

Planning Your Own Memorial Service

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Having End of Life Discussions:

- ▶ What is END OF LIFE?
- ▶ Why end of life discussion is needed?
 - with yourself
 - with your family and loved ones
- ▶ DNR, DNI, Advanced Directives, and Living Will
- ▶ Palliative Care and Hospice
- ▶ Funeral or memorial Services
- ▶ Make your wishes clear and concise
- ▶ Burial choices
 - ▶ What do you want be done?
 - ▶ Possibilities: burial, cremation (then what?), Direct cremation, donation, green burial
 - ▶ Cremation: burial in urn, scattering (where? And how?), columbarium, keeping the ashes, added into artwork, launched into space, casted in a reef

End of Life Conversations:

- ▶ Tell them that this conversation won't be easy
- ▶ Tell them what you want (clear and concise)
- ▶ Ask them if there is anything that they want
- ▶ Answer their questions
- ▶ Reassure them (you're not kicking off tomorrow)

The Importance of Planning Ahead:

- ▶ Sometimes there is only a short period of time
- ▶ Numbness and shock are common and preparing anything during this period can be difficult
- ▶ Take the pressure off your family and friends (and maybe prevent a family fight)
- ▶ It can take 2 to 3 hours of meetings and even more without a clear plan
- ▶ You have seen some of the choices your family has made...do you really want to leave this to them?
- ▶ A “good” service is authentic and personal
- ▶ This takes time and effort
- ▶ How many services have you been to where it seemed that no one really knew the person

Why a Service?

- ▶ Empower your friends and family to grieve in a healthy and healing way
 - ▶ Rituals and Traditions help
- ▶ Provide closure for those who love you
- ▶ Make it meaningful / Search for meaning
- ▶ It is not all about you....just say, your memorial service is really for your loved one
 - ▶ Provide support network
 - ▶ Provide healthy ways for people to express their grief
- ▶ Six Needs:
 - ▶ Acknowledging the reality of death
 - ▶ Embracing the pain of loss
 - ▶ Remembering
 - ▶ Developing a new self-identity
 - ▶ Searching for meaning
 - ▶ Receiving support from others (Wolfeit)

What Do “They” Need to Know:

- ▶ Everything...you are not going to be around to tell them!
- ▶ Who can make the decisions
 - ▶ Medical
 - ▶ Financial
 - ▶ Memorial Services
- ▶ Location of your documents
- ▶ Location of your memorial plans
 - ▶ Back-up copies (for when the first copy can't be found)
 - ▶ Safe but accessible

Documents:

- ▶ Living Will and Legal Documents
- ▶ Advance Care Directives
- ▶ Social Security Card
- ▶ Insurance and financial information (including for home, car, accounts)
- ▶ Date and place of birth (Birth Certificate)
- ▶ Certificates of Marriage, divorce, etc.
- ▶ Contact information for clergy and/or church
- ▶ Contact information for lawyers, close friends, financial planners, and relatives
- ▶ Funeral home pre-paid plans
- ▶ Final resting plan or burial plots
- ▶ Keep it current and up to date!!!

Your Service:

- ▶ Give your self time to think and feel free to change it later
 - ▶ Brainstorm, talk with family, and be creative
- ▶ The Location
 - ▶ Where do you want your memorial service at?
- ▶ Officiant
 - ▶ Who do you want to preside over the service?
- ▶ Viewing and Visitation
 - ▶ Do you want a wake, visitation time the day before, or visitation time before the service?
 - ▶ Do you want your body present? Open or closed casket?
 - ▶ Valuable time for family and friends to support each other
 - ▶ Acknowledge the reality of death
 - ▶ Pros and Cons of having the body present
- ▶ What Type of Service
 - ▶ Simple or Elaborate
 - ▶ Religious or Secular
 - ▶ Public or Private
 - ▶ Memorial Service or Funeral
 - ▶ Funeral Home or Church or Graveside
 - ▶ Tone and Style

Your Service:

- ▶ How do you want to be remembered?
 - ▶ Friend
 - ▶ Teacher or Mentor
 - ▶ Rebel with a Cause
 - ▶ The Jerk down the Street
- ▶ Chose your style....
 - ▶ Set the tone
 - ▶ Help them laugh, help them cry, help them remember

Elements of Your Service: Scriptures

- ▶ Ecclesiastes 3:1-8
- ▶ Psalm 17:7-14; 42:1-5; 46; or 139:1-18, 23-24
- ▶ Job 19:25-27
- ▶ Isaiah 25:6-9; 40; 61:13; or 65:17-25
- ▶ Lamentation 3:22-26, 31-33
- ▶ Matthew 5:3-10 or 11:28-30
- ▶ Luke 23:33, 39-43
- ▶ John 6:37-40 or selections from chapters 11 or 12
- ▶ Romans 8:9-11, 31-39

Elements of Your Service: Music

- ▶ Music or Not?
- ▶ Music reflects who you are
- ▶ Music expresses emotion; it sets the tone of the service

- ▶ What does your venue allow?
- ▶ Live or recorded music?
- ▶ Service Music:
 - ▶ Prelude
 - ▶ Special Music
 - ▶ Hymns
 - ▶ Postlude / Recessional
 - ▶ But...I have more music than I can use...

