

Graveside Visits to Honor Loved Ones

For family and friends, having a dedicated place to honor a loved one expresses respect for their memory and provides a place to remember and reflect.

Visiting the gravesite can also be a significant part of the healing process. Visits may provide a sense of unity as families struggle after a loss. It can be an important way to begin to process and work through grief.

Some people feel a sense of comfort or connection to their loved one at a gravesite. Others find solace in the quiet surroundings that are unique to a burial site. For many, visiting the gravesite simply allows them to feel closer to someone they love and miss.

Everyone Grieves Uniquely

People perceive death and gravesite visits differently. Some choose to grieve privately. Others feel more comfortable having loved ones around to support them. It is important to let each person mourn in their own way, on their own time without judgment or demands.

Use Sensitivity with Children

It is especially important to give children options when visiting a loved one's grave. They may need more time to process, accept and integrate the loss. They may need a special outlet to express their grief. Make special considerations for children during a time of loss.

Grieving After Cremation

Sometimes, there is no gravesite to visit after a loss. Loved ones who have chosen cremation may not have a permanent, physical memorial like a gravesite or headstone. Yet families can still devote a special place to honor them.

Options include dedicating a tree or garden bench, planting flowers or a memorial garden or posting a plaque near the site of scattered ashes. Establishing an online memorial, social media page or a memorial fund are also good ways to honor a loved one.

When to Gather

People and customs differ on timeframes to visit a loved one's gravesite. Frequency may depend on proximity or a person's unique grieving process. Some people visit immediately following a death to help them start to heal. Others choose to visit on a birthday, death or wedding anniversary, or on meaningful holidays. Families and friends may also choose to gather according to religious or spiritual guidelines, or to celebrate with an annually-held End-of-Life event.

Personal Offerings

Offerings during burial visits may provide a meaningful way for loved ones to honor and feel close to the deceased. Floral arrangements add beauty to the gravesite. Letters, notes or religious passages may help express unspoken final words. People may bring balloons on a birthday, wreaths on holidays, flags on Veterans Day, or may simply offer quiet thoughts or prayers. Religious and cultural traditions are also often observed.

Check with the cemetery or burial site for visitation guidelines and policies. Whenever you choose to go, graveside visits can provide a life-affirming way to help heal your grief and to remember your deceased loved one.