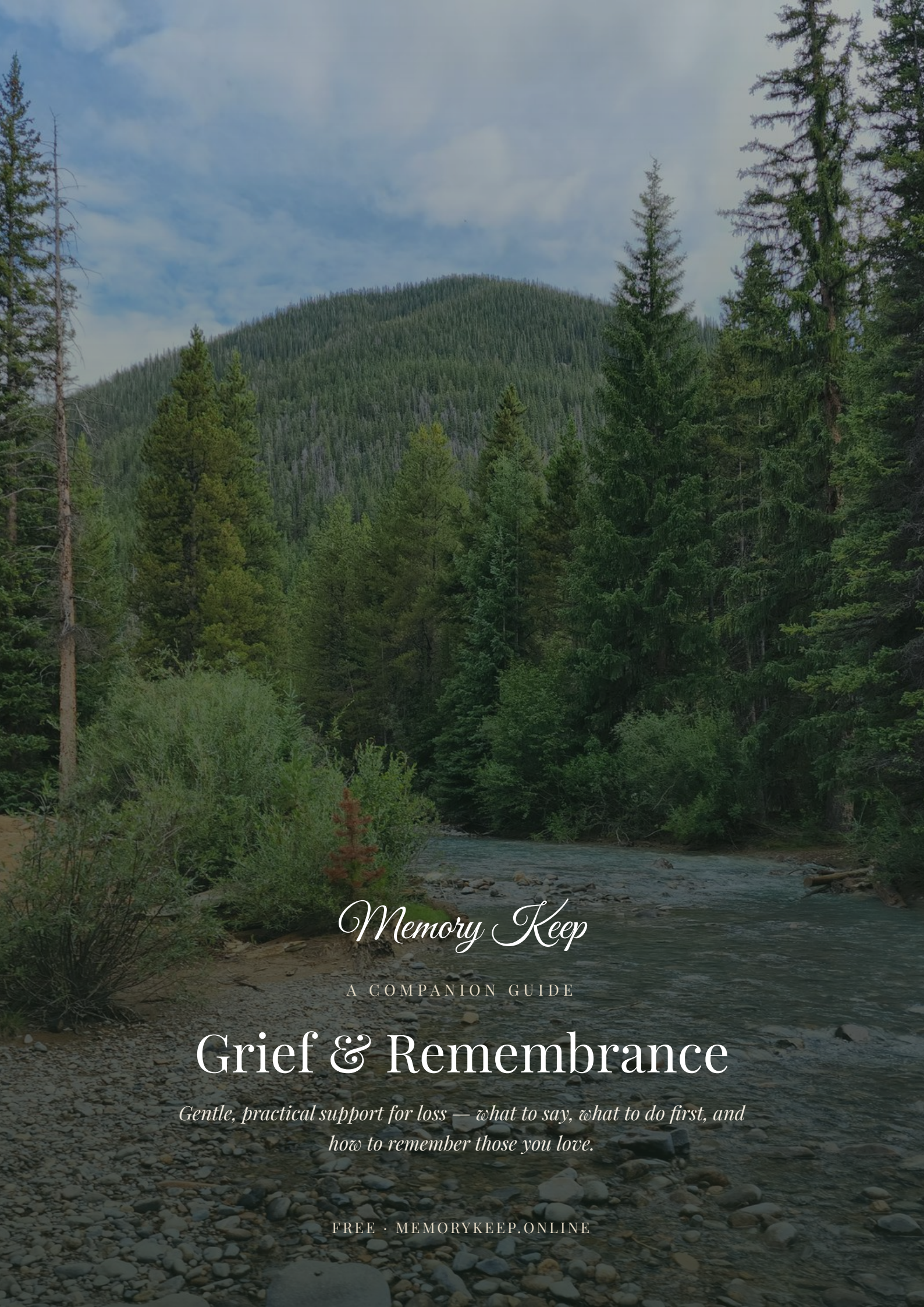




Memory Keep

A COMPANION GUIDE

Grief & Remembrance

*Gentle, practical support for loss — what to say, what to do first, and
how to remember those you love.*

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FOREWORD

You are not alone in this

Grief has no map. This guide will not tell you how to feel — there is no right way — but it can walk beside you through some of the hardest, most practical moments: what to do in the first days, what to say to someone who is hurting, how to shape a goodbye, and how to keep a life close. Every page here is drawn from our own guides, written gently and without cliché. Take what helps you, and leave the rest.

