



Reasons Why People Do or Don't Want Funerals

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled "All Psyched Up" for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of "Life is An Adventure...every step of the way" and "Open for Business Success" is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

Published

March 31st, 2011

Lately there seems to be more of a trend towards not having funerals when individuals die. Some of this stems from the decisions that the person made before death and some from the decisions of the family members after the death.

I think there are three main reasons why funerals are held for individuals and three for why they are not held.

First the reasons why they are not held:

1. Finances - Funerals can be very expensive and often families cannot afford to have them. The person who is dying might even make a request that any estate that exists not be used for a funeral.
2. Personal preference - Many people do not want a "fuss" to be made when they die. They think that they haven't accomplished anything or are not willing to have others travel and get together in an uncomfortable setting because of them. This may be especially true if there is a great deal of travel involved for mourners.
3. Spiritual beliefs - Different cultures have different beliefs and the individual therefore may choose to avoid a service because of their own stance or lack of spiritual faith.

On the other hand, funerals are usually held because:

1. Group grieving can bring support and relief to individuals. Many times, a funeral is the only way that cousins and family members see each other. The funeral allows them to share their memories and find comfort in knowing that they are part of a family.
2. Community respect - Sometimes when a person has been well-known, in a high-profile position or a good example for others, a funeral is a way to honour that person and set a further opportunity for others to be inspired by them. Soldiers, for example, are given funerals in respect of their commitment to fight for freedom.
3. Spiritual beliefs - When an individual has a strong faith the family might view a funeral as an extension of the person's life. It might also be a way to share that faith and how s/he lived it out on earth with those who attend the funeral.

There are several options that people have when it comes to death. They might decide in advance to have a memorial service, be cremated followed by a ritual for spreading the ashes or even request that their loved ones get together for a party or celebration.

Some people say that funerals are for the living. But if you have lost a loved one, it is also important to consider the wishes of the person who has died. Create a plan that will respect them and the adventure that they had in this world during their life.