

# Doesn't It Get Depressing\_ First Edit

Sun, 3/14 4:49PM 22:21

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

death, talk, life, jeanne, work, dying, feel, words, individuals, experience, algebraic equation, gift, lightweight jacket, judgement, birth, people, math, downward spiral, remember, workers

## SPEAKERS

Staci Sokol, Jeanne Bain

- 
- J** Jeanne Bain 00:20  
Welcome to death unfiltered where we talk about all things death and dying. I'm Jeanne Bain,
- S** Staci Sokol 00:25  
and I'm Staci Sokol, we are both end of life and dementia care professionals. I live in Atlanta, Georgia and Jeanne lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota.
- J** Jeanne Bain 00:36  
How's the weather today? Stacey?
- S** Staci Sokol 00:38  
I am looking outside my window is gorgeous. There is gorgeous blue sky, a breeze. It's just beautiful.
- J** Jeanne Bain 00:48  
I guess it's beautiful here too. It's a gorgeous grey sky with the few little patches of blue. But it's over 30 degrees. Well, congratulations breaking freezing.

- S** Staci Sokol 01:00  
They've been gradually like,
- J** Jeanne Bain 01:03  
light at the end of the tunnel.
- S** Staci Sokol 01:04  
I understand. I'm sure it's in the 50s for us. I will. And so it's nice. I just need the lightweight jacket. Oh, it's 60 degrees. I was wrong. Wow.
- J** Jeanne Bain 01:17  
That's not a lightweight jacket. That's shorts and a T shirt.
- S** Staci Sokol 01:20  
Yep. That's what my husband does. For you. It's bikini weather.
- J** Jeanne Bain 01:26  
So tell me what are we going to talk about today?
- S** Staci Sokol 01:28  
We're going to talk about how we always get the question isn't what you do? depressing.
- J** Jeanne Bain 01:35  
The big energy drainer that is death. Yeah, yeah. All right.
- S** Staci Sokol 01:40  
How do you do that? How do you do it? Doesn't it take a toll on you? And my response is always emphatically, no. What about you Jeanne?
- J** Jeanne Bain 01:53

My response is always No. I remember when I have a friend who's a home birth midwife. And I remember she kept trying to talk to me about possibly becoming, you know, going to the dark side and doing end of life or birth work instead of end of life work. And I was just so not interested. I can't understand birth junkies, I can't understand people who are like, Oh, the new baby. And sure babies are great. But I wasn't I wasn't interested in midwifery on that level. And I would just always say to her, but with death, the outcomes always the same. With birth, you never know what's going to happen. There's a cord around, there's this the mom's blood pressure goes up, down and out of that. And I can't handle that kind of. Boy, what's the word? it's unpredictable. Its unpredictability. And I feel like by exploring and walking with people at the end of their life, there's a lot of predictability in that for me, which really feeds me.

S

Staci Sokol 03:13

I've never thought about end of life as predictable. But of course it is, right. Everybody's outcome is the same. The variable is how do you get there. And right, and that's what I can speak for myself. That's what I enjoy. About my work is, it's never the same, it is always different. And it's beautiful, I find when I am at someone's bedside, at the time of the of their death. It's a privilege. It's a privilege to be there, that someone has allowed me in their home during the most vulnerable time in a person's life. I also feel blessed when I'm able to join them on the journey, even if I'm not there, during during the exact time of death.

J

Jeanne Bain 04:13

So that's interesting. That's really interesting, because I think that one of the things that I know about the end of life world, people who are death workers what I what I know about them is they're the kinds of death workers who keep track of how many deaths they attend. And it kind of reminds me of the people who write down you know, the little notches about how many babies have been born or whatever. You know, it's like we have to keep track of and I actually get that question a lot. People who are interested in end of life work say to me, Well, how many bedsides Have you been at at the moment of death? I don't think that ever matters. It never matters. To me, if I was there for the last breath, or not there for the last breaths, and I don't that part I don't understand. Do you hear a lot of that? Or do people ever ask you that question?

S

Staci Sokol 05:13

No, that's never been posed to me before. That's interesting, because I couldn't tell you. Like, I don't keep a tally. It's, it's an experience for me. So I couldn't tell you how many I've

been and how many I haven't been. But the ones, there are a couple that I do remember, you know, the lady who I, I jumped in the bed with her. And she was very anxious and could not relax. And the hospice nurse was there with her. And I just started stroking her forehead and telling her what a great mom she was and how safe she was and the legacies that she left. And she just expired. Right there with me. Nice. I remember a couple of things like that. But I, I don't know how many of those I've done.



Jeanne Bain 06:06

It doesn't matter. Look at it. No, it doesn't matter to me, either. It matters, that I was there. And it matters, that I was a part of it.



Staci Sokol 06:17

Yes.