Memory Keep

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PART ONE

When you've just lost someone

What to Do When Someone Dies

If you are reading this having just lost someone, first — breathe. You do not have to do everything today, and you do not have to do it alone. What follows is a gentle map of the practical steps, in roughly the order they tend to happen. Very few of them are urgent. Take them one at a time, lean on the people around you, and let the rest wait until you are ready.

In the first hours

Only a couple of things need attention straight away, and even these can be done calmly.

- Have the death formally confirmed. Who you call depends on where and how they died. In a hospital or hospice, the staff will take care of this and guide you. For an expected death at home, call their doctor or hospice. For a sudden or unexpected death, call emergency services.
- Tell those closest to you. Reach immediate family and closest friends. You do not have to tell everyone yourself — ask one or two people to help carry the news.
- Contact a funeral home when you are ready. A funeral director will bring the person into their care and gently guide what comes next. There is no need to rush — it is alright to sit with them a while first.

In the first days

- Register the death with the relevant authority, and request several certified copies of the death certificate — you will need them for banks, insurers, and government offices, and it saves time to have a few.
- Look for any wishes they left — a will, a funeral plan, prepaid arrangements, or organ-donation wishes. These often ease the decisions ahead.
- Choose a funeral director to help you plan a service, however simple or personal you would like it to be.
- Care for what they leave in your keeping — dependents, pets, and their home. Secure the property and make sure anyone who relied on them is looked after.

In the weeks that follow

None of this is urgent. It unfolds over weeks, and much of it can be shared.

- Tell the wider circle — friends, colleagues, community. A memorial page can help here: one link that shares the news, the service details, and a place to gather.

- Notify organisations — their employer, banks, pensions, insurers, government offices and benefits, utilities, and subscriptions. Many governments offer a single "tell us once"–style service that notifies several departments at once.
- Begin settling the estate — the will, and probate if it is needed. A solicitor or the funeral director can point you to the right process where you live.

The exact legal steps — how a death is registered, who must be notified, and how the estate is handled — vary by country and region. Use this as a gentle overview, and check your local government's official "what to do when someone dies" guidance, or ask your funeral director, for the specifics where you live.

Looking after yourself

Grief is not an item on the list, and it will not wait its turn. In the middle of all these tasks, be gentle with yourself. Eat something. Sleep when you can. Let people bring food, make calls, and sit with you — accepting help is not weakness, it is how we get through. You do not have to be strong, or organised, or composed. You only have to take the next small step, when you are ready for it.

There is no right way to do any of this, and no schedule you are failing to keep. The person you loved would not want these first days to be a test. Take them slowly. The rest can wait.

Dealing with the Loss of a Parent

Losing a parent is one of the most significant losses most of us will ever face. Even when the death is expected, the reality of a world without them can feel disorientating in ways that are hard to put into words. You are not alone in this.

A parent occupies a unique space in our lives. They are often our first home, our longest relationship, and a living thread to our own history. When they die, the loss can feel layered — you grieve the person, but also the relationship, the future you imagined, and the version of yourself that only existed in their presence.

The particular shape of this grief

Many people are surprised by how much the loss of an elderly parent affects them, even when the death was peaceful and expected. Grief does not scale with the circumstances — it scales with love and with the significance of the relationship.

You may find yourself suddenly aware of your own mortality in a new way. Parents often act as a kind of buffer between us and the reality of death. With them gone, many people describe a feeling of becoming "the older generation" — even if you are still young. This is a recognised aspect of parental bereavement and it can take time to settle.

Siblings may grieve very differently from one another, which can create friction at a time when you most want connection. The grief of siblings is shaped by their own relationship with the parent, their life circumstances, and their individual ways of coping. Try to allow space for this difference without judgement.

Practical steps in the immediate weeks

- Allow yourself time before making major decisions. Grief affects our cognition — decisions about estates, belongings, or life changes are often best made when the initial fog has lifted a little.
- Accept practical help. People often want to do something. Let them bring meals, help with administration, or simply sit with you.
- Begin gathering photographs and memories while they are fresh. Ask relatives and old friends to share stories, photos, and remembrances. These become precious over time.
- Be patient with your body. Grief is physically exhausting. Sleep disturbances, fatigue, and changes in appetite are common and normal.

Keeping their memory alive

Many people find that actively preserving a parent's memory helps with grief, giving the love somewhere to go. Collect their recipes, their handwritten notes, the sound of their voice if you have recordings. Create a space — physical or digital — where their story is held and can be revisited by the whole family.

Talk about them. Say their name. Share the memories with children and grandchildren who may not remember them well. The best memorial is a life continued in the hearts of those who loved them.

Grief has no finish line. But with time, many people find that the sharpness of loss softens into something more like gratitude — for the years, the lessons, the love. It does not mean missing them any less. It means carrying them with you differently.

