

Remembering A Life

It's Never Too Late to Honor a Loved One

Planning a Service for a Loved One Who Died During the Pandemic



It's Never Too Late to Remember a Life

If you are unable to have the funeral you would like to have due to the pandemic, you can still plan to have a traditional memorial service in a few weeks or months once social distancing and other restrictions have been lifted. While delaying a memorial service may have some disadvantages, there are also some benefits.

Having a memorial service several weeks or even months after a death:

- Provides ample time to create a very meaningful tribute that beautifully honors the life of your loved one.
- Makes it more possible for friends and family, especially those who live at a distance, to be in attendance.

The service can be held at a funeral home, or you may want to select a location that has significance to your loved one or the family – perhaps a church, restaurant, or park. Contact a local funeral director to get started. To find one near you, use the Find a Funeral Home search tool on RememberingALife.com.

Initial Planning

Timing. You may start planning a meaningful service at any time, even if it won't be held for several months.

Location. The service can be held at the funeral home, at a church, or at another place with special meaning to you and your loved one.

Refreshments. You may want to serve food and beverage for your guests. Make it meaningful by including your loved one's favorite foods.

Type of service. Whether you have a more formal service with a set program of readings and music or a more casual gathering is up to you. Your funeral director can help you create a meaningful service.

Music. Whether you feature traditional music reflective of your faith or another genre of music favored by your loved one, music can create a special environment for mourners. Perhaps there are guests who would appreciate having the opportunity to perform a piece of music.

Speakers. If you're planning to have readings, such as scripture readings, poems or letters, consider who might appreciate the opportunity to speak.

Officiant. Consider if you'd like to have a faith leader or celebrant lead the service or participate in some capacity.

Décor. Enhance the space with flowers or personalize it with items important to your loved one.

Budget. Be open about your budget so your funeral director can work within it and offer options that are meaningful yet respectful of your budget. Regardless of your budget, your funeral director can help you plan a service that reflects the life of your loved one.

Make it Meaningful

Display the urn. If you chose cremation for your loved one and still have the cremated remains in your possession, the urn can be displayed at the service if you wish.

Gather meaningful mementos and photos to display. Your funeral director can help you create a thoughtful display that honors the life of your loved one. Objects may include photos, letters, awards, a favorite book, artwork, a record collection, a special watch, or other meaningful objects.

Prepare a eulogy or other remarks if you would like to speak about your loved one. Invite others to speak as well.

Offer guests a small memorial token. Whether you give your guests a traditional prayer card, a copy of your loved one's favorite quote, a small stone or metal heart, or another object of meaning, a memorial token can keep a loved one close as guests continue on their grief journeys. Your funeral director can also suggest some options.

Highlight a cause important to your loved one. Invite guests to donate to a cause important to the person who died, whether to an organization of personal interest, such as a humane society or food bank, or one that raises money for a specific health issue, such as heart disease or cancer.

Involve Your Guests

Involving other mourners in the service can play an important role in helping you and others continue on their grief journeys.

Storytelling. Your guests will likely have their own stories to tell about your loved one. Invite them to share the serious, playful and humorous memories that defined how your loved one lived their life and impacted the lives of others.

Memory book. Make a large blank book available to guests so they can write down a memory or two.

Memory jars. Place empty jars throughout the space and invite guests to write memories on small pieces of paper provided nearby and place them in the jars.

Virtual options. It's possible not everyone will be able to attend the service you have planned. Consider offering a virtual option for out-of-town guests or for those who, for any variety of reasons, would find it difficult to attend in person. Your funeral director can help you find the virtual option that is right for you and coordinate the details.



Planning Worksheet

Date of Service

Location

Budget

Officiant

Speakers/Readers

Music

Refreshments

Decor



Planning Worksheet

Make it Meaningful

Involve Your Guests