

Where there is no body

This occurs under unusually tragic circumstances like aircraft or shipping accidents, abduction, when the deceased is a victim of war or has willed that his/her body be donated to science.

It's still important to acknowledge the life of the deceased and help the family and friends to accept that death has occurred.

A special memorial service to allow everyone to gather together and be able to get on with their grieving is essential. The use of photos, significant objects associated with the deceased's life, and perhaps candles are a great help to use in place of the body.

A time to share

It is very helpful for all mourners - family, friends, business associates, acquaintances - to get together after the funeral in a social atmosphere to remember and re-live the good times and the bad they have shared with the deceased. This is the time to offer support to each other, to share memories and it is best to have no restriction on that time so that we can laugh and cry together.

Whether it be tea and biscuits, a picnic in the park, a backyard barbecue, a counter lunch at the deceased's favourite pub or a full scale Irish Wake, it's alright to have a "party" that is appropriate for the family. This time together can help you take the first step towards dealing with your grief.

What to do when someone dies

Wherever a death takes place - at home or hospital, in a public place, interstate or overseas, the Funeral Director is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

The first call to the Funeral Director's office will enable the immediate needs of the family to be met. The Funeral Director will arrange the transfer of the deceased person from the place of death and obtain all the relevant details and proper certificates for the burial or cremation services which may follow.

To guide and advise families on the many matters which must be considered, an arrangement conference is held either at the Funeral Director's office or at the family home.

We need to take a little time to plan the most appropriate way of commemorating the death of a loved one. The funeral is the last occasion on which our relationship may be expressed and our close association remembered.

We can find the funeral to be traumatic or triumphant, depending on our view of life and death.

If we plan a special funeral that has particular significance in relation to the deceased and to the family and friends who are left behind, it is so much more meaningful for the survivors.
(See AFDA leaflet "It's alright to Cry")

The Funeral Director is available at all times to help us plan the most suitable ceremony to meet our needs, to advise on how much time to allow interstate family and friends to attend, to advise on legal procedures and costs and to take most of the load of arrangements off our shoulders.

Then we can remember them with love and peace and dignity.

Australian Funeral Directors Association

When faced with having to make funeral arrangements, most people have no prior experience in organising such an event, and little knowledge of what to do.

Funeral directors can alleviate this burden for you by providing a range of services, allowing you to choose an appropriate funeral that will be conducted professionally, and with dignity.

For your own peace of mind, select a Funeral Director who is an accredited member of the Australian Funeral Directors Association which requires its members to honour a strict code of ethics and practice.

The AFDA publishes a range of information brochures for the bereaved. These brochures along with other help and advice is available through AFDA offices:

National Office: Telephone (03) 9859 9966

Or your nearest AFDA member.

A Gentle Touch Funerals
73 Railway Street
Mudgeeraba QLD 4213
Ph: 07 5522 0099

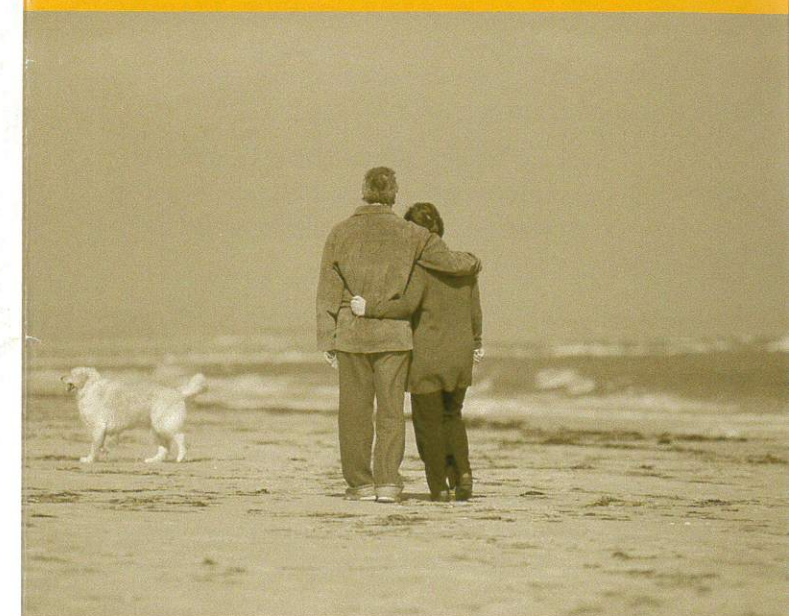


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Sharing memories

Why a Funeral is important



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Why have a funeral?

