



# *your guide to* **FUNERAL ETIQUETTE**

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# your guide to FUNERAL ETIQUETTE

WHAT TO DO		
Do	Don't	
<p>Funerals are difficult for families experiencing the loss of a loved one, but they can also be awkward for friends, relatives and acquaintances. This guide addresses the common issues funerals present, so that you can feel more confident in helping an acquaintance, friend or family member cope with loss ... or express your gratitude to others.</p>	<p>Focus on the survivor's needs. Listen to friends and family talk about their loved one and the death. Acknowledge the life of the deceased and refer to her by name.</p> <p>Bereaved: be prepared to answer the "how did he die" question. There is no need to elaborate if you would rather not.</p>	<p>Don't pressure the bereaved if they are reluctant to talk about their loss. Don't minimize their emotions – it's okay if you say something that causes them to cry. And it's okay if you cry. Crying is healthy.</p>
<p>Wear subdued colors to the funeral or memorial. For many, black apparel is a symbol of grieving and sympathy. Although today's dress codes are more flexible, subdued colors continue to show respect.</p> <p>Men: a dark suit and tie is always appropriate.</p> <p>Women: a skirt and blouse or a suit is commonly worn.</p>	<p>Men: don't wear jeans and shirts without collars.</p> <p>Women: don't leave your shoulders uncovered or wear revealing clothing. Don't wear extremely high heels or open-toed shoes. Remember, you may be standing for long periods of time and walking across a cemetery.</p>	
<p>Try to arrive 15 minutes before the funeral or memorial service begins. If you arrive late, enter quietly and sit in the rear of the room. Allow those who were close to the deceased to sit closest to the front.</p>	<p>Don't use a cell phone or other electronic device during the funeral or visitation.</p>	
<p>Sign the registry book with your full name and address so the family can contact you if they wish to. They will appreciate having a record of all who attended.</p> <p>Bereaved: make an effort to greet, at least briefly, everyone who attends a visitation (wake).</p>	<p>Don't expect a lot of attention from the bereaved family. Services may attract a big group and it may be difficult for them to spend time with everyone.</p>	
<p>If you're unfamiliar with the rituals of the service, take your cues from the group or speak with the funeral director or clergyman beforehand.</p>	<p>Don't feel obligated to participate in anything that makes you uncomfortable, such as participating in religious ceremonies, praying or viewing the body if there is an open casket. However, you should always stand when the services call for it.</p>	
<p>After the services, keep in touch with the bereaved. They may not have the energy to initiate contact, but they will appreciate your concern. Be there for them when they are ready.</p> <p>Remember birthdays and anniversaries of the death with a card or a phone call.</p>	<p>Don't pressure the bereaved to see you or expect things to be "back to normal" in a particular timeframe. Don't ask them to call you. You should initiate the contact. The grieving family needs control to help them work through their grief.</p> <p>Don't pressure the family to clean out the deceased's belongings. They need to do this in their own time.</p>	
<p>Pet loss: the death of a cherished pet can spark deep feelings of grief. How you treat someone who is grieving a loss is much the same whether the loved one is a person or a pet.</p>	<p>Don't minimize the loss of a pet. For many, a pet is just as important as a human loved one.</p>	

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WHAT TO SAY		WHAT TO GIVE		BEREAVED: EXPRESSING YOUR GRATITUDE
Do	Don't	Do	Don't	
<p>It's polite to say:</p> <p><i>"Let me know if you need help to make arrangements."</i></p> <p><i>"We are thinking of you. I wish there were words to comfort you."</i></p> <p><i>"We are shocked and saddened by your loss. We care about (or love) you."</i></p> <p><i>"She was a fine person."</i></p> <p><i>"What you're going through must be very difficult."</i></p> <p><i>"It's too bad he died. I will always remember him."</i></p>	<p>It's NOT helpful to say:</p> <p><i>"It's probably a blessing."</i></p> <p><i>"He is in a better place now."</i></p> <p><i>"I know just how you feel."</i></p> <p><i>"Stay busy to take your mind off things."</i></p> <p><i>"God won't give you more than you can handle."</i></p> <p><i>"At least she is no longer suffering."</i></p> <p><i>"Time heals all wounds."</i></p>	<p>Send flowers with a note. For details on what various types of flowers symbolize, visit <a href="http://www.funeralwise.com/etiquette/flowers">www.funeralwise.com/etiquette/flowers</a>.</p>	<p>Don't send flowers to those whose religious orientation does not traditionally recognize floral arrangements as appropriate, such as those of Jewish and Islamic faiths.</p>	<p>It is not necessary to send a thank-you note to everyone who attended the funeral or visitation, or to those who sent you a sympathy card. However, you may wish to send a note to acknowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People who have sent or brought flowers</li> <li>• People who have made memorial donations to a charity</li> <li>• People who have helped out in some way (e.g., brought food, provided transportation, done baby-sitting, etc.)</li> <li>• The Pallbearers</li> <li>• Clergy presiding at the funeral. An honorarium may also be appropriate.</li> </ul>
Share fond memories of the departed.	Don't bring up embarrassing stories or negative comments about the deceased. Even if you are a loving family member, other family members may take offense.	Offer a donation to the deceased's favorite charity. You can also make a donation to an appropriate medical research organization. For help finding a reputable charity, visit <a href="http://www.funeralwise.com/etiquette/donations">www.funeralwise.com/etiquette/donations</a> .	Don't send flowers when the family requests a donation in lieu of flowers.	
Praise the bereaved for even small accomplishments.	Don't compare or mention your losses or others' experiences with death. Let the bereaved focus on their loss.	Send a fruit or gourmet basket to the family's home. Since flowers generally arrive before the funeral, it's a welcome gesture to send something to the home after the funeral.	Do not send flowers to the funeral home or church unless they can arrive the day before the funeral.	
		When possible, offer to help with childcare, cooking, cleaning, errands or other chores.		

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