassuring message of Graceful Departures is the iconic response, “I’m going to Disneyland!”

Similar to boarding a cruise ship destined for an everlasting sunset there is no looking back, only full-steam ahead to an existence far, far away. Enchanting as this may seem, qualms of uncertainty exist with a trip of this nature, filled with the curiosity inherent to extreme adventure. This journey is not for procrastinators or the fainthearted. It is for trusting souls who engage uncertainty as a new frontier. Prior to death, those who believe in predestination and self-determination are more likely to reward themselves with Graceful Departures.

Graceful Departures is the sweet surrender and rite of passage that wants for nothing other than to be at peace. This experience is conceived as a safe haven and bastion of everlasting unconditional love and serenity.

Personally, I envision Graceful Departures to be the ultimate spa destination aboard a luxury cruise ship boasting uncompromising service and first class amenities such as:

- Pillow-top bedding with the finest linen
- Rejuvenating hydrotherapy along with soothing touch
- Aromatic scent with blissful indulgence
- Incandescent soft lighting
- Sacred music

The intention and goal of Graceful Departures is to reward people with the experience of heaven on earth prior to death. This experience of being venerated at the end of life is ideally a good death.

Culturally, we rarely wish death upon others for fear it may come back to haunt us. Death can conger up images of body decomposition, tombstones, burial ritual or sheer darkness. These denigrating perceptions are depressing and aversive. A different type of light needs to shine on death and dying as people enter this final phase of life. It is unlikely that fellow human beings will actively engage or buy into anything sight unseen until it becomes embraced as a well-deserved initiative and fulfilling prospect. People hope to realize self-fulfillment with contentment near the end of life, but few have a true sense of how this is achieved.

Graceful Departures might be equated to the bliss a child experiences when school seemingly lets out forever. No more teachers. No more rules. Summer vacation begins without a care in the world except for the excitement generated by beach vacations, amusement parks, water slides, fantasylands, and new frontiers.

Graceful Departures is reminiscent of the water adventure ride that provides forewarning of a mighty plunge. We sail through life knowing full-well that a steep incline and fearful plunge are before us and ever-present when diagnosed with end-stage disease. Chains of love and perseverance clang during this period of ascent while approaching the pinnacle peak of no return. This heightened simultaneous moment of exhilaration and sinking feeling occur when self-fulfillment reconciles with imminent death. Riders plummet uncontrollably.

Less fear is associated with this mighty plunge when someone is there to catch us. Graceful Departures acts as the safety net and springboard upon which we can depend during impact, assisting transformation from looming death to good death. The end of this water adventure ride amounts to smooth

sailing following the mighty plunge. Peaceful final passage is secured through going with the flow and enjoying the ride. This safety net potentially provides a feeling of floating, being carried, uplifted and nurtured.

Smooth sailing through Graceful Departures requires the lack of resistance with the ability to breathe through the agony. Through gentle rhythmic inhalation and exhalation, innate swaying sensation occurs. Similar to rocking a baby to sleep, measured breathing allows us to release, relax, let go and deepen into eternal rest. As the mind begins to wander, there is time to ponder and reflect while sailing the 7 C's of Graceful Departures. These oceanic "C's" cover the expansive aspect and dimension of personal responsibility and enlightenment:

- 1. Composure**
- 2. Competence**
- 3. Commitment**
- 4. Certainty**
- 5. Conformity**
- 6. Compassion**
- 7. Comfort**

The 7 C's of Graceful Departures are the keys to unlocking the mystery of realizing dignity during the process of dying. These keys allow for navigating from here to the afterworld with ease and tranquility. The incremental order of the "C's" provides the footing to climb to the top of the mast and see more clearly into the distance. Each step or "C" provides increased awareness to the process of dying along with the opportunity to embody each concept into the core of our being. Awareness melds thought with feeling and practice with experience.

Through sailing the 7 C's of Graceful Departures, presence of mind is geared towards the promise of an uplifting, transcendent and tranquil end-of-life journey.

# 1 Composure

## The Ocean of Self-Control

Never let anyone disturb your composure, deter your accomplishment, or destroy your happiness. **Anonymous**

**C**omposure is the reminder from Mom to use your inside voice, lower the intensity amid heightened situations and find the wherewithal to state, “I have this.” Indeed, I own this. The crazy experience called life and death happens.

