

Contents

- About this eBook..... 5
- Why have a funeral? 6
 - The importance and advantages 6
 - The significance of rituals within a farewell service..... 7
 - The importance of having a funeral..... 8
 - The advantages of a funeral..... 8
 - How to plan a funeral..... 10
 - The farewell service..... 11
- Conclusion 14



About this eBook

It is very important to have a funeral to honour the life of the deceased, to recognise publicly the end of the person's life and bid the person farewell. Here you will find information regarding the importance and advantages of having a funeral, and an outline of what is entailed in planning a funeral and a farewell service.

The aims of this eBook are to:

- explain the importance and advantages of having a funeral
- explain the ritual of a funeral
- help in planning a funeral and a farewell service.

This information is gathered from extensive research by the author on this subject, from the author's personal experience of planning funerals and farewell services for loved ones, and from interactions with various organisations in the field of death, loss, grief and bereavement.

Included are comments and opinions based on the author's many years of involvement in the field of grief and bereavement support.

Why have a funeral?

The importance and advantages

When someone dies we may acknowledge the death with our minds and perhaps intellectually we understand the fact of the death, but it takes time before we fully acknowledge the reality of the death in our hearts. It is difficult to understand and acknowledge the finality of the death especially if the death is unexpected.

As a normal human response to the death of a loved one many questions about life and death surface, such as:

- Why did this person die?
- Why now?
- Why at this age?
- Why this way?
- Why does dying have to hurt so much?
- What happens after death?

We may never have definitive answers to these questions but having the thoughts and feelings that prompt these questions is a normal reaction to loss and is part of working through grief and coming to terms with the death. To help us accept the fact and finality of the death of a loved one, we need to ritualise the passage from life to death so that our thoughts and feelings can be acknowledged and expressed.

A funeral is a public, traditional and symbolic means of expressing thoughts, feelings and memories about the person who has died.



IMPORTANT GUIDELINES

The purpose of having a funeral

Situation	Reason
Planning or attending a funeral	<p>At a fundamental level planning or attending a funeral reinforces the central fact of human existence that living and dying are two aspects of a single process and everyone will eventually die.</p> <p>Reflection at the time of the death and during the funeral helps to define the meaning of the life and death of the person who has died, the meaning of our own life and the fact of our inevitable death.</p>



Situation	Reason
For the deceased	It marks the rite of passage from life to death and affords an opportunity for the deceased to be laid to rest with love and in peace.
For the bereaved	It acknowledges the beginning of the time of mourning and the process of grief.
For other mourners	It is an opportunity to offer condolences, comfort and support to the bereaved.

The significance of rituals within a farewell service

Like being born, dying is a natural and unavoidable process. The very fact that we have a funeral demonstrates that death is important and to live with a healthy appreciation of life we must acknowledge and accept the inevitability of death. The farewell service forms part of a funeral and comprises rituals which have particular significance.



IMPORTANT GUIDELINES

The importance of rituals in a farewell service

Ritual	Focus
Honour the life of the deceased – usually done in the introduction to the service and in the eulogy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> remember the significant events of the person's life applaud the person's achievements in life and the influence the person had on others pay tribute to the person's special characteristics express how much has been lost by the person's death.
Offer comfort and support to the bereaved and to acknowledge the loss they have suffered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> comfort the family and friends of the deceased allow other mourners to express their condolences and support begin the process of closure acknowledge the sorrow and grief of the bereaved.
Acknowledge the loss at a communal level and allow friends and other members of the community to express their condolences and support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> gather the collective memories of the deceased affirm the contribution the deceased has made to the community.
Bid farewell to the deceased.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> bid farewell to the deceased to rest in peace with love and blessings.