A funeral is for those who are living. It is a celebration and thanksgiving of the life of the loved one who has died.

Consequently, it is essential that everyone who has been touched by the life of the deceased has the opportunity to share in that celebration of their life.

There are four basic needs fulfilled by the funeral:

- *Physical* - The disposal of the deceased's body is controlled by State Laws, and is usually by way of burial or cremation.

After burial, the remains are still legally identifiable at a later date if necessary, whereas cremated remains have no legal status and this allows the flexibility for disposal in a more personalised manner.

- *Emotional* - A funeral allows family and friends to share their memories of a loved one, to laugh and cry together and provide vital support to each other in their grief.

The funeral experience helps us to put our memories in perspective and provides the opportunity for healing to commence. It allows us to pay our last respects.

- *Social* - A funeral is a social event that emphasises and acknowledges life. It is also an historical event that should be shared, so that family and friends can support each other.

- *Spiritual* - A funeral helps us realise that material things don't really matter as money can't buy the most important gift of all, that of life. A funeral gives expression to love and allows for faith to be shown.

The funeral ceremony

The funeral experience is a key part of the grieving process which offers hope to the living and helps us on the road to recovery from our loss. In order to fulfil that role, the funeral must meet our own personal needs, the needs of the family and friend and those of the community.

The following aspects meet these needs:

- Some sort of ceremony in which all mourners can share is appropriate. It can be in a church, a funeral home/chapel, at the graveside, in a park or any other place that was special to the deceased.
- An individual choice of funeral makes the event more meaningful for those attending. Families are encouraged to select their own venue, their own music, readings or poetry, and they can choose whether a religious or non-religious ceremony is more appropriate.
- The order, content and style of service can all be varied to suit the family's needs. A personal tribute from a family member or close friend, or perhaps the inclusion of appropriate cultural traditions, may make the service more meaningful.
- The involvement of the body of the person we are mourning in the funeral experience is very important in helping us through our grief. It may be painful to witness the final committal of the body, but the act of that person leaving us helps us to accept the reality of their death.

The steps between parts of the funeral (e.g. from church to graveside to crematorium) can be very significant. It can be a very special privilege for pallbearers to be able to render a last act of love and respect.

Why viewing is important

"The viewing" is an old-fashioned term which describes the time mourners spend with the deceased person after death and before the funeral.

Apart from the legal requirements in certain states or territories for the family to identify the body in the coffin before cremation can take place, the viewing experience, and allowing enough time for everyone to take part, helps us in many ways.

- It provides everyone with the chance to express personal thoughts, to talk to the deceased and maybe just hold their hand, to finish off any "unfinished business".
- It helps us to acknowledge that death has occurred and to confirm that the person we think has died really is the person in the coffin. It helps us come to terms with the reality and finality of death.
- We can see that the one who has died is now at peace, especially if they were struggling or suffering in life.

Children and Funerals

The death of a loved one affects everyone in the family, including the children. With a loving explanation of what it's about and what will happen, they should be encouraged (though not forced) to share the funeral experience with the rest of the family and friends.

Adults have a tendency to try and protect children from pain, but they also need to be able to accept the death and feel their grief, the pain of which no amount of protection (or "fairy stories") can eliminate.

Children need to be told lovingly that someone they love has died and they can gain comfort from taking part in the family's mourning, knowing that they are included in the event and not left out because they are "too young to understand". Children need to say goodbye too!

Funerals for Children

The loss of a child is also the loss of a future teenager, adult, parent and maybe grandparent. The child who has died has still, even in a short space of time, influenced everyone's life and family members and friends still need the funeral experience to help face the reality of the loss and start to manage their grief.

Because losing so young a life is generally such a shock, it can be a great help for some families to bathe and dress the child's body and "tuck them up in bed" for the last time.

When there are special problems

Survivors of suicide or AIDS death may have special problems because of perceived age-old religious discrimination and/or social stigma.

The need for people to mourn and the rituals of the funeral are essential for friends and family, no matter what caused the death.