Common Musical Choices:

▶ Hymns

- ▶ I was There to Hear Your Boring Cry
- ▶ Shall We Gather at the River
- ▶ Will the Circle be Unbroken
- ▶ I Come to the Garden Alone
- ▶ It is Well With My Soul
- ▶ Great is Thy Faithfulness
- ▶ I Need Thee
- ▶ 'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus
- ▶ Amazing Grace
- ▶ In the Sweet By and By
- ▶ Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me
- ▶ Leaning on the Everlasting Arms
- ▶ Go, Silent Friend

▶ Special Music

- ▶ Tears in Heaven
- ▶ My Way - Frank Sinatra
- ▶ Unforgettable - Nate King Cole
- ▶ O Danny Boy
- ▶ What a Wonderful World - Louis Armstrong
- ▶ I will Remember You - Sarah McLachlan
- ▶ Wind Beneath my Wings - Bette Midler
- ▶ Time to Say Goodbye - Andrea Bocelli and Sarah Brightman
- ▶ You are my Sunshine
- ▶ Somewhere Over the Rainbow
- ▶ Memories by Van Morrison
- ▶ There are too many to list
- ▶ What makes it personal?

Elements of Your Service: Readings

- ▶ Another valuable addition to your service
 - ▶ Community Litanies or Readings
 - ▶ Poetry and creative writing
 - ▶ Parables or Stories
- ▶ Common Choices:
 - ▶ “Dear Lovely Death” by Langston Hughes
 - ▶ “When Great Trees Fall” by Maya Angelou
 - ▶ “The Road not Take” by Robert Frost
 - ▶ ”If I Can Stop One Heart from Breaking“ by Emily Dickinson
 - ▶ “Silent Tear” by Gaynor Llewellyn
 - ▶ “Dear Friends, I Go”

Elements of Your Service: Symbols, Displays, and Flowers

- ▶ Photographs
 - ▶ Which one for the services?
 - ▶ Picture boards for reception?
- ▶ Flowers
- ▶ Flag
- ▶ Candles
- ▶ Special Touches

Elements of Your Service: Speakers

- ▶ Participants
 - ▶ Who do you want to ask?
 - ▶ Ask multiple people
 - ▶ Ask people from different aspects or time periods of your life
- ▶ Open time for remembrances or not?
- ▶ Give them the power to say: no
- ▶ Some might be too close or too emotional to be able
- ▶ Others might be honored to be asked but scared of the public speaking

Elements of Your Service: Eulogy

- ▶ Typical eulogy is three to five minutes
- ▶ Given by a close friends or family members
- ▶ Written out
- ▶ Gives a personal touch with:
 - ▶ Life history
 - ▶ Stories

Other Considerations:

- ▶ Costs
 - ▶ Funeral Home
 - ▶ Church
- ▶ Veterans
 - ▶ Burial benefits
 - ▶ Veterans' honors
- ▶ Programs
 - ▶ Picture on the Cover? Which one?
- ▶ Guest Book
- ▶ Greeting Line
- ▶ Receptions
 - ▶ Food and sharing after a service helps the family and friends bond and support one another

Other Considerations: Obituaries

- ▶ Where to publish?
- ▶ Who writes and who edits?
- ▶ What to publish?
 - ▶ Announcement of death
 - ▶ General biographical information
 - ▶ Birth, education, marriage, work history,
 - ▶ Make it personal
 - ▶ Accomplishments, hobbies, passions, personal characteristics, and other key pieces of information
 - ▶ Family members
 - ▶ Preceded and still living
 - ▶ Service Information
 - ▶ Time, location, and information regarding donations

Elements of Your Service: Graveside or Spreading of Your Ashes

- ▶ Where?
- ▶ Do you want pallbearers? Who?
- ▶ Military honors?
- ▶ Elements of the graveside service:
 - ▶ Scripture: 23rd Psalm
 - ▶ Others are possible
 - ▶ Committal
 - ▶ Ashes to ashes
 - ▶ Lamb of your own fold
 - ▶ Earth receive an honored guest
 - ▶ Benediction
 - ▶ Choices?

Other Considerations: Monuments

- ▶ What type of monument?
 - ▶ Type
 - ▶ Color
 - ▶ Personalized
- ▶ What do you want as the epitaph?
 - ▶ Unique principles, beliefs, or values
 - ▶ Humorous or not
 - ▶ Legacy
 - ▶ Keep it short and compact

Grief Resources:

- ▶ Grief is a process: it begins before the end of life and ends when your loved ones are done grieving.
- ▶ Having End of Life conversation with yourself will help you deal with your own anticipatory grief.
- ▶ Having End of Life conversation with loved ones prior to all the happenings will help them grieve healthier when you're gone.

References:

- ▶ Long, Thomas and Thomas Lynch. (2013). The Good Funeral. Louisville, KY: John Know Press.
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- ▶ “Why You Should Have a Memorial Service” available at:
https://www.huffingtonpost.com/marilyn-sewell/virginia-doesnt-want-a-me_b_903570.html
- ▶ Funeral Basics: Planning Tools” available at:
<https://www.funeralbasics.org/planning-tools/>