Coping with the Loss of a Pet

The loss of a pet is a genuine, significant grief — one that is sometimes minimised by people who have not experienced the particular bond between a person and their animal. If you are mourning your pet, your grief is valid. You loved them, and they are gone. That is enough reason to grieve.

For many people, a pet is among the most consistent presences in daily life — greeting you at the door, sleeping beside you, accompanying you through major life events. The loss of that presence leaves a very specific, very physical absence. The routine that revolved around them vanishes overnight. The silence they used to fill can be particularly hard.

What grief for a pet can feel like

Pet loss grief can include all the same emotions as any bereavement: sadness, anger, guilt, disbelief, and a profound sense of missing. It can also carry specific elements:

- Guilt, particularly when a decision was made to end their suffering. If you chose euthanasia to spare your pet from pain, that decision was an act of love — perhaps the final and hardest one.
- Disenfranchised grief — a sense that the world around you does not fully recognise the scale of the loss, which can make it feel more isolating.
- The absence of routine. The walks that no longer happen, the food bowl in the corner, the lead by the door. These daily reminders can extend the period of active grief.

Allow yourself to grieve without apology. You do not need to justify the depth of your feelings to anyone.

Ways to honour your pet

Creating a meaningful tribute can be part of the healing process. Some families find comfort in:

- Planting a tree or garden in their memory
- Creating a photo album or [digital memorial with a shareable QR code](#)
- Making a small donation to an animal rescue or welfare organisation in their name
- Having a paw print or portrait made as a keepsake
- Holding a small ceremony with the family — particularly important if children are grieving too

Looking after yourself and your family

Be patient with yourself and others in the household. Children often grieve very openly for pets and may need particular support and honesty. Other pets in the home may also show signs of distress — changes in behaviour, appetite, or energy — and benefit from extra attention and routine.

There is no set timeline for pet loss grief. Some people feel better within weeks; others carry the loss for months. If you are struggling, pet bereavement support lines and counsellors exist specifically to help — there is no shame in seeking them out.

When and whether to welcome a new pet into your life is entirely your decision. There is no right time, and no new pet replaces the one you loved. But for many people, eventually, caring for an animal again becomes a way of continuing to live fully.

Twelve Essential Grief Insights

Grief is one of the most universal human experiences, yet it can feel profoundly isolating. These twelve insights do not offer a way around grief — they offer a more compassionate way through it.

1. Grief is not a disorder. It is a natural and necessary response to loss. The pain you feel is proportional to the love you had — which means it is a sign of something precious, not something broken.
2. There are no stages to complete. The "five stages" model is widely misunderstood. It was never meant to describe a linear sequence everyone must pass through. Grief is far more individual and non-linear than any model can capture.
3. Everyone grieves differently. People in the same family, mourning the same person, can have vastly different experiences. Neither is doing it wrong. Avoid comparing your grief to someone else's, or judging others by how you grieve.
4. Grief has physical symptoms. Exhaustion, appetite changes, difficulty concentrating, chest tightness, and a weakened immune system are all common physical manifestations of grief. Take care of your body during this time.
5. Grief comes in waves. Many people describe the experience as unpredictable — calm one moment, overwhelmed the next, often triggered by something small and unexpected. A song, a smell, a phrase. This is normal.
6. You do not have to "move on." The goal of grieving is not to leave the person behind. It is to find a way to carry them with you — to integrate the loss into a life that still moves forward.
7. Time alone does not heal grief. What helps is what you do with time — the conversations, the rituals, the allowing yourself to feel rather than suppress. Grief acknowledged tends to move; grief buried tends to accumulate.
8. Grief can feel like fear, guilt, or anger. These are not separate problems — they are often grief in disguise. Guilt that you could have done more. Anger at the illness, the accident, or the unfairness. Fear of what comes next. All of it belongs.
9. Anniversaries and milestones are hard. Birthdays, holidays, and the anniversary of the death can bring grief back with surprising force. Planning gently for these days — having something meaningful to do or someone to be with — can help.
10. Talking about them helps. Many people worry that mentioning the person who died will upset others. In reality, most bereaved people want to talk about their loved one. Say their name. Share a memory. It is a gift.

11. Grief can coexist with joy. Laughing at a funny memory does not mean you are not grieving. Finding pleasure in life does not mean you have forgotten them. The heart is large enough to hold both.
12. It is okay to ask for help. If grief feels unmanageable, if you are not eating or sleeping, or if weeks have passed without any lightening, please reach out to a counsellor, grief support group, or your doctor. Asking for help is not weakness — it is wisdom.

