

Funeral Etiquette

Like everything in society, funeral etiquette has evolved over time. While common sense is your best guide, here are a few dos and don'ts of funeral etiquette.

Do:

Express your condolences – It's not easy to come up with the right words for someone who has just lost a loved one. You don't need to be a poet. Simply saying, "I am sorry for your loss. My thoughts and prayers are with you and your family", is enough. If you can't be at a funeral service in person, sending a card or leaving a message on a memorial website is a perfect way to express your sympathy.

Dress appropriately – Gone are the days of dressing up in all black for a funeral, but jeans and a t-shirt aren't acceptable either. You should still dress to impress. Try to avoid any bright or flashy colors. Wear what you would wear to a wedding or a job interview.

Sign the register book – The family will keep the register book as a memento for years. Be sure to include your full name and relationship to the deceased. Feel free to leave a message.

Give a gift – You don't need to go overboard with your gift – it is the thought that counts. Suitable gifts include: flowers; a donation to the charity of the family's choice, or you can make a commitment of service to the family at a later date. A commitment of service can be something as simple as cooking dinner for them, offering to clean up their house, or any of the "little" things that may be neglected while a family deals with death. Make sure you provide a signed card so the family knows who gave the gift.

Keep in Touch – You may feel that the family needs their space and time to grieve, but a simple phone call or note after the funeral lets the family know you care. With social networking, leaving a quick note is as simple as a click of a mouse. The months following a death is when grieving friends and family need the most support.

Don't:

Bring your cell phone – Your phone ringing will be highly inappropriate and will cause a disturbance. Turn any ringers or notifications off. Even better, leave your phone at

home or in your car. A funeral is not the time to be texting or checking your messages.

Allow your children to be a distraction – From a very young age, children are aware of death, and if the funeral is for someone that was close to them (grandparent, aunt, uncle), they should be given the option of attending. If it is not appropriate for your child to be there, or if you feel they will cause a commotion, it might be best to find appropriate care for them for the day.

Be afraid to remember the good times – Funerals are obviously a time of grieving and mourning, but remembering the good times helps with the healing process. Sharing a funny and appropriate story is acceptable, and in some cases, it's exactly what the deceased would have wanted.

Overindulge – If food or drink is served, don't over-do it. Remember that you won't be the only attendee. If alcohol is served, limit yourself to one or two.

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