Do we steer the process of dying or let it get out of control? Do we let emotions get the best of us or do we take hold of them? Do we use emotions as excuses or channel them into achieving higher purpose?

*Self-control reduces suffering.*

During a moment of crisis, it is easy for concern to become worry and worry become fear. Well-composed people are well-rehearsed and self-assured during turmoil. These are patient and active listeners who strive to ease hardship by stepping back and critically evaluating the situation with a sense of duty, experience and grace. This show of composure averts panic in the face of adversity.

It is human nature to have catastrophe take our breath away while unprepared for bad news or life-threatening situations. This sudden overwhelming sense of impending doom and intense anxiety prompts the release of adrenaline inherent to self-preservation. Seemingly caught up in the rip current of the ocean, people become frantic in their attempt to swim back to shore. Back on land is where most feel grounded, familiar and stable.

Three steps in achieving composure include:

1. Taking a breath
2. Letting emotions settle
3. Acting from the middle-ground of certainty

The offensive line employs the same strategy before any play during a football game. The resounding battle cries, “Down! Set! Hike!” ingrain the presence of mind necessary for composure. Composure allows us to take hold of the breath deliberately before fear, panic, and chaos ensue. Deliberate breathing naturally quiets the mind and settles the nerves.

## The quiet before the storm is the gift of composure.

Composure is the brief reminder of what we are ultimately looking to achieve in life: serenity and tranquility. Composure provides the self-control that leads to personal empowerment. Composure instills clear thinking and appropriate behavior while emphasizing that actions speak louder than words. “I have this,” arises from composure and leads to competence.

# 2 Competence

## The Ocean of Self-Discipline

No human being will work hard at anything unless they believe that they are working for competence. **William Glasser**

**T**he opposite of competence is insanity. Those who embark on Graceful Departures have already surpassed insanity, described by Einstein as doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result.

Graceful Departures provides the vision of a great voyage.

Nevertheless, the reality is that Graceful Departures is an end-of-life boat that has a gaping hole in its hull. Competence is having the presence of mind to not repeatedly attempt beating the odds by bailing water out of this life-boat. If competence prevails, this sink or swim endeavor is no longer a reasonable option.

A glimmer of competence shines forth when a person proclaims, “I can’t live like this anymore!” Competent people realize that bad things happen to people who live too long and therefore, have little desire to live forever. When living in misery is no longer a viable option, we essentially need to take it or

leave it. Competent people also tend to seek out others who listen to reason and honor personal wishes.

Personal wishes are similar to inalienable rights and protected freedom. Freedom is actually a discipline often involving sacrifice in regards to what matters most in life.

The pursuit of happiness enlists competence, negating the idea that ignorance is bliss. Self-discipline leads to self-awareness, requiring practice and courage. Moods, appetites, and indulgences are powerful forces that sabotage competence. People with competence avert optimism and pessimism for realism.

This evolution of competence to realism takes three steps to achieve:

- 1.** Pulling back to levelheadedness
- 2.** Regaining common sense
- 3.** Attaining enlightenment

Most people cannot truly fathom death and dying and usually become incapable of dealing with it mindfully. This presumed incompetence renders patients and family members essentially powerless and gullible. Competence trumps weakness with astuteness. It reminds everyone that the gift of humanity is to both live and die reasonably.

Competence requires introspection of goals and values that determine behaviors and lead to personal victories. At the outset of a decidedly terminal condition, goals need to foremost align with competence. The bible phrase, "*O' death where is thy victory,*" (1 Corinthians 15:55) leads one to think, inspiring realization of a personal goal. *Thy victory* is perceived as the gift of having lived a rewarding life. This victory lap is appreciated while aboard Graceful Departures. Competent people aspire to making the most of their time here on earth. Being of sound mind and body is a testament of competence and inspires commitment.

