



# What's your legacy?

Rachael Freed encourages you to write "legacy letters" to keep your values alive.

By KEVYN BURGER  
Special to the Star Tribune

As we get older, we tend to understand the importance of having our affairs in order. We conscientiously prepare with wills, trusts and advanced care directives.

For 25 years, Rachael Freed has been encouraging people "in the second half of life" to think

beyond their estates, heirs and health care. Freed exhorts them to contemplate their values and spell them out in what is known as an ethical will, or legacy letters.

A teacher, therapist and long-time senior fellow at the Center for Spirituality and Healing at the University of Minnesota, Freed, 83, has written six books about legacy sharing and has taught classes and workshops to help people contemplate and write their own ethical wills.

Sound intimidating? In a conversation with the Good Life, Freed

insists that it's simpler — and more important — than you think.

**Q:** What is the basis of an ethical will?

**A:** The ethical will is an ancient and sacred tradition. It started in the Book of Genesis when Jacob was dying; he called together his 12 sons, blessed them and died.

In the 20th century, rabbis rediscovered the concept, using the ethical will not just for blessing your children but also passing on your values. "Ethical will" is a scary term. I prefer "legacy letters."

Illustration by  
BROCK KAPLAN • Star Tribune