



After The Funeral....

It is often difficult to know what to say or do when someone we know experiences the loss of a loved one. The death of a loved one is filled with intense moments and emotions, many of which are centered on the visitation, funeral service and burial. The grieving individual often is overwhelmed – both by the loss and the outpouring of support by others.

Once the funeral is over, the person may feel isolated and alone in the grief. The flood of people is replaced by the emptiness, mundane duties and the ongoing task of sorting through paperwork and possessions. For many who grieve, the days after the funeral are exponentially more difficult than the funeral itself.

Getting Through the Weeks Following the Funeral

For many people in the immediate family, the real grieving starts after the funeral is over. Loved ones and friends have returned home and a sense of reality and loneliness sets in.

Stay in touch with the family members that were drawn to the funeral services. All of you are still in the grieving process. The support and encouragement that just staying in touch with each other will generate will be powerful.

Do not set expectations on yourself to “return to normal.” You and your family are in a period of adjustment, learning how to proceed from the painful events. The new “normal” will be life without the deceased. There is no time table for when that will feel more comfortable.

Organize and schedule the items that need to be handled in an orderly manner. Some of the affairs of the deceased have deadlines, but often the funeral directors or attorneys will see that those things are handled.

Plan ahead of time how you will go through the possessions of the deceased. Gather some of the closest family members and talk about items that need to be distributed within the family. Are there items that can be given to charities or those in need? Think about who needs to be there to actually go through the items. Probably two or three people would be enough to move through the items and few enough that problems will not arise. Do not feel the pressure of having these items sorted immediately.

4 Ways To Help Someone After the Loss

While you cannot take away the pain of the loss, there are many ways to help a grieving friend or loved one through the painful days following the funeral by providing comfort, strength and support. Here are some things to keep in mind:

- Don't expect the loved one to call you. Often at the funeral home, in the midst of an embrace, we will remind our loved one that we are only a phone call away. We begin to part with the reassuring words, "Promise you will call me if you need me." A nod makes us feel better, and when we don't hear back, we assume that healing has begun and that life has begun to move on. Usually the grieving individual does not want to trouble someone else with pain, feels weak and guilty for not being able to progress quickly, or feels embarrassed for having to seek help. Even though you may not know exactly what to say, it is important for you to make the contact. Phone calls, cards, email messages, or brief texts all affirm that your door is always open.
- Create a new tradition. Most of life has been shared with an individual who is now gone. Even trips to the grocery store can bring back memories and re-emphasize the pain of the loss. As a caring friend, you can help make new memories that do not include the departed loved one. New places to go eat or shop, local events that were not celebrated, or even short trips to places not visited can go a long way to making new traditions.
- Write down important dates. Some days will be more difficult than others to process and overcome. You can make anniversaries, birthdays, holidays or other special occasions easier by sending a card or making a phone call. Make sure that your loved one does not spend those days alone. If you are uncertain of those days, ask another close family member to inform you of the days most likely to be difficult.
- Share when the deceased is on your mind. One of the most isolating feelings that the grieving individual will have is the thought that no one else will remember the departed loved one. When something in your life reminds you of that person, send a card or note to let the person know that you remember and care.

With just a few moments of planning and care, you can make the days that follow the funeral feel less awkward and alone. You can reassure your loved one that you care and that together there will be strength and encouragement for the road ahead.