Jeanne Bain 06:19

And there are a lot of players in a death. There just are whether it's in a community, or in a private home, there are always a lot of players. And I think that death workers by nature, realize that they're just one part of the whole system. In that experience, yeah,



Staci Sokol 06:39

I just wrote an idea. Thank you, you know, for allowing me to be just like one cog in that wheel of end of life. And it was, it was a beautiful experience. In this case, the gentleman did not have any living family. And he created an extremely close network of family. And these, these friends, people should be so lucky to have family members that stood up and supported him and took care of him like they did. And I felt blessed to experience that. Truly.



Jeanne Bain 07:21

So what do you think is behind the idea of saying to a death worker, someone who professionally works in and around the world of death? Something like that must be depressing for you. What do you think people are actually trying to say, underneath that?



Staci Sokol 07:40

I think they're trying to say, Isn't it hard? Isn't it scary? How can you be around death so

much and not get depressed? Because that goes back to many things we've talked about, that. People have a fear of death. And I can say you and I don't. So we come to it from a different perspective. Maybe that's one of the reasons we don't get depressed.



Jeanne Bain 08:11

Well, when I start when I think about other people we've had on our show, or other deaths that we've talked about, or deaths that we've experienced, or I've experienced, I have no interest in being a hospital chaplain. I don't want to deal with murders and suicides and all of those pieces. I don't like the shock to the body. And if I did, I think I would be in that kind of work. I would be a chaplain. But there's never I won't say never, in my experience, death has never been an emergency. So death has never been an emergency. So it's very quiet. It's very, it's even though there's chaos in it. And there's this, this expectation that it's going to happen, but we never know when it's gonna you know, when we're going to fall down this wallet waterfall. It always catches me off guard. But at the same time, it's never a surprise. We know where we're heading.



Staci Sokol 09:32

So one of the reasons you aren't depressed by the work is because you know, the journey, you know the path, it's stable for you.



Jeanne Bain 09:45

Yeah, it's really just the speed. That is the there's a math term here. What am I looking for?



09:53

There's a you're asking the wrong math.



Jeanne Bain 09:55

Yeah, I don't know. What are we what I need somebody with a math with a map something Whatever that would be called. It's just about the speed. I feel like it's an algebraic equation here. It's the speed that we can't determine. But everything else is in. So when I worked as an aide in an inpatient hospice, I was fascinated by the language because the language is all about, they changed. There's been a change, they changed again, she's changing. And it's, it's almost as if it's the spiral of transformation. And sure, it's a downward spiral. And yes, they use the words, she's circling the drain. They, they, you

know, they it is it's a downward spiral. But in most hospices, they they talk with the family about how it is this waterfall, it goes down, there's a little plateau, it goes down. And at one point, it starts to just vote. And it goes fast. And then it's over.



Staci Sokol 11:04

Or, Gene, some people would say it goes slow, two days can sometimes feel like,



11:12

right?



Jeanne Bain 11:13

That's true, it probably depends on who's standing. In whose shoes at what time,



11:19

correct? Yeah,



Staci Sokol 11:22

because sometimes those very end plateaus can just seem like they drag on forever. And I find that really hard for families sometimes. So when people ask me, don't I get depressed? No, I feel this is a gift, and a blessing for me a gift, because I'm able to be with individuals at the most vulnerable time in their life. So I see it as a present. That's not to say I don't miss loved ones who have who have died. Because I do I, I just am able to be present there in the moment and be with the experience,



Jeanne Bain 12:10

I want to ask you more about the idea of the gift. So gift is such a neutral term. And so is privilege. And I want to slice that up a little bit, because you use those words a lot, and I can see it on your face. But of course, our listeners can't see it on your face. What's inside of that.



Staci Sokol 12:31

And the first thing that came to mind is I am able to hold space for the individual that is

dying, I am able to advocate for that individual, if they want ice cream, or beer, or whatever it is, I get to be that voice. I also get to be the sounding board and advocate for the family members. So I walk a really tight rope between the patient and the family members, making sure they both have what they need. But the person that's dying, always wins out. If I can help it, their needs have to be met first. So that's why I think it's a gift because I get to be a voice which is very hard for me to do in my unprofessional life is to use my voice. But when it comes to the end of life, I have no problem. So I would say that's why it's a gift. I didn't really think about it. Until you mentioned that.

J

Jeanne Bain 13:40

Let me ask you. So this is getting kind of personal. And and I'm just gonna say that when I'm working a death, especially as we're getting closer to the death. I never feel more me that I am in those moments like I feel that meanness so strong, and I can see that you are shaking your head. My question was, do you feel similar?

S

Staci Sokol 14:09

Definitely. I am just being authentic, just who I am. And that's what I love. And that transcends into the other work that I do with people with dementia. Totally authentic. It doesn't even cross my mind to be anything but that and one of the reasons working with end of life and individuals with dementia is there's no judgement. We just get to be us and are appreciated for who we are. Especially by the person that we're taking care of.

