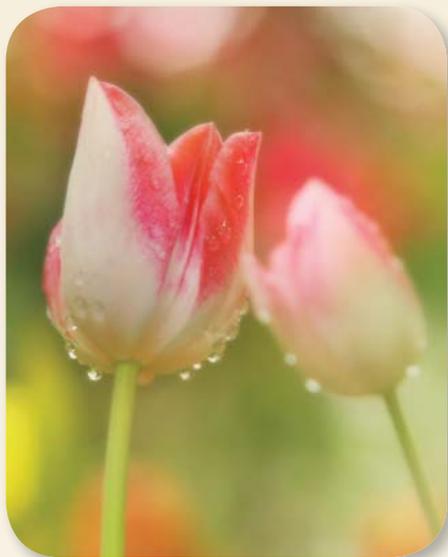


# Where Do I Begin?



Get help with the things on this list. Family, friends, and clergy can make phone calls to find out options and costs. Then you can make the decisions.

*“My brother-in-law called around to several funeral homes to find one that was nice but still affordable.”*

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Remember that there's no right or wrong way to say goodbye. Even if some of your decisions don't make sense to others, do what suits you, your family, and your traditions.

*“In my home country we cremate our dead. My wife's family thought I should bury my father. But that didn't seem right to me.”*

When a loved one dies, you may feel like it takes all your strength to just get through the day. But suddenly so much needs to be done. It can be overwhelming. Use this checklist to help you stay on track as you manage the details of these difficult days.

- **Choose a funeral home (mortuary).** Make this decision right away. The funeral director will help with details of the funeral and the burial or cremation. Remember that the funeral home is there to help you say goodbye in the way you want. Don't hesitate to ask questions, and say what you want. Ask how much it will cost.

*If you live out of state and plan to hold the service there, a funeral home in your home area should handle the arrangements.*

- **Decide whether to bury or cremate.** Only you can decide the final resting place of your loved one's body. Listen to your feelings and make the decision that's best for you and your family.

*If you choose burial, you'll need to:*

- Purchase a plot in a cemetery.
- Choose a casket.
- Decide how to dress your loved one.
- Choose a grave marker (this decision can wait if you want).

*If you choose cremation, you'll need to:*

- Decide if you want to have the body present in a casket at the funeral and cremated afterward.
- Choose what you want to do with your loved one's ashes. You may want to scatter them in a special place, keep them in an urn or container at home, or bury them in a small plot at a cemetery. But there's no hurry. You can wait until you're ready to decide.



Know that these decisions and activities — however difficult right now — are helping you grieve.

*“It was so hard to choose a place to bury my little girl, but I knew she’d want to be near a tree. Finding a plot near a tree was the last gift I gave her. And it helped me find peace, too.”*

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Should children attend the funeral? Most families and professionals agree that children should be invited to the funeral and given the choice whether to attend. A funeral is an important time to say goodbye, and to feel included with other people who loved the person who died.

- **Let people know.** Once you’ve notified those closest to you, you may want to ask someone else to contact others, including:
  - Extended family, close friends, and caregivers
  - Employers, old friends, groups the person belonged to, acquaintances, and others who may want to attend the service

*After the funeral you’ll need to make sure you’ve contacted:*

- Banks, insurance companies, bills, Social Security
  - Other people and organizations with whom the person had a financial relationship
- **Write the obituary.** An obituary is not required, but it’s a good way to let people know what happened. A loved one usually writes the obituary, but the funeral home can help if necessary.

The obituary can be as simple or as detailed as you wish. It usually includes biographical information, survivor information, and scheduled ceremonies. Most obituaries include a photograph, a personal look at what made your loved one unique and memorable, and an expression of your love. If you choose, it can also include thanks for care given to your loved one and/or a formal request for contributions to a memorial fund established in honor of the person who died.

- **Plan the service.** This is the place you will publicly say goodbye. Let others help you make it special. You need to decide:
  - When and where to hold the service
  - Whether to have a viewing, and whether the casket will be open or closed
  - Who will deliver the eulogies
  - Who will be the pallbearers