# 3 Commitment

## The Ocean of Integrity

Desire is the key to motivation, but its determination and commitment to an unrelenting pursuit of your goal—a commitment to excellence—that will enable you to attain the success you seek. **Mario Andretti**

**C**ommitment drives the seafaring ship upon the waters of Graceful Departures. Similar to a boat's throttle, commitment is realized as man-made, hand-held and has various speeds depending on the given situation. A wayward or wishy-washy commitment is perceived to cause the ship's engine to sputter and stall, resulting in less personal intention and purposefulness. This lack of forethought and fortitude is likely to not get people what they want, leading to happenstance, upset and unfinished business.

Finding comfort in the midst of being uncomfortable requires commitment, discipline, and grace.

More importantly, comfort requires an endpoint. Suffering becomes insurmountable when there is no certainty of a resolution, finite time or finish line.



Uncertainty will sabotage a predetermined endpoint or goal. Commitment aligns with advance care planning and establishes the primary goal of compassionate end-of-life care. Hopefully, this conviction will be established during the prime of life and geared toward the consistency of remaining on course.

Phillip Moffitt, the former CEO and Editor-in-chief of Esquire magazine and founder of the Life Balance Institute proclaims Dharma wisdom.<sup>2</sup> He states, “*For many of us ‘commitment’ is a charged word, bringing to mind the loss of freedoms and the need for hard work. However, it is very rewarding when it is practiced with integrity, mindfulness, and skillfulness.*” He outlines the rewards of commitment as follows:

- Provides meaning to life with a sense of identity and direction
- Allows one to mature emotionally and psychologically
- Instills purpose to life with intention to serve
- Prevents acting from impulses that can sabotage wise decisions

Commitment to a purpose is how we teach others to value themselves in a three-pronged approach:

1. View one example
2. Provide one example
3. Reap what you sow

Quality of life is rarely based on wealth but through honoring commitment. When duty calls to end the journey of life, how I respond will make all the difference in maintaining my quality of life.

Personally, I have found my wellness established through considering commitments to be issues of integrity. These include flossing my teeth, taking vitamins/supplements, drinking plenty of water, minding nutritional intake, routinely lifting weights, practicing yoga, paying bills on time and calling my mother once a week. This is how I ultimately remain true to my values and myself.

Commitment signifies personal responsibility, faithfulness, and steady course.

Failure of commitment leads to upset that often rocks the boat. With loss of freedom near the end of life, commitment can become outsourced to others who provide service. However, commitment is first and foremost a devotion to self. Being our personal best through integrity provides direction for caregivers to respect our commitments in life. Doing what we say we are going to do signifies both integrity and living up to our own purpose in life. Maintaining commitments instills certainty and inspires dignity.

# 4 Certainty

## The Ocean of Dignity

I act with complete certainty. But this certainty is my own.

**Ludwig Wittgenstein**

**W**hile death is certain, how and when individuals die naturally is virtually unknown. This mystery is created and governed by trust. Whomever you entrust with your end-of-life wishes likely determines your fate. Most trust in God, caregivers, healthcare providers, or the soul. Some are not certain whom to trust. We might all concede that the reference point of certainty begins with this statement, “If you want something done right do it yourself.” Respecting personal autonomy is ethical. Determining our own fate is both fearful and empowering.

Cutting ties with the mother ship during the time to die requires both certainty and a well-stowed tender or life-preserver: namely, a guardian angel that lights and guides us through uncertain situations. The simple prayer to the guardian angel enlists the plea, “ever this day, be at my side.” These words provide reassurance that certainty arises from good conscience. This tender, a lifeline to the divine spirit or higher power, is uplifting and comforting. Me and my guardian angel unite to flow gently down the stream.

Certainty—the confidence we have in our beliefs—is more subjective than objective. Indeed, certainty just *feels right*. Research has shown that increasing certainty around the values that people hold dear leads to conviction and action.<sup>3</sup> Four levers can be pulled to switch our thoughts into high gear:

1. Consensus—Certainty is gained through shared opinion and following the crowd.
2. Repetition—Ambiguity becomes more clear when the message is repeated several times.
3. Ease—Powerful insight is revealed by how easily and quickly it comes to mind.
4. Defense—Going out on a limb requires standing up for personal beliefs.

This marketing tool for persuasion might convince people of the inherent value of Graceful Departures. More importantly, it may become the persuasive presentation that favors creating certainty and instills realizing dignity at the end of life.

