



Rosedale
FUNERAL HOME

What happens at a Funeral?



VIDEO FOR CHILDREN

What happens at a Funeral?

Introduction

This film has been produced by Rosedale Funeral Home for use by parents, teachers, bereavement workers, counsellors or anyone working with children. It is intended that this film will help children make an empowered and fully informed decision about whether or not to attend a funeral. Its creation was prompted by a boy's experience of attending his mother's funeral and having no idea what he was walking into.

It could also be watched by a child who did not have the chance to/or did not wish to attend a funeral and wants to know what might have happened.

Children can often be 'forgotten mourners'. It is important that they are not side-lined or left out of the funeral process as this can create a feeling of being ignored. They are grieving too and may be confused about what is going on.

It is common for our funeral directors to be asked by parents if it is appropriate for their child to visit the Chapel of Rest or attend the funeral. There is no right or wrong answer. It depends on the child's emotional maturity, the relationship they had with their special person and how they feel about attending. This film is intended to help with this dilemma.

There is often silence when it comes to talking about death and adults may feel it is better to protect children from it. However, many children have, and will experience death in their own family or school.

The taboos surrounding death means that many children (and adults) may have misinformed ideas or unanswered questions.

This film clearly explains in a gentle and simple way exactly what happens when someone dies and has a funeral. It gives clear, accurate information that could help ease a child's fear and anxiety.

The film is 9 minutes and 39 seconds long. The first part of the film shows what happens immediately after someone has died, the funeral arrangements being organised and the family visiting the Chapel of Rest. After that the film divides with the first funeral being a burial followed by a social gathering (wake) and the final part depicting what happens at the crematorium. If you are only wishing to show the burial to a bereaved child, you can stop it at **7.19**. If you just wish to show the cremation to a bereaved child, you should pause the film at **4.09** and restart it at **7.19**. Whilst the wake scene in the film follows a burial, it could equally follow a cremation and the scenes take place between **5.59 to 6.43**.

The effects of a death on a child's development can be long-lasting and profound. The grieving process can be helped by allowing children to ask honest and open questions and express what may be troubling them. Attending their loved one's funeral may be beneficial if they make their own informed decision to go.



Preparing children before watching the film

Liz Koole, a family service manager for the bereavement charity 'Winston's Wish' explains:

Going to the funeral of someone important to them, helps a child (and adult) to process what has happened. So, it helps to make it real; it helps a child to know that the body does not have any life in it and to see that this makes people sad. Seeing other people cry at a funeral shows a child that it is natural for people to be upset when someone dies and lets them know that it is alright to feel sad and cry. Going through the process of the funeral is also an opportunity to say goodbye to the person in many different ways.

Attending a funeral can allow children to begin to accept the reality of the death, to feel part of what is happening, celebrate the good memories and say goodbye to their special person.



It is important to explain to children that the people in the film are acting. Even the lady who is seen to be 'dead', is acting. During the scene where the coffin is brought into the church, it needs to be stressed that the lady was not inside the coffin.

The lady who is acting in the film 'dies' in bed. However, not everyone dies in bed. Just as there are many types of funerals, people also die in many different circumstances.

Be aware that the film may stir up emotions or memories. Tears may be shed and this is ok. Tears are a natural human expression of emotion and help with releasing our feelings of grief.

With very young children, you might want to explain what they will see in the film –

When someone dies, their friends and family might want to go and see the body of the person who has died, to say goodbye. Their body will be in a box called a coffin. This can be made of different things, such as wood, cardboard or willow. The people that take special care of the dead person before the funeral are called funeral directors. You can ask them any question you like. The dead person cannot move or talk because their body has stopped working. The special part of them (some people call this their soul or spirit), their memories and the love that was inside them will last forever and will always be remembered.

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Questions that may arise after watching the film

Encourage the child/children to ask any questions about what they have seen. If they are upset, explain that death is a sad thing and crying is normal and ok.

How do I know if the ashes I received were really my loved one's ashes?

Be reassured that every coffin is cremated separately and the crematorium has a strict procedure for ensuring each person's ashes are kept separate.

When the curtains close at the end of the ceremony, is the coffin burnt straight away?

When the curtains close, and everyone has left the chapel, the coffin is taken to a different room where it awaits cremation.

What if the person who dies, doesn't want a funeral?

Sometimes a cremation will take place without a service. A celebration of their life may follow this and/or a ceremony to scatter their ashes in a special place.

If I don't go to the funeral, will people think I don't care about my special person and be disappointed with me?

No, there are some other things you can do to show how much you care. You could draw a special picture or write a special letter to put with them in their coffin. You could choose a piece of music to be

played, write a card to go with the flowers on the coffin or write down some memories of them that could be read out at the funeral, if you don't want to go.

You could also go the next day to see the grave and the flowers and say goodbye then.

If cremation means burning, then will that hurt my special person?

When someone dies this means that their body has stopped working so they cannot talk, eat, move or feel any pain.

Am I too young to go to a funeral?

No. Anyone can go to a funeral no matter how old or how young. You may not understand much of what is going on but when you get older you might be pleased that you went. The people there might be sad and you might be too. Sometimes it is good to share your sadness together.

If I decide to go to the funeral, can I change my mind later on?

Yes! You don't have to go to the funeral. It is important to tell someone if you don't want to go anymore.



Do children of different ages experience grief differently?

If I go and see my special person who has died, before the funeral, what will it be like?

