

Value Of A Funeral

Beginning the Healing Process... How a Traditional Funeral Can Help

Funerals are not just a ceremony to honor those who have died. Funerals are also an important ritual that helps survivors start dealing with their loss by sharing with those around them.

::*"One of the recognitions shared by humans throughout the world and over time is the importance of ritual" ... "In every culture, significant transitions such as births, marriages and deaths have been marked by rituals."*

::Disenfranchised Grief by Kenneth J. Doka

Benefits of a Traditional Funeral

- Assists in taking the first steps in the grief process by reinforcing the reality of death
- Offers an opportunity to express feelings of grief
- Encourages sharing of memories that celebrate and validate the life of the deceased
- Provides support from friends and family and acknowledges the loss within the community
- Creates a forum to share spiritual values and beliefs
- Allows mourners a structured activity or "something to do" during a disorienting time
- Serves as a rite of passage and important social ritual

More than just a service for the person who has died, a funeral is for the loved ones who are left behind. Participating in a funeral can be a therapeutic act that actually starts the healing process.

::*"Funerals are not to benefit the dead, but the living. They have a number of unparalleled therapeutic benefits. As a rite of passage, the funeral assists you in recognizing the passing of your loved one, supporting you as you start your life without the deceased, and reintegrating you back into the social group as a person whose loved one is no longer alive."*

::How to Go on Living When Someone You Love Dies by Therese A. Rando, Ph.D.

When a loved one dies, the first reaction for many people is to want to get things over with as quickly as possible. They mistakenly believe that not having a funeral will shelter themselves and their family from more pain.

::*"When we compared the respondents who had less than the traditional funeral, i.e. those who did not view the body or had arranged immediate disposition of the remains (setting aside the Jewish respondents who traditionally do not view), we found that those who had requested no viewing and/or immediate disposition of the body reported experiencing the greatest hostility following the death, the greatest increase in the consumption of alcohol, tranquilizers, and sedatives, the greatest increase in tension and anxiety, the lowest positive recall of the deceased, and, in general, particularly among the male respondents, greater problems in adjustment to the death."*

::Robert Fulton, Ph.D., Department of Sociology, University of Minnesota

::Reporting on a large-scale study of bereaved people

Psychologists and grief counselors agree that funerals can be a healing experience that helps survivors move through their grief.

:: *“But the funeral service, if done well, can be an important adjunct in aiding and abetting the healthy resolution of grief ... Seeing the body of the deceased person helps bring home the reality and finality of death. (Even in cremation) the body can still be present at the funeral service in either an open or closed casket and then the cremation done after the service. In this way, the funeral service can be a strong asset in helping the survivors work through the first task of grief.”*

::J. William Worden, Ph.D., Harvard Medical School

::Author of Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy

Funerals can be emotionally difficult, but they provide an opportunity to receive the gift of treasured memories that others shared with the person who has died. Many families are pleasantly surprised to hear stories from friends and relations about their loved one that they had never heard before. Being surrounded by family and friends and learning how their lives were touched can bring great comfort.

:: *“It had been a long time since my husband and I stood in the receiving line at a viewing It had been years, too, since our children had seen their aunts, uncles and cousins all under the same roof. We’d forgotten what a wonderful slice of humanity walks through the funeral home doors.... Death observes no calendar, arbitrarily selecting its own inconvenient appearance date. Yet, every aged great-aunt, every tottering uncle and most of their progeny took the time to pay their respects to this woman and her immediate kin.... They came not just to honor her but also to show respect for her long-gone husband, highly regarded by his peers, and her six children, who had come of age here.”*

::Eileen Graham, syndicated newspaper columnist

Planning Advice

When planning a funeral, you have many options available. There are also decisions to be made, often during a difficult and emotional time. Whether you have recently lost a loved one or are considering prearranging your own funeral service, your local PFDA funeral director is dedicated to providing personal and ethical care and support.

Pre-Planning

More and more people are planning ahead for their own funerals for many reasons. They may want to relieve their surviving spouse or other family members from the emotional and financial burden. Pre-need planning also assures an individual that all the arrangements will follow their personal wishes.

General Tips

- Be an informed consumer. Don't be reluctant to ask questions.
- Today's there are a variety of options to meet your financial needs and wishes. Be sure to discuss all available options before making a decision.

- When selecting a funeral director, choose one who is licensed and has a good reputation in the community. PFDA's member directory is a good place to start.
- Be prepared! Avoid the burden of making decisions while under emotional stress by organizing details with your funeral director ahead of time. Remember...preplanning doesn't necessarily mean prepaying.
- Plan a personalized ceremony or service to help you begin the healing process. Getting through grief is never easy but having a meaningful funeral or tribute will help.

Do's and Don'ts

- DO ask a family member or friend to sit in on any meetings.
- DO ask all sales persons to identify themselves, the company they represent, and what services they are selling.
- DO ask for a phone number and business card.
- DO ask the salesperson for permission to tape record your conversations.
- DO make a list of questions to ask, and take notes.
- DO read over any contract carefully before signing. Have a trusted advisor – such as your clergy, attorney, banker or accountant – look over the document with you first.
- DO make certain that everything promised is put in writing and attached to the contract, including your right to change your mind and cancel the deal within three days.
- DO ask for explanation of anything you're not sure about, written in plain language that you understand.
- DO find out exactly what is covered. If you buy a casket, vault and cemetery lot, you will still require the services of a funeral director.
- DON'T agree to make payments until you know the rate of interest and the total amount you will pay. Ask if you can get your money back if you change your mind. Find out if there is a withdrawal penalty and how much it is.
- DO find out the name of the bank or insurance company that is acting as the trustee of the plan. Ask if your funds are protected and transferable.
- DO keep a copy of any contract you sign in a safe place that your family knows about.
- DO be cautious. When purchasing a pre-need plan, a licensed Pennsylvania funeral director is usually the best source. Ask to see the license.

DON'T take the word of a salesperson that says they are affiliated with "ABC Funeral Home." Call the funeral home and check

Funerals help give meaning to life

Every life is a rich tapestry of memories, emotions, and experiences. Each of our lives has a story to tell; a meaning to uncover. Funerals help us express the importance of a life lost. They help tell your loved one's story and pass it on to future generations.

Funerals help you acknowledge and express feelings of loss

Acknowledging and expressing your feelings of loss is an important stop in your journey of resolving grief. Funerals provide a prime opportunity for you, perhaps with the presence of concerned others, to confront your loss and express your

Funerals help family and friends give vital support

Funerals are social rituals that strengthen the relationship between the living and dead. The support and compassion from family and friends provides you with vital validation to your feelings, spiritual sustenance to your soul, and the courage to continue on in your life's journey.

Funerals help stimulate the recollection of the loved ones

As family and friends gather at a funeral, the past becomes alive. With the telling of each story, the remembrance of each incident, the sharing of each memory, your relationship to the deceased is strengthened.

Funerals help reconcile the changed relationship between you and your loved one

As you mourn for the deceased, your relationship with them changes. Funerals help you review your relationship to your lost loved one. They also may serve as a separation and switching point from a relationship of presence to one of memory.