Dignity arises through the certainty gained from a three-step program:

1. We admit that we are human
2. We admit that we are vulnerable and fallible
3. We decide to turn our will and our lives over to the care of a higher power

My certainty is expressed through the conviction that I am foremost a spiritual being living a human existence. Engaging the higher power within my spirit, I unite certainty with rightness. Well-ascribed in my book, *Wishes To Die For*, dignity is the certainty of being right. Through always *feeling right* with my spirit, I first make peace with my soul's intention to end life and proceed to enter the final frontier.

Every action geared towards enacting dignity has an equal and opposite reaction with the imposition of doubt. Doubt and uncertainty provide choice with regard to personal freedom and how life ends. Ultimately, avoiding death indefinitely is not a choice. This reality offers profound certainty. Attention to this certainty lies beyond choice with necessary focus on given to dignity.

This subliminal underpinning is suggestive of an unstable foundation upon which certainty rests, underscoring the need to know how we truly matter in this world.

Life continues to have meaning to the extent that we remain relevant.

No one can take away how we matter while abiding in the awareness of a higher power within our divine spirit. This purposeful conviction instills the feeling of grace within along with the blessings of well-being and personal dignity. Dignity provides the grace necessary to go with the flow that leads to conformity.



# Conformity

## The Ocean of Harmony

Conformity, humility, acceptance—with these coins we are to pay our fares to paradise. **Robert Lindner**

Conformity is complicated with desires to be the same and beliefs that we are different. Mostly, we strive to go against the norm and be seen as above average. Conformity is perceived as not thinking creatively, independently or outside the box. The *whys* and *wherefores* to resting in peace require a state of conformity amid the sea of harmony. Harmony resonates with the affirmation that our lives matter whether in sickness and in health. Conformity aligns with being like everyone else, leading to an awareness and agreement to treat others as ourselves.

An agreement is a virtual treaty for establishing ground rules for surrender at the end of life. This surrender or ceasefire occurs between the time to live and the time to die. Surrender sets the stage for each side to lay down their arms and medical artillery in a just cause for peace. Presently, caregivers and health-care providers seem to work against each other rather than in the best interest

of the patient. Supportive teamwork eases the transition in life and death through empathy, kindness and harmony

## Graceful Departures ensures *all hands on deck*.

Conformity is generally present among acquainted persons such as family members, friends or colleagues. However, people at the end of life are often called upon to make very personal decisions with total strangers. According to Kelman, there are three types of conformity:<sup>4</sup> 1) Compliance—going with the flow, 2) Internalization—being fully on board with the idea because it's consistent with our value system and 3) Identification—assuming the role society expects of the person.

The Social Impact Theory<sup>5</sup> asserts that the impact of a message is stronger if it's repeated by a lot of people who are all in agreement and strengthens if the person doing the convincing is an expert.

The steps to conformity include:

1. Being willing to die
2. Being able to surrender
3. Gaining affinity with others


Conformity is a virtue that aligns with duty, honor and commitment. As the final act, conformity acknowledges there will be a curtain call, the time to take a bow and then essentially bow out. Conformity is an acknowledgment of humanity along with the realization that we all will die. There is nothing special distinguishing an individual in having life end. However, those who die with unabashed humility appear to rise to the occasion and die gracefully.

## Conformity is the ways and means of compassionate end-of-life care becoming best standard practice in medicine.

Presently, ethical standard practice is determined by autonomy of the patient. Patients have the inherent right and choice to prolong life, oftentimes leading

to contention, righteousness and indignation with impending death. Conformity enlists a type of covenant, protective shield or safe haven during the time to die. Those who desire a safe and secure end-of-life journey realize that the purpose of conformity is to allow for compassion.





# Compassion

## The Ocean of Abundance

Compassion is the keen awareness of the interdependence of all things.

**Thomas Merton**

**C**ompassion is the manifestation of the Golden Rule. “Do unto others as you would have done to you” creates guidelines and a reservoir for compassion and mutual respect. Compassion creates awareness of others having profound needs requiring understanding. To quench the thirst of another first requires drawing a ladle of water from our personal reservoir of compassion and then offering it in service. I liken this reservoir to being a wishing well. Instinctively, others place their trust in us and to make their wishes come true is an act of human ingenuity and compassion.

