ABSTRACT

TITLE:	The Effect of Mortality Salience on Life Goals: Do Bucket Lists Change?
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ABSTRACT: This study explored the effect that mortality salience, both death and imminent death, had on life goals. Sixty undergraduates from a small liberal arts college wrote about their feelings associated with either death, imminent death, or dental pain, then completed a survey containing a list of various accomplishments that they rated on a scale of one to ten on how strongly they wanted each item on their list of things to do during their life (i.e., the Bucket List). Results indicate that females show significant increase in legacy items on their bucket lists (e.g., family, relationships, material success, and religion) when reminded of their eventual death versus their imminent death and more so than males. In addition, religious participants show significant increase in legacy (family, relationships, material success, and religion) overall (all conditions combined) in a linear fashion. Finally, participants endorsed more self-related items (e.g., travel, skills, individual achievements) when primed with imminent death as opposed to those primed with death. Findings have important implications for predicting human behavior given that the thought of imminent death leads people to invest more in themselves and that more religious people and those reminded of their eventual death have increased desire to leave a legacy.