

FESTIVAL DRAWING BIG CROWDS TO REIMAGINE THE END OF LIFE

Reimagine End of Life is a weeklong series of events that draws thousands of attendees into conversations around the taboo topic of death. The festival entered its second year this April, drawing more than 7,000 people to over 175 events taking place during one week in San Francisco. Subsequent gatherings are scheduled for Cleveland and New York later this year.

Fast Company spoke with Founder and Executive Director of Reimagine End of Life, Brad Wolfe, for their piece, "This Festival Wants Us to Rethink How We Die." Wolfe says the idea took shape after he helped coordinate OpenIDEO's End of Life Challenge, a public contest seeking new ways to re-humanize the dying process. Wolfe recalls the experience of writing a song for his friend Sara LaBoskey, who was diagnosed with pediatric bone cancer and "how it had some small impact on her well-being."

The event offers a mixture of opportunities for emotional support, spiritual grounding, creative outlets, and practical advice. San Francisco's Interfaith Council agreed to share sermons and services around its core topic. Greek tragedies were read as preludes to a town hall conversation. A film festival featured a talk with Lee Unkrich, the director of Pixar's *Coco*, which was set in the Land of the Dead. A doctor and pastor joined the stage for a talk called "Exploring Racial Inequalities in Healthcare at the End of Life." The list goes on.

To keep the audience diverse, ticket prices for events ranged from \$5 – 20, and 10% of all tickets were given to community organizations that work with people that the sessions might mean the most to. In San Francisco, Reimagine has forged partnerships with the Department of Aging and Adult Services as well as the city's Palliative Care Workgroup to help offer free sessions for advance care planning.

Beyond all of the differences among us, Wolfe notes that death is universal. "If we can learn to have conversations around this topic with people from all walks of life, that might inspire us to be able to connect in other ways that that can bring our community more closely together." ([Fast Company](#), [ABC News](#), [Reimagine](#), [Reimagine](#))