Compassion renders us to go above and beyond, inward and heart-centered. To truly know another person requires a heart-to-heart connection. Compassion is the bond between soulmates. A compassionate undertaking occurs when a person identifies with another’s source of pain and creates a pact for mutual healing. We reap what we sow while healing and freeing others to simply be, supporting their own personal journey.

It has long been assumed that selfishness, greed and competition seed human behavior, but recent scientific studies challenge this perception.<sup>6</sup> Evidence of compassion has been shown to light up regions of the brain on MRI's and hormones like oxytocin surge while helping others or when eating chocolate. Gaining more pleasure is an evolved part of human nature. It ignites compassion, provides a sense of abundance and cultivates the greater good.

Mindful steps of compassion are:

- 1.** Choice
- 2.** Cultivation
- 3.** Goodness

Compassion, as a godsend or good, yet has distinguishing aspects of free choice and altruism. The conflict comes down to taking life sustaining medication or receiving downright mercy. The choice of taking medication is given to patients receiving palliative care. End-of-life care secures the blessings of compassion through receiving altruistic and unrequited mercy. Compassion is ultimately the no-holds-barred quest to end suffering.

Compassion as the means to an end is cause for celebration. A virtual banquet for the last hurrah and bon voyage becomes an invitation for all to create a potluck for the guest of honor. With every attendee bringing a special dish, this cornucopia of abundance is spread before the honoree in exultation.

Compassion averts the pity a person might receive at the end of life through showering and overwhelming the honoree with humility. From this place of humility, the honoree imbibes an attitude of gratitude and completeness. The boundless blessings inherent to compassion flow from this sea of abundance, bestowed as benevolence, grace and comfort.

# 7 Comfort

## The Ocean of Absolution

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and staff they comfort me. **Psalm 23:4**

**T**he use of nonverbal tools similar to *thy rod and staff* are resources that provide understanding and strength. Spoken words can awkwardly interrupt a profoundly spiritual or uplifting occasion. Words prompt responses rather than allowing a person near death to engage fully in the moment of transcendence. Listen, don't speak or solve. Providing comfort is not an intellectual or consensual practice, it is spiritual and intuitive. I liken this experience to a séance, establishing a sacred space for creating a deeper communication between people and spirits.

The final frontier to Graceful Departures is the few remaining breaths of life. These exhalations are often longer, fuller and liberating. This release and sinking feeling allows for those dying to deepen into the experience of passivity and solemnity. While dying, people deserve to be provided contentment and comfort. They are now free to be absolved from sickness and suffering. Comfort and joy generally ensue from lying down to sleep with a clear conscience and sense of accomplishment. Self-worth arises from the personal satisfaction of a job well done while drifting off to eternal sleep.

David Kowalski provides practical advice for comforting the sick:<sup>7</sup>*Never assume that the sick person is doing poorly emotionally and spiritually. A suffering body does not necessarily indicate a sick soul. The sick will quite naturally be displeased with their suffering and may feel discouraged – but neither of these should necessarily be equated with depression. Say nothing to imply their displeased or discouraged feelings are wrong or unspiritual.*

Illness is not a failure. It's an opportunity to rise to the occasion. I truly believe that each of us is exactly who and where we need to be at any given moment. This reassurance offers a great source of comfort.

Steps to comfort are:

1. Self-fulfillment
2. Validation
3. Transcendence

Self-preservation and personal security remain vigilant throughout life. Letting your guard down is a deliberate act of surrender. Surrender leads to relief and consolation through absolution. Comfort is actually rooted in forgiveness and blossoms through healing. Most people with terminal illness make a not-so-subtle promise to survive. When the chance of survival is less likely, there is a tendency to let their guard down and break this promise. This severance becomes an irreconcilable difference and discomfoting act of betrayal.

Forgiveness with absolution is necessary for healing and comfort. Without forgiveness, dying often feels like a sad state of betrayal. Forgiveness through absolution is the catalyst for comfort. This sense of well-being creates a shift at the end of life from fight to flight, aggression to passivity and passion to grace. Forgiveness affords reassurance and deliverance from evil. Death is no longer perceived as punishment, but rather a final reward. Death is the ultimate gift of peace becoming the final blessing and embodiment of grace.

