

love after death



Join us for a series of digital events on
Dying Matters Week **11th–17th May**
#DyingToBeHeard

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Digital events provide safe space to discuss death

With Covid-19 prompting many of us to examine how we deal with death and dying, a series of online events have been set up providing a digital space where people can share their stories, hopes and fears in relation to loss.

The first events take place this week to coincide with national [Dying Matters Awareness Week](#), and have been organised by Northumbria University academic [Dr Stacey Pitsillides](#) in partnership with libraries in Newcastle, Redbridge and Kirklees.

The events are part of [The Death Positive Library](#) project, funded by CarnegieUK, and include an online death café and a virtual book club, both of which will give people a much-needed opportunity to explore their emotions and share their feelings in a safe space.

Originally the events were due to take place at Newcastle City Library, but with the Covid-19 pandemic leading to building closures, the library team and Dr Pitsillides have worked hard to provide digital alternatives.

As Dr Pitsillides explains: “Dying Matters Awareness Week is an annual event, but with Covid-19 having such an impact on so many of us, this year it feels as if sharing our emotions and experiences in relation to death is more important than ever.

“Many people are feeling very anxious about death and dying at the moment but, due to lockdown, they might not have the opportunity to discuss those emotions with others.

“These events provide that safe space to share stories, memories, opinions, questions and curiosities about death at a time when that is very much needed.”

The first event taking place this week is an [online book club](#), during which Kate Mayfield’s book *The Undertaker’s Daughter* will be explored.

It will include a reading by the author, as well as a question and answer session, chaired by [Dr Claire Nally](#), Associate Professor of Modern and Contemporary Literature at Northumbria University.

The book club will be a monthly event where members are able to discuss themes of death and loss through literature.

Also taking place this week is a [digital death café](#) – an informal discussion group where people can meet online and talk about death in a relaxed setting over tea and cake.

First introduced in the UK in 2011, death cafés aim to increase awareness of death with a view to helping people make the most of their lives.

Running alongside the two events is a [virtual Instagram art gallery](#), held in collaboration with Marie Curie Hospice in Newcastle and featuring art work by patients created during art therapy sessions.

Despite having to adapt due to lockdown, taking the events online has highlighted the important roles libraries play during times of crisis.

Fiona Hill, Service Delivery Specialist: Community Hubs and Libraries at Newcastle City Council, said: “We are delighted to be working with Dr Pitsillides and Dr Nally from Northumbria University and colleagues from Redbridge and Kirklees libraries.

“The Dying Matters digital programme and The Death Positive Library project is a powerful opportunity to connect with citizens. To open up the conversation and think about death in a new way.”

Dr Pitsillides is a Vice-Chancellor’s Senior Research Fellow within the [Northumbria School of Design](#). Her work focuses on death and technology.

She was recently invited to join the Global Covid-19 Relief Coalition and was part of a subgroup tasked with exploring all aspects of death, grief, and virtual funerals.

The group’s [white paper](#) has just been released and reflects the input of nearly 100 specialists who work with dying, death, and grief on a daily basis – doctors, grief therapists, psychologists, funeral home directors, hospice workers, chaplains, end-of life-practitioners, and academics, from around the globe.

Dr Pitsillides also features on the [latest podcast from Inside China Tech](#) (South China Morning Post), discussing ‘how technology has changed the way we die and mourn’.

Find out more about Dr Pitsillides’ work on [The Digital Death Project](#) and the [Love After Death](#) research.

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