

Q&A About Funerals...

Why We Have a Viewing

FACT SHEET 6

A viewing usually involves presenting the body of the deceased in an open, or partially open coffin or casket at the funeral home or even at the family home - at some time prior to the funeral. The deceased may be dressed in their favourite clothes or perhaps as they are to be remembered, often with jewelry, prized possessions, letters and photographs added by family. Researchers and psychologists agree that a viewing can be an important initial step in the whole experience of grief.

- **A viewing can be a painful or uncomfortable event:** While viewings are common, you may have never seen a dead body, or you may find the idea very confronting. It is always a personal choice, but many people who go ahead and attend describe how helpful the experience was in accepting the death and letting the reality of what's happened sink in.
- **A viewing is your personal goodbye:** Unlike the funeral, which is usually a public ceremony, a viewing is usually a private event just for family and close friends. This means it's your time for a private goodbye and to say the things that matter such as:
 - * *I love you*
 - * *I'll miss you forever*
 - * *Thank you for everything*
 - * *I wish I'd said I was sorry for the time when...*
- **Viewings can be just for you:** At viewings, family and friends often go to see the deceased as a group. If you wish instead to have your own personal time, one-on-one, tell the funeral director that this is what you want. Also discuss what you would like to do... it should be no problem to arrange a personalised private viewing.
- **Viewings can be especially important when death is unexpected:** In these circumstances, a viewing can be even more important for your grief. It helps to make the "unreal" real and it allows you one more time together. This is your opportunity to say the things you want to say. Even if the body is injured, there is still the opportunity to spend time with a closed coffin or perhaps the injuries can be bandaged or wrapped - speak to your funeral director about the possibilities.
- **You can make it meaningful :** Perhaps you want to place a goodbye letter in the coffin, or a photo or some other memento of your relationship. It can be a time for one last touch or kiss to say goodbye. It can be your time to finish "unfinished" business. You might like to play a favourite piece of music or even have the coffin surrounded by memorabilia of the person's life - all of this is possible to make your final time together memorable.



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