**Bon Voyage and Boundless Blessings to all who Sail the  
7 C's of Graceful Departures!**

# Notes

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# About the Author



Dr. Kevin Haselhorst founded Graceful Departures to help patients and caregivers approach death and dying with ease and tranquility. Leading by example and through his practice of emergency medicine, Dr. H helps patients change their fear-based perception of dying and see their terminal illness as just cause for receiving humane treatment.

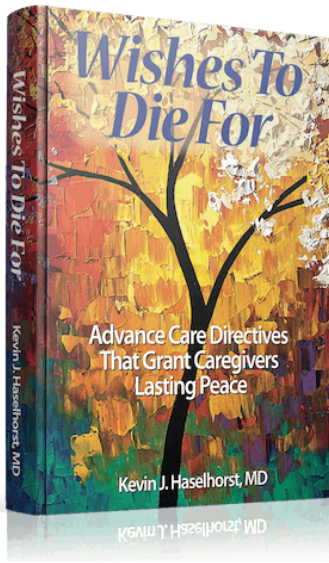
Dr. Kevin Haselhorst grew up in Trenton, Illinois, with dreams of becoming a doctor. Dedication and hard work culminated with a degree in medicine from Southern Illinois University.

His residency training at Mercy Hospital in St. Louis opened the doors to the unending excitement of a privileged career in emergency medicine.

Following his tenure in St. Louis, Dr. Haselhorst relocated to Arizona in 1998 and practices at Abrazo Health hospitals. He is a contributing writer for *The Arizona Republic's* "Ask the Expert" column, an end-of-life coach, and a public speaker on Advance Care Directives and the Universal Healthcare Directives. Dr. H is the author of *Wishes To Die For: Advance Care Directives That Grant Caregivers Lasting Peace*.

A leading voice for compassionate end-of-life care, Dr. H speaks to individuals, organizations and institutions that are passionate about personal well-being, lenient healthcare delivery and spiritual awareness being provided during the time to die. He blogs on websites for *Wishes To Die For*, *The Conversation Project* and *Death Café*. He is interviewed regularly on radio and TV.

As founder of both Graceful Departures and Caregivers In Sync, Dr. H. melds his personal desire for a good death with the humane pursuit of enabling caregivers to provide *wishes to die for* to others near the end of life. Additional resources, programs and personal consultations with Dr. Haselhorst are provided at [KevinHaselhorst.com](http://KevinHaselhorst.com).



Explore Dr. Haselhorst's additional insights regarding advance care planning in . . .

## *Wishes To Die For*

Advance Care Directives That Grant Lasting Peace

*Wishes To Die For* draws real intentions for life from the hearts of readers and bridges personal desires for self-fulfillment with advance care planning.

**Life has newfound meaning when goals are set  
Life becomes fulfilled when the goals are realized**

**Real Intentions for Life are captured from reading *Wishes To Die For*:**

- Make wishes in anticipation of suffering being replaced by lasting peace
- Acknowledge the worst moment of life with humility and gratitude
- Focus less on the fear of dying and more on the desire for a good death
- Shift defense mechanisms into offense strategies for personal empowerment
- Dare to be distinguished—free of obligation and deserving of respect
- Declare a finish line to prolonging life by creating a personal will to die
- Guide personal intentions through the storm front of conviction and compassion
- Complete an Advance Care Directive as a matter of the heart and good conscience

The fullness of life is rarely experienced until individuals truly appreciate the profound depth and resilience of the heart's capacity to give and receive, to

hold on and let go. Gifts from the heart include compassion, innate harmony, healing presence and unconditional love. Evoking these attributes of the heart calms the worst fears and instills coping mechanisms for the madness and stages associated with death and dying.

Calling upon the higher power of the heart during perilous times is the proactive message of *Wishes To Die For*. Transformation is inherent to the heart and creates an awakening, path forward and peaceful resolution. With a heart-centered directive as an ever-abiding living will, advance care planning supports dying with both dignity and grace while offering the peace of mind, encouragement and empowerment necessary for immediate caregivers to become long-term survivors.

[Available at Amazon.com](#)

More information and blog posts at [www.WishesToDieFor.com](http://www.WishesToDieFor.com)