This is called 'viewing the body'. Your special person may look a bit different to how you remember them. They will not be able to move or talk and won't be breathing anymore. If you choose to touch them, they may feel cold and smooth. They won't be able to give you a hug. They will be lying still and at peace in a special comfortable box in a quiet room called the 'Chapel of Rest', where you can say goodbye to them. You can choose if you want to do this or not. If you prefer, you could just look from the door.

In the film, why were the people who went to the funeral having a party afterwards?

It is sometimes called a 'wake' or a 'celebration of life'. All the people who knew and loved your special person come together and remember the special memories of them. Although a funeral is a sad time, it is also important to remember all the happy times that were shared and the funny things they did or said. Even though your special person is not there, their memory lives on in the people who knew them.



Babies and toddlers will sense changes in their caregivers and environment. As a result, sleeping and eating patterns may change. This age group can be reassured with lots of comfort and love. Keep routines as normal as possible.

Children aged 3-6 can find the concept of death and heaven difficult to understand. Allow questions to be asked and explain things simply and in truthful and uncomplicated language. Ensure the child knows that the death was not their fault.

At this age, children might become more demanding. Try to allow them to express thoughts and feelings by drawing and role play. Keep routines as normal as possible.

At age 6-9, children will have more understanding of what death means. They may experience bad dreams and have fears that someone else close to them will die. They may behave in a challenging way. Allow them to talk about what is troubling them and offer reassurance, love, cuddles and understanding. It is ok to cry together; this will help them to feel included.



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Age 10+ adolescence is a time of huge change as puberty begins. Hormones and changes in the brain can cause upheaval at this age. They may rely more on friendship groups to provide support. Rebellious and risk-taking behaviour is normal for some. They may question beliefs and become interested in exploring ideas about God and heaven. Find time to listen and be prepared to share your beliefs in a non-biased way. It is important for parents to try not to take anger and rebellion personally. Older children still need to know they are loved, safe and accepted unconditionally. Try to find time to do age appropriate activities together. Remember together and grieve together. This demonstrates that it's ok to show your feelings rather than to bottle them up. Guide them towards child bereavement charities (*see overleaf*) that can offer groups or residentials with children their own age. This can help with feelings of isolation.



Activities that can help children with their grief

Create a memory jar: collect small items that remind you of your loved one or write memories of them on pieces of paper and store them in the jar (*you could ask other people for their memories too.*)

Plant a special tree or rose bush in the garden.

Create a memory box, fill it with photos, a piece of their clothing, jewellery, an object that reminds you of them, a candle that could be lit at special times (their birthday or Father's/Mother's Day.)

Write a story book/create a scrapbook all about them.

Visit a place that was special to your loved one, take a picnic and share memories together about the person who has died.

Set time aside to **look through a photograph album** together.





Notes for teachers and the curriculum

This film could be used as a resource for upper key stage 2 Science, which refers to the life cycle of animals, including humans. Death is part of the human lifecycle which occurs when the physical body stops working. The cycle continues when the physical body is absorbed back into the earth either through burial or cremation.

It could also be used as a resource for Key stage 4 Biology which covers, health, disease and the development of medicines.

The National Curriculum for High Schools, states regarding Personal, Social, Health and Economic Development (PHSE):

‘We want teachers to be free to address the topics most relevant for their pupils, drawing on good practice and advice from professional organisations... we encourage organisations to develop guidance for schools in the area of their expertise.’

With the tragic rise in teen suicide in the UK, the topic of death is something pupils may have many questions about. This film will assist school age children to explore the topic of death in an open and straightforward way.

The discussion points alongside the film, may also be helpful for the teaching of R.E. when looking at the funeral practices of different religions. The film explores a Christian burial ceremony and a non-religious cremation. It is important to stress that there are other types of funerals that can vary greatly in different cultures. It may also prompt discussion about what different religions/groups believe about the afterlife, allowing students to form their own ideas around this subject.





Rosedale Funeral Home – rosedalefuneralhome.co.uk

Complimentary bereavement courses for adults. Memory boxes, memory bears, story and audio books for children. Christmas memory trees and book of remembrance, annual walks of remembrance and Christmas remembrance services in various locations in Norfolk and Suffolk.

Further sources of support/child bereavement charities:



Giving hope to grieving children

Winston's Wish – winstonswish.org.uk

Winston's Wish is a childhood bereavement charity in the UK. The charity offers a wide range of practical support and guidance to bereaved children, their families and professionals. The charity currently supports 40,000 bereaved children and young people per year.



Child Bereavement UK – childbereavementuk.org

Child Bereavement UK supports families and educates professionals both when a baby or child of any age dies or is dying, and when a child is facing bereavement.



Nelson's Journey – nelsonsjourney.org.uk

A Norfolk charity that supports children and young people up to their 18th birthday who have experienced the death of a significant person in their life. They provide a range of support, appropriate for the needs of each child or young person.



Hope Again – rd4u.org.uk

Hope Again is Cruse Bereavement Care's website by young people for young people. Cruse is a national charity that provides support, advice and information to children, young people and adults when someone close to them dies. They also work to enhance society's care of bereaved people.



Scotty's Little Soldiers – scottyslittlesoldiers.co.uk

Scotty's Little Soldiers is a charity dedicated to supporting children and young people who have lost a parent whilst serving in the British Armed Forces.



Smiles and tears gift box from Nelson's Journey
(created by young people for young people to support children through the grieving process.)