

Know Your Funeral and Cemetery Etiquette

When someone you know passes away, one of the best ways to honor their life is by attending a funeral service or ceremony. However, it is sometimes unclear on the proper protocol for services or cemetery visits, and many people don't know what to expect.

Understanding funeral and cemetery etiquette will help you feel more confident that your support is appropriate and welcome. The following guidelines may also help you comfort those closest to the deceased loved one.

Go. Attend the funeral service. Mourners will remember your selfless gesture. You'll bring them comfort even if your stay is brief.

Arrive early. Sign the guest book or registry with your full name and connection to the deceased. The family may use it to send thank you cards after the service.

Dress appropriately. Conservative, darker clothing most suitably expresses grief. Refrain from bright, trendy dress and casual wear like sports or beach attire.

Observe proper seating. Sit near the front if you are a family member. Close friends sit or stand behind the family; coworkers or acquaintances further back.

Behave respectfully. Tears are normal when grieving. If you have difficulty managing your emotions, gracefully exit until you regain control. Use common courtesy and discretion. Respect the somber occasion.

Express condolences. Greet the family after the service concludes. Tell them you share their sorrow. Focus on them rather than on your grief. They will remember and appreciate your compassion.

Pay respects. Stand near the casket, urn or memorial display for a moment of silence to remember the deceased.

Remove distractions. Phone calls, texting and snacking are taboo. Excuse yourself discreetly if needed. Take photos with advance permission only.

Manage children. Take restless children away from the service. Remind them that a cemetery is not a place to run or play.

Observe cemetery procedures. When driving in a funeral procession, turn on your headlights and follow the vehicle ahead. Park to the side of a cemetery road, instead of on the grass. Walk between, not atop, headstones or markers.

Respect rituals. Respect and follow rituals if you can. Stay throughout formal visitation prayers or services. Confirm religious customs in advance.

Follow instructions. The funeral director will inform you of funeral or graveside procedures and duties. When in doubt, ask the funeral provider for guidance.

Share a memory. When appropriate, offer a story that illustrates your connection to the deceased and what you and will miss most. Keep your remarks positive, respectful and brief.

Contribute. If asked to participate in the service, do so if you can. Donate to a favorite family charity or offer a gift of flowers, food or services.

Follow up. Grieving loved ones often experience challenging moments after the funeral. Stay in contact after the service to let them know you still care.

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Has someone close to you passed away? Visit www.passare.com for helpful information and resources on many End-of-Life Management topics, including : how-to write a will, avoid probate, obtain life insurance, manage digital assets and cope with grief.