



Leaving a Legacy

Funeral and Memorial Planning

In our lives we plan for many things - work, vacations, what to have for dinner. At times we even plan for long-term goals - college, retirement, and our first home. Rarely, though, do we plan for our death.

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If asked, many people would express clear wishes about what they would want regarding memorial or funeral rituals.

If you do not make plans or state your wishes, it may be difficult for your loved ones to guess what you may have wanted. By telling them, you help them to reflect your wishes for that time.

Getting Started

■ Is there a particular spiritual and or cultural ritual that is important for you to be observed? If so:

- When does it need to occur - before, at or after your death?

- Does it require advanced planning or preparation?

- Who will perform those rituals and do they need to be contacted ahead of time?

■ Do your family and/or decision makers know your wishes?

■ Will they support your choices? If not, what needs to be done to make sure your wishes are honored?

■ Is the location of your death important?

- Do you want to die at home, not at home, etc?

- Have you thought about how you can arrange for that to happen?

Working With Your Remains

■ Do any of the above rituals require certain handling of your body? For example:

- Ritual washing _____

- 3-Day vigiling _____

- Other _____

- Restrictions regarding contact with the body

- Covering the body, if so, with what?

■ Do you want family and friends to be involved in the above rituals? If so, who?

- Are there certain garments that you would like, or are required, for your body to be dressed in?

- Do these garments need to be made or purchased or are they on hand? If on hand, where can they be found?

- Are there other items that need to be present with the body? E.g. - prayer beads, books of scripture or sacred texts, images of teachers or certain icons?

- Will it be important that certain prayers or practices be done with your body prior to burial or cremation? If so, what?

For Burial or Cremation

- Do you have a place selected for your body or ashes to be buried? If so, where and do arrangements still need to be made?

- If your ashes are being scattered, do loved ones know where you want that to happen?

- Would it be OK if family wanted to keep a small portion of the ashes? _____

- Green burial means having a tree planted over or near where a person is buried. Is that something you would like?

Memorial Service

- Are there formal memorial rituals that need to be performed through your community? (For example, a Catholic Mass).

If so:

- Who would lead the service? Do they need to be contacted?

- Are there special preparations that need to be made?

- If no formal ritual is required, would you still want a memorial service? If so,

- Who would you want to lead it?

- Where would you would like it held?

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• What music or songs you would like offered?

• Which readings, i.e. scripture, poems or quotes would you like at the service?

• Are there prayers or reflections you would like presented, if so what are they?

• Would you like this event to coincide with a special anniversary or family gathering? If so, when and where is it?

■ Does your spiritual and/or cultural tradition require that a ritual or ceremony be performed several weeks or a year after your death? If so, what arrangements need to be made?

Additional Comments

If you are having difficulty with these questions, it may help to contact a leader within your spiritual and/or cultural community. If you are connected with a hospice, the chaplain or spiritual care provider can also be a good resource for guidance.

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For More Information

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