

Funerals are important... because life is important

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AT Burstows, we believe that while bereavement is one of life's most challenging experiences, the grief it brings is not something that you should expect to overcome. Instead, it is something that needs to be experienced. Our team is here to support you and your loved ones, to help begin the healing.

We have commenced this regular newspaper series in the hope to assist our local community,

with providing teachings from industry leading bereavement experts to support you along life's journey.

As a fifth generation, local funeral company we constantly strive to improve our service, quality and understanding through our own professional and personal learning and growth, so we have taken this opportunity to share some of these insights.



Burstows Funerals - a fifth generation family firm.

FOR thousands of years, Funerals have been a means of expressing our beliefs, thoughts, and feelings about the death of someone we love. As you enter into the planning process, you may find it helpful to

remind yourself why we have funerals.

The funeral ceremony:

- helps us acknowledge that someone we love has died.
- fosters our memories of the person who died and

encourages us to share those memories with others.

- offers a time and place for us to talk about the life and death of the person who died.
- provides a social support system for us and other friends and family members.
- allows us to search for the meaning of life and death.
- offers continuity and hope for the living.

One of the most important gifts of planning a funeral is that it helps you and your family to focus your thoughts and feelings on something meaningful. The funeral encourages you to think about the person who died and to explore the meaning of her life and the ways in which she touched the lives of others.

The remembering, deciding, and reflecting that take place in the planning of the service are often an important part of the process of grief and mourning. And ultimately, this process of contemplation and discovery creates a memorable and moving funeral experience for all who attend.

Wolfelt's Hierarchy of the Purposes of Funerals

The multi-coloured triangle depicts the many reasons why we have had funerals since the beginning of time. The most practical reason is on the bottom of

the pyramid, and the most spiritual and significant is at the top.

Let's talk a little bit about each layer of the pyramid.

Reality

When someone we love dies, we are faced with acknowledging a difficult reality. It is hard to truly accept the finality of death, but the funeral helps us begin to do so. At first we accept it with our heads, and only over time do we come to accept it with our hearts.

Recall

Funerals help us begin to convert our relationship with the person who died from one of presence to one of memory. When we come together to share our memories, we also learn things we didn't know and we see how the person's life touched others.

Support

Funerals are social gatherings that bring together people who cared about the person who died. This reason for having funerals is especially important to remember if the person who died liked to say, "I don't want a funeral. Don't go to any trouble." Funerals are in remembrance of the person who died, but they are for the living. Those who loved the person who died need and benefit from having a special time to support one another in their grief.



Wolfelt's Purposes of Funerals Pyramid

Expression

So many thoughts and feelings fill our minds and our hearts when someone we love dies. Collectively, these thoughts and feelings are what we mean by the term "grief." In other words, grief is what's inside us. When we express our grief—by crying, talking to others, sharing memories, taking part in a funeral ceremony—we are mourning. Mourning is grief communicated outwardly. When we grieve but do not mourn, our sadness can feel unbearable and our many other emotions can fester inside of us. Mourning helps us begin to heal. The funeral is an essential time for mourning.

Meaning

Did the person I love have a good life? What is life, anyway? Why do we die? There are no simple explanations, but the funeral gives us a time and a place to hold the questions in our hearts and begin to find our way to answers that give us peace.

Integration

Funerals have a way of getting us to wake up—to

think about what we truly care about and how we want to spend our precious remaining days. Ultimately, funerals help us embrace the wonder of life and death and remind us to live deeply, with joy and love.

Please join us on this series as we continue to explore and share the insights of Dr Alan Wolfelt. A continuation to this series will appear on the 28th September.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Dr. Alan Wolfelt is a respected author, educator, and consultant to hospices, hospitals, schools, universities, funeral homes and other community agencies. His life's work of accompanying those who grieve has led him to advocate for the value of meaningful funeral experiences. For more information, visit www.centerforloss.com.

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