

# Memorials & Rituals That Help Us Heal

*Source: Unknown*

When a loved one dies, memorials, rituals and traditions can help us mark a significant event, spend time remembering and find healing.

The process of preserving our memories is in itself a part of our grieving. Reviewing, recollecting, sorting, organizing, ensuring preservation - all these activities help us to relive and re-experience our time with our loved one. This process may take a long time, and you may find yourself adding to your memory journal or photo album for months, perhaps even years.

## Some Ideas:

Keep a journal.

Plant a tree. Planting trees is a meaningful way to memorialize your loved one. You can plant a tree at home, near a special place, or elsewhere in your community. Some towns and cities have programs where you can plant a tree in memory of a person, and the town places a plaque beside it bearing the name and birth/death dates. You may choose to dedicate a garden bench in a park.

Do an act of kindness. In honor of your loved one's birthday every year, donate a selection of books to your library, pay for an ordered birthday cake at your grocery store, buy coffee for the person behind you in line.

Bring your loved one's interests and pleasures to others. If your loved one enjoyed sports, create a fund at a local high school to purchase much needed equipment, and dedicate the donation in honor of your loved one.

Send up a balloon or paper lantern. Releasing a balloon or lantern is a ritual that symbolizes releasing a lost loved one or sending loving thoughts to their spirit. Some people write notes and attach them to balloons or lanterns.

Light a candle. Set a place at the table or set up a memorial display area in your home and light a candle when you want to honor the memory of a loved one. Lighting a candle symbolizes the light that your loved one brought to you and the memory of the person who lives on in your heart.

Plan a family reunion or gathering on the anniversary of the death. Invite the family to share a special memory. Serve your loved one's favorite dishes.

Purchase a gift for your loved one at Christmas and give it to the Salvation Army or other organization to help provide those less fortunate at Christmas.

Carry a remembrance item. Sometimes a small keepsake, like a handkerchief, a watch, a piece of jewelry, or a small heirloom can serve as a reminder of a lost loved one. Keepsakes also serve as a daily reminder that often brings comfort to those who mourn.

Attend a support group or special memorial event. Certain community events such as support groups, grief workshops, or remembrance events such as candlelight vigils can bring comfort and healing. Such events help us connect with others who are also feeling the pain of loss, which can bring a greater sense of peace.