

BURIAL PREPARATION HANDBOOK



The path that leads to burial

ARE YOU PREPARED TO BURY A LOVED ONE?

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M. Ed. November 1, 2000 Revised June 18, 2007

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Do you know what to do during and after the death of a loved one?

This question many will answer yes to but soon find out after death knocks that the sorrow and anxiety may negatively impact managing the burial.

What must I do right away? Who will handle the obituary writing? Will there be a viewing service at the funeral home? Will there be a graveside service? What happens after the burial? Hopefully this booklet will address these questions and more, and provide helpful information.

PURPOSE OF BOOKLET

The purpose of this booklet is to answer several questions, and offer a few suggestions (not intended to be all-inclusive) which may prove helpful during the loss of a loved one. It will also speak to some of the more familiar questions, but unplanned answers when a death is at hand.

At the time of the death of a loved one it is not unusual for the impact of sorrow to interfere with one's ability to think and make rational decisions as one normally would. At such time it is hopeful that this booklet will be considered and applied where applicable to make the death experience more manageable – remember “We don't plan to fail, but rather fail to plan.” (author unknown).

IMMEDIATE ACTION ITEMS

When medical personnel notify the survivor that a loved one has died, “What must I do right away?” Below is a recommended process, and requires immediate action by the survivor.

___ Immediately contact a licensed funeral director of your choice to take possession of the deceased body.

___ Decide and communicate on the funeral arrangements with the funeral director (i.e., date, time and location of services; donations, flowers, cards and food plans).

___ Secure burial ground for the deceased. It is a wise gesture to have burial lot chosen in advance of the death. Many burial ground facilities will permit monthly payments on burial lots which makes it more manageable for those not having life insurance. Where an insurance policy exists notify the insurance company so that the claim process can be immediately acted upon. Otherwise, be prepared to work with the funeral director for payment arrangements.

___ Who will handle the obituary writing? It may be wise to have someone designated to promptly prepare the writing of the obituary, if not written by the funeral director's staff. If the survivor desires someone who attends the church of the deceased to write the obituary, contact the proper church authority who may be able to provide this service.

FUNERAL HOME VIEWING SERVICE

___ Will there be a viewing service at the funeral home? It is wise to plan the activities for the viewing service as quickly as possible prior to the date of the viewing. If any cards and acknowledgements, and obituary readings are desired have someone already designated to handle the proceedings. Contact the appropriate church official or the funeral director who may be able to assist you with these plans. If no formal readings or services are desired by the survivor, but viewing only, it may be wise to make contact with a church musician or funeral director as quickly as possible prior to the date of viewing to provide music during viewing.

FORMAL FUNERAL SERVICE

If the funeral is desired on the same day of the viewing or a different day this must be communicated with the funeral director. The same type of arrangements stated for the graveside service should be prepared for the formal funeral service whether it is held at the respective funeral home or another location.

GRAVESIDE SERVICE

___ Will there be a graveside service or a formal funeral service? If the survivor desires a graveside service on the day of burial, once again an appropriate church official or the funeral director may be able to assist you with these plans. A typical graveside service might include (but is not limited to):

- Obituary reading (reader already selected)
- Selected testimonials & songs (persons already selected)
- Officiator's sermon
- Final viewing
- Committal of body

An announcement may be made at the funeral home and graveside to remind friends and family where to repast will be located.

Once these steps have been successfully completed, and the deceased is properly buried there are yet additional necessities that must be attended. These necessities (not all-inclusive) will be included in the **AFTER BURIAL DUTIES** section of the booklet. If the duties listed in this section can be handled during the immediate action phase of death, this is fine. Otherwise, the survivor must handle the after burial duties as soon as possible, as in some matters time is of the essence.

THE GRIEVING PERIOD OR PROCESS

How long is the grieving period, and is it normal and healthy to grieve?

Not all people share the same degree of grief, nor do they necessarily experience the same level of anxiety for the same periods of time. Certainly these are normal emotions.

Spiritually speaking we can confidently say, by the grace of God, "Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot heal." However, this does not discount the fact that we at times will experience sorrow. Opinions of many mental health professionals support grieving as being healthy and normal. On the other hand, grief becomes unhealthy and abnormal when a survivor goes into deep and prolonged depression to the point that the desire to get on with life stops.

Included in the booklet is a grief resolution inventory you can complete as a measure to help you through the grieving process. Note: The inventory is only a tool to gauge how you think about the death you experienced. It might be wise to take the inventory shortly after the burial process and again several months later for a comparison. By no means should the inventory be perceived as a diagnosis of a mental health professional, or dictate that you have a serious problem. If survivors feel they are having abnormal difficulties after the death of a loved one grief counseling should be sought.

AFTER BURIAL DUTIES

The death certificate should be maintained in a secured location. Do not give anyone the original death certificate, but a copy if sufficient.

What happens after the burial?

___ The survivor should contact all financial institutions to make necessary changes to joint-owned financial accounts (i.e., spouse name removed due to death, change of beneficiaries, etc.) A certificate of death may be requested of the financial institution for verification purposes, and a copy of the certificate of death is proper to provide.

___ Verify any other insurance policies for which the deceased is eligible apart from the primary life insurance. Several credit card companies, credit unions and other financial lenders may offer life insurance policies through credit cards, department stores (i.e., Sears, J.C. Penney's, Lowe's, etc.) having the premium for such policies charged directly to the cardholders billing statements.

___ If the deceased is insured on such policies promptly notify any such department store or credit cardholder company of the death so that the insurance company can redeem the policy. Again, be sure to update any beneficiary

information, and have the name of the deceased removed from all active credit card accounts and financial institutions.

IMPORTANT NAMES AND NUMBERS

SPECIAL THANKS AND RECOGNITIONS

HOW ARE YOU COPING WITH THE GRIEF?

By completing the grief resolution inventory below you will get a general indication of where you stand in regards to coping with your grief. Once again, this is only a tool to gauge how you think about the death and serves as no diagnosis or opinion of a mental health professional.

Grief Resolution Inventory - A score of 18-24 usually means that a person is experiencing a healthy resolution of grief. Anyone who scores below 18 may profit from participation in a grief support group. A score below 12 may indicate a need for grief counseling. 1

Oates, M. D. (1993). Death in the school community: A handbook for teachers and administrators. United States: American Counseling Association, 5999 Stevenson Ave., Alexandria, VA 22304.

GRIEF RESOLUTION INVENTORY

(adapted from Oates, 1993)

Instructions: Think about the death you experienced. Place a check in the blank under your answer to each question.

Most of Some- Not at
the time time all/rarely

- | | Most of
the time | Some-
time | Not at
all/rarely |
|---|---------------------|---------------|----------------------|
| 1. Can you talk about this loss without becoming upset? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 2. Can you think about how your life was before this loss without feeling a great deal of emotional pain? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 3. Do you feel angry, either at a specific person or just angry in general, when you think of this loss? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 4. Are you generally happy and look forward to the future and the good things it will bring you? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 5. Can you go places that remind you of this loss without being overly upset or feeling depressed? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 6. Do you still think or say "If only..." | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 7. Do you remember this person's good points and his/her bad ones? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 8. Do you feel guilty about your prior relationship or about any of the events that caused the death? | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Score your inventory as follows:

1. Assign three (3) points for each check under "most of the time" for questions 1,2,4,5, and 7.
2. Assign three (3) points for each check under "not at all or rarely" for questions 3, 6, and 8.
3. Add one (1) point for each check under "some of the time"

Total _____