



Funerals and ways of saying goodbye

Grief is what we feel. Mourning is what we do as a way of expressing our grief. Experiencing a death affects us as individuals and the communities we are connected with, large or small. When we use the word funeral or burials we include all non-religious ceremonies, such as celebrant funerals, humanist, atheist, woodland burials, green funerals and direct cremations.

Funerals can help us in many ways

- We can begin to feel the death is real and happened.
- We are offered a chance to share stories, thoughts and feelings about the person who has died and a forum to say goodbye.
- We can see and meet family and friends together and an opportunity to feel supported.

These gatherings offer us a focus at a time when many things feel or are out of our control.

Whomever you have to help you direct or facilitate your funeral, burial or cremation, they will be able to gently guide you through to have a heartfelt and safe goodbye. It is an opportunity to be alongside the person we care for so much and can in time bring comfort and an acceptance that the person really has died. Some people choose not to be present and this OK too.

We have come to understand that for some bereaved people who have experienced the sudden death of someone close without being able to say goodbye, this can present challenges and extra distress with their grieving process. It is important to remember that for most of us these overwhelming feelings do not last a lifetime. With the right kind of bereavement support to guide you through this time

you will be able to slowly work through things and come to some kind of resolution and peace that feels right for you.

Many people find this image helpful when trying to understand their feelings of intense loss.



If you can't go to the funeral, burial or cremation we know this can be very difficult and painful. People have felt stunned, shocked, undervalued, angry and bereft of a chance to say goodbye. This can lead to feeling a lack of closure. You may have attended a small gathering but feel your grief has intensified because family and friends couldn't be with you.

The lack of opportunity for a memorial, large or small, not being able to gain comfort from others who knew the person that has died or unable to share cherished memories with one another face to face, all adds to our sense of isolation and loneliness.

The lack of physical comfort at this time can be very hard coupled with limited opportunities to express our grief through a faith or belief system that is important to us.

To help you remember and to feel connected to the person that has died you may wish to explore other non-faith ideas and consider these suggestions:

- Ask someone who can attend the funeral if they could save you the order of service or something similar or, if appropriate, to take some photos.
- Ask the funeral director if it is possible to have the service live streamed or recorded.
- Write a short message to be read out at the ceremony.
- At the time of the funeral set aside time to have some private moments of remembering.
- Light a candle.
- Play music or watch films which connects you to the person.
- Write a letter to them and read it aloud at home.
- Look at photos, spend time thinking about them and sharing memories.
- Create a memory book or memory box filled with special keepsakes.
- Follow your own cultural beliefs and rituals.
- Try and have a conversation with someone who attended the funeral. The chance to talk about it can help to create a mental picture of how things went.
- It's ok to have a conversation with the person that has died, many people do this and it is NOT weird or wrong. It is normal.
- Donate to a charity or look at raising funds in their name.
- Spend time in your garden or in places that were significant to you and them.
- Create memorial cushion covers or pillowcases.

These are just a few suggestions. There are lots of other ideas on the internet to help you develop ways of memorialising those special to you. Here are some useful links:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/lifeevents/funerals/here-everyone/support-when-you-cant-attend-funeral>

www.interfaith.org.uk

<https://www.yorkinterfaith.org/>