



# The Benefits of Having a Funeral

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](mailto:office@drlindahancock.com)

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On July 11 my sister died.

Six days before this we all attended the wedding of her only son and now we were faced with yet another long trip to attend the funeral. You see Deb had lived for almost four decades in a small farming community in the southeastern area of Saskatchewan, very close to the Manitoba and United States borders. That meant an eight-hour drive from my home and eleven hours from my daughter's. Two trips meant that in less than three weeks I spent over thirty-four hours in the backseat of my son-in-law's truck!

Often I hear people tell me that they don't like funerals and actually don't want one when they pass but this funeral reminded me of the many reasons why having one is important:

1. **Extended family members are drawn together** - As children, the cousins played together during the summers, at Christmas and at other family events but now that we are grown, geographic distance and busy schedules separate us. One of our cousins drove about sixteen hours one way to be with us for Deb's funeral. It was so good to be with people who knew us well. In a matter of minutes the years melted away and we were close again.
2. **Stories are told that we would otherwise not hear** - Each person has had unique experiences that were stored in individual memory banks. We heard so many tales that brought both tears and laughter and now we will all remember them for years to come.
3. **Individuals who care show up** - We all expect our friends to contact or comfort us when there is a death in our family but often people we have never met or barely knew end up providing insight or comfort that we never expected.
4. **History is shared** - Whenever family gathers there is usually talk about the past and opportunity to learn about our ancestors. As one of the older members of our family who has an interest in genealogy, I am often asked the questions - not just because I have the facts people want but because I have lived the past and actually remember it.
5. **The environment is savored** - My family and I ate at the one restaurant in town, took treats to the Nursing Home and visited the flower shop. These were the places that my sister had frequented. It felt good to be there and we were warmly greeted.
6. **Funerals remind you that you aren't as busy as you think** - When you are forced to drop everything with very short notice, leave your home and go away from your regular routine, you are reminded that there is always time for the important things.
7. **Emotions are released** - Most people don't feel comfortable crying in front of others but funerals offer a safe place to do this.
8. **Traditions are honoured** - My sister and I were raised in a home where church was a regular part of the week. Deb was married in the church and her son was baptized but they were not regular church-goers. I was therefore surprised to see that the funeral had a very traditional format. The pastor led

us in prayer and the singing of very old hymns was beautiful. We were reminded that our family has roots of faith.

9. **Mortality is emphasized** - It is easy to promise to get together but when one of the younger members in the family dies, everyone seems to pay more attention to the time-limited aspects of humanity. Our promises have now turned to commitment and action.
10. **Inspiration surrounds us** - Funerals encourage us to consider the positive attributes of the person who died. Funeral directors and those who plan the service usually highlight the strengths of the person we knew and remind us to emulate them in our own lives.

Perhaps you have thought about or asked your family not to have a funeral for you when you die. It is very important to remember that a funeral is not for the person who is gone. It is for those who are left. In fact, your funeral might be one of the best gifts you can give to those you care about when you consider the above ten points.