

## During Covid-19

### How Funerals Might Not Be What You Thought

The Covid-19 crisis has changed a very many things that we take for granted. One thing that is particularly different is the way in which we bury or cremate the bodies of people we love or care for. This is a loss, particularly for adults who are familiar with the important rituals around grief and grieving and who find help and support in what is familiar at a difficult time. It is even more difficult for children and young people who have no ritual structures around death and loss and who rely on already stressed and challenged adults to help them find their way through this.

What might not be the same:

- You may not have had a chance to say goodbye to your loved one before they died because they were in intensive care
- You may feel angry and frustrated because of the way they died, suddenly, or while they were still very young
- You may have been told of their passing away by a medical professional and told that you cannot see their body
- The body will be in a sealed coffin and only 10 people will be allowed to go to any funeral service for a burial
- You won't be able to have friends or family visit for or go to a wake at someone's house or a hotel
- If the body is cremated you will not be able to go the crematorium at all
- At the graveside you will have to stand 15 feet away from the grave
- You may watch the funeral and graveside service by video link
- You might not be able to have the funeral you thought, or to attend the funeral or cremation of the person who has died because of Covid-19
- You will not be able to visit the cemetery until after the crisis is over

These changes to the normal ritual of grieving can make grieving more difficult. Here are some simple ideas that you could use, if you wanted to, while you are still confined to home to help with grieving.

Plan to meet your friends and family online, at an agreed time to have a short memorial service or to share memories of your loved one. You may want to have hymns or songs, reading and prayers. Whatever is meaningful to you and your family is ok.

Have a special meal like you would have at a funeral and eat it together with the people you live with. You might eat sandwiches, cake, drink tea and chat about the loved one. Maybe do this after the funeral at your own home.

Have special times in your house when you can all talk about your loved one but make it clear that anyone can talk about the loved one whenever they want.

Set up a special place at home or in your garden or back yard where you might put up some flowers or pictures to remember them. Children can do drawings for this or they might want to leave a little toy or memento there .

At home, with the people who live in your house, have your own memorial time. During this you can set a time to light a candle, blow some bubbles or release a balloon to remember your loved one. This is important for children and adults who didn't get to say goodbye.

Make a memory box, memory jar, memory book, online page, or a sand jar to remember your loved one and save your memories of them using this. Let your children take part in this.

Plan a trip to the grave when this is over.

Start a family gratitude journal and write down, over time, the things that you're grateful for about the person.

Draw or paint or write a poem about them.

These are just some ideas and you may have lots more and much better ones. Ritual isn't just traditional, it's a way of doing what's meaningful for us so it's ok to make up your own family rituals.

Finally, be gentle with yourselves and your children. Remember your friends and family want to be there for you and allow them to help you in whatever way they can because they would at any other time.



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