J

Jeanne Bain 14:43

Nice. Nice. I like that answer. Sometimes I'm a little I won't say embarrassed, but it kind of fits in with that. Sometimes I feel a little a little too bubbly. Like I feel a little too who can you really say I just love death so much. Because I'm not it never in a moment and by saying I love loss, because I actually don't love loss. I miss everyone I've ever cared for, at the end of life, I certainly miss my parents. And yet that, you know, it would be really great if during that dying time, you could just have all of that dying time. And then you could have them back. Because I actually don't like loss. I like the death, the transmutation, the whole experience of that. But then I really just want them back. So that part's hard. For me. The death part is not hard. The last part can be hard, how about

S

Staci Sokol 15:49

I am always very sad and feel a void in my heart. When someone is gone, when they are lost, and their physical body is no longer here. Depending on how long I have been with

that person or where they are in my life, I think the loss is greater than others. But at the end of every death. There's a sense of gratitude that I have, and so I'm okay to, to go to walk away from that. And just be at peace. That's the word. At the end of every death, I am at peace, and I feel peaceful. And sometimes I feel like individuals go to a better place. And sometimes I feel that. Yeah, I'll just stick with that. What about you?

 16:51  
Oh,

 Jeanne Bain 16:52  
you know, I was actually thinking, what would?

 16:56  
Well,

 Jeanne Bain 16:57  
I'm due for my colonoscopy. I get them every five years. I'm at least a year overdue. So I was just thinking, I should probably buy some life insurance. Because what if this is the one? You know, what, what if this is the one where I find out that I have fully metastasized colon cancer or whatever not? I mean, it's just where I go. But I think about that, and I think could I be done?

 Staci Sokol 17:25  
Do you ever really know?

 Jeanne Bain 17:27  
But but would I be okay with that? And I think when I look back on every death, it's never the death. It's always the loss. It's never the death. It's always the loss.

 Staci Sokol 17:44  
Not a beautiful way to look at it. Yes. The loss to me is greater than the death process itself.



Jeanne Bain 17:54

Well, I think this has been helpful for me just to, to talk about it, because it is a question that I get a lot and I hope it was helpful. For our listeners, I know we have a really wide array of people who are listening to our podcast already. And and some people are listening, and they don't really want to because they know us. But I hope that that I hope that that is helpful for them to know that this actually isn't a downer for us. It's actually more of an upper for us, both of us.



Staci Sokol 18:26

Yes. And just in talking with you, I was able to get more clarity with myself. And I have said it before that I love working with people in dimension, because I can just be authentic, and there is no judgement. But today when I said those words, it just felt bigger than that. It felt bigger than that. So I appreciate this time. And I hope that we gave our listeners reasons why. It's not depressing because we get to be who we are fully present, and giving and compassionate and empathetic to help someone through the death process. Which does not mean we're not upset about the loss. Good point. And I loved how you delineated between the two



Jeanne Bain 19:27

now do you currently have anyone in your life people will ask me this, especially after someone has died? Someone I've been working with for a long time. You know what's next? It's like you just did this Theater Project. And now it's over and you don't know what's on the on the agenda. But do you ever have times in your life where there isn't someone dying? Well, aren't we all dying? Are we all? Exactly? Exactly, exactly. I had I had a very very dear Friend say to me after my last very long term client died. I had him say, well, I'll probably be your next client.



Staci Sokol 20:08

Did you laugh? I did.



Jeanne Bain 20:12

I said, Oh, I'm not ready for that yet. But you know, we all kind of have to get ready for that.



Staci Sokol 20:17

Because we don't know. We're gonna hate as you said the one variable is we're leaving the one constant variable as we are leaving.



Jeanne Bain 20:27

Right. Right. I think we should brush up on our math though. So that when we talk about that,



Staci Sokol 20:34

well, the tutor that I had in high school for math, I'm still good friends with her. Maybe I can bring her on.



Jeanne Bain 20:42

Excellent, good. Well, we'll talk about death as a as an algebraic equation of the IB. Okay, that would be really cool. Definitely. Let's do that. All right. Well, we would like to interview you for our next episode of our what's your death story, which is a segment within our episodes or within our podcast, we're looking for a wide array of everyday people willing to tell their stories. Please pitch us your story in a couple of sentences and send the pitch to [death.dot.unfiltered@gmail.com](mailto:death.dot.unfiltered@gmail.com)



Staci Sokol 21:15

thanks for joining us for another episode of death unfiltered. If you like what you heard and want to hear more, subscribe to us on iTunes, Spotify or wherever you get your podcast. If you'd like to know more about what Jeanne and Staci are up to sign up for our tiny letter at [tiny letter.com backslash death unfiltered](http://tinyletter.com/backslashdeathunfiltered). Can't wait to connect with you again about all things death and dying.