



BODY CARE AFTER DEATH: WASHING & SHROUDING



Burial shrouds (also called burial sheets, grave clothes, winding-cloths or winding-sheets) are fabric coverings draped around the body of the deceased.

Shrouding at it's most simple can be relatively affordable. Shrouds might be made from animal skins, a bedsheet, elaborate garments, and many fabrics, all of which are able to do the important work of swaddling the body of the dead.

Always unique, some people choose it out of desire, some faiths require or encourage it, some are looking for a low-cost option, and some are seeking for a covering with low environmental impact.

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THANK YOU!

In human history, shrouds have been used through all parts of the world in religious, ecological, and personal creations. There are many reasons!

Washing and shrouding the body of someone you care for is a powerful ritual to honor and connect to the deceased through time and touch.

This practice can also offer a way to slow down and acknowledge grief when a person's death may have been sudden or traumatic, to give the community more time with the person's physical body.

Shrouds are often used as a covering. For some, it may provide a sense of dignity and honor to the person who has died.

The shroud covers and protects the body while shielding it from view if desired or swaddling for transportation and during the disposition process.

Using a Shroud (see):

- It can be helpful if a firm surface (cot, plank of wood, thicker blanket) is under the shroud.
- Unfold the shroud onto a clean, flat, and safe dressing space.
- If there are hemmed edges, face them upward.
- Place the body onto the shroud.
- Cover the body:
 - Begin by folding the shroud over the lowest portion of the body to wrap the lower fourth.
 - Then, starting on one side and diagonally folding the corner from lower fourth to the opposite shoulder. Then fold from the shoulder to the opposite lower fourth.
 - Repeat the previous step on the opposite side of the body. Fold the sides over the body.
 - When ready to cocoon the body, fold the shroud over the head.
 - Slide strips of fabric beneath the shrouded body to tie closed.
 - Gently and securely fasten the shroud so it is swaddled around the body of the deceased.
- Consider keeping points of contact available (head/face, limbs, etc.) during a vigil or life celebration.

Examples of Religious Shrouds:

Tachrichim (Hebrew: תַּחְרִיכִים) are white burial garments in which some deceased people are dressed by the designated burial group in Jewish traditions.

Al-Kafan (Arabic: الجفان) burial shrouds that are made of white cotton or linen. The Kafan is used for the traditional practice called Chusl in Islam.

Shroud of Turin, a specific burial garment believed by some to be the shroud of a Christian prophet.

Examples of Shrouds around the World:

Chachapoya people of Peru would sometimes mummify their dead and wrap them in woven cloth shrouds in the fetal position, stood on the cliffs.

Egyptians have historically practiced covering the bodies of those who had died in herbs like cedar, or coriander, shroud the body in fabrics.

Northern Europeans have historically created textile shrouds of natural fabrics such as wool, linen, or hemp and wild plants, such as Nettles or grasses.

Nonmedical Washing & Body:

- There may be guidance for body care in your experiences, lineages, or traditions.
 - Gather materials and prepare supplies (i.e. water, wash towels, bowl, castile soap, oils, shroud).
 - One way is to begin with the face, head, and hands, then limbs and torso.
 - Uncover only one portion of the body at a time, washing the body and then re-covering that area.
 - Oils, skin balm, or lotion can be used for moisture, or offering care as a last message.
 - Cut clothes to fit.
 - Choose a space for the body to lay in honor, such as a table or coffin (cardboard, wood)
- ### Ongoing Body Care:
- Place cotton and/or towels in any places that may leak fluid: wounds, sores, autopsy sutures, etc.
 - Lay out sturdy draw sheets for moving the body & refreshing ice.
 - Make sure there is ventilation for dry ice use, or use alternatives like re-freezable blocks, or Techni-Ice.
 - Drape body and table with decorations and plants as desired.
 - Change ice as needed, 6-10 hrs.
 - Close the shroud as needed.

Where to get a shroud:

You can make one from fabric or a large bed sheet, purchase one from a local funeral home, or by asking someone in your local death care group or spiritual community. There are several options for burial shrouds which range in design, material, and cost. Research your options and practice media literacy!

For Medical & Funeral Care:

- Take time to research the processes for organ donation, autopsy, or embalming the body.
- Each of these practices may be different depending on the location and institution.





USING A SHROUD (NO HANDLES):

- **IT CAN BE HELPFUL IF A FIRM SURFACE (COT, PLANK OF WOOD, THICKER BLANKET) IS UNDER THE SHROUD.**
- **UNFOLD THE SHROUD ONTO A CLEAN, FLAT, AND SAFE DRESSING SPACE.**
- **IF THERE ARE HEMMED EDGES, FACE THEM UPWARD.**
- **PLACE THE BODY ONTO THE SHROUD.**
 - **COVER THE BODY:**
 - **BEGIN BY FOLDING THE SHROUD OVER THE LOWEST PORTION OF THE BODY TO WRAP THE LOWER FOURTH.**
 - **THEN, STARTING ON ONE SIDE AND DIAGONALLY FOLDING THE CORNER FROM LOWER FOURTH TO THE OPPOSITE SHOULDER. THEN FOLD FROM THE SHOULDER TO THE OPPOSITE LOWER FOURTH.**
 - **REPEAT THE PREVIOUS STEP ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE BODY. FOLD THE SIDES OVER THE BODY**
 - **WHEN READY TO COCOON THE BODY, FOLD THE SHROUD OVER THE HEAD.**
 - **SLIDE STRIPS OF FABRIC BENEATH THE SHROUDED BODY TO TIE CLOSED.**
 - **GENTLY AND SECURELY FASTEN THE SHROUD SO IT IS SWADDLED AROUND THE BODY OF THE DECEASED.**
- **CONSIDER KEEPING POINTS OF CONTACT AVAILABLE (HEAD/FACE, LIMBS, ETC.) DURING A VIGIL OR LIFE CELEBRATION.**