A note on grief support

Grief counselling and bereavement support groups are available in most communities and online. Speaking with someone who specialises in loss can make a significant difference, particularly in the first year. You do not need to be in crisis to seek support — reaching out early is a kindness to yourself.

Whatever you are feeling right now, it is valid. There is no timeline, no correct way to do this, and no destination at which you have finished grieving. There is only today, and being as gentle with yourself as you can.

How to Mark a Death Anniversary

The anniversary of a loved one's passing — sometimes called a death anniversary, angelversary, or Remembrance Day — can catch us off guard with a fresh wave of grief, even years after the loss. There is no right or wrong way to observe the day, but having a gentle intention for it can bring comfort and meaning.

Losing someone we love is among the hardest experiences any of us will face. In the weeks and months that follow, life slowly finds a new rhythm — yet certain dates carry a weight that nothing quite prepares us for. The anniversary of a death is one of them. Whether it is the first year or the fifteenth, the day has a way of arriving with unexpected intensity.

Why anniversaries can be so difficult

Grief does not follow a calendar, but our memories do. The approaching date can trigger a kind of anticipatory grief in the days beforehand — a quiet restlessness, a tendency to replay old memories, or a sudden heaviness that is hard to name. This is entirely normal. Our minds and bodies remember loss in their own way, and the anniversary is one of those powerful anchors.

Some people find the anticipation harder than the day itself. Others feel the weight most keenly in the moment. Still others find that, over time, the day shifts from one of raw sorrow to one of quiet reflection and even gratitude. All of these experiences are valid.

Meaningful ways to mark the day

There is no single correct way to honour a death anniversary. What matters most is that the gesture feels true to the person you are remembering and to the way you grieve. Here are some ideas that many families find comforting:

- Light a candle. A simple, quiet act that creates a moment of stillness and intention. Many families light a candle at a particular time and sit with their memories for a while.
- Visit a meaningful place. Whether it is a grave, a favourite park, the beach they loved, or a chair by the window they often sat in — being in a space connected to them can feel grounding.
- Share stories. Gather with family or friends, or simply pick up the phone, and talk about the person. Tell the funny stories, the proud ones, the ordinary ones. Keeping their memory alive in conversation is one of the most loving things we can do.
- Do something they loved. Cook their favourite meal, watch a film they adored, play the music they danced to. Bringing a piece of their personality into the day is a beautiful way to feel close to them.

- Support a cause in their name. Making a donation to a charity they cared about, or volunteering your time, can channel grief into something that carries their values forward.
- Revisit their memorial. If you have created a digital memorial, this is a day to spend time there — looking through the photos, reading old messages, and sitting with the life they lived.

Supporting others on this day

If someone you care about is approaching a death anniversary, a simple acknowledgement can mean the world. You do not need to have the perfect words. A message that says "I am thinking of you and of [their name] today" is enough. Many grieving people find that others stop mentioning the person they have lost over time, which can feel isolating. Being the one who still remembers — and says so — is a profound act of kindness.

If you are unsure whether to reach out, reach out. A missed opportunity to offer comfort is more regrettable than a slightly awkward message sent from the heart.

Grief is not a problem to be solved or a stage to move through. It is the ongoing shape of love after loss. On a death anniversary, there is no expectation to feel any particular way — only to be gentle with yourself, and to hold the memory of someone who mattered.

PART TWO

Supporting someone who is grieving

How to Support a Grieving Friend

Supporting a grieving friend or family member is one of the most important things we can do for the people we love — and one of the things we most often feel unprepared for. You do not need special training or the perfect words. You need presence, patience, and a willingness to show up.

Show up practically

In the immediate aftermath of a loss, bereaved people are often overwhelmed by practicalities at a time when they have the least capacity for them. The most useful support is often the most concrete:

- Bring food that does not require preparation — individual portions they can eat when they are ready.
- Offer to help with specific tasks: collecting children from school, walking the dog, managing correspondence, or handling phone calls.
- Help with the administrative burden of death — there is often a great deal of paperwork, and having someone offer to sit beside you while you do it makes a real difference.
- Drive them to appointments without making them ask.

Rather than saying "Let me know if you need anything," offer something specific: "I am going to the supermarket on Thursday — can I pick things up for you?" Specific offers are far easier to accept than open-ended ones.

Be present without pressure

Grief can be exhausting for the person experiencing it and, at times, difficult to be around. Some days your friend may want to talk endlessly; other days they may not want to talk at all. Follow their lead. Your job is not to fix the grief or accelerate it — it is to be a steady presence.

Sitting in silence is enough. Going for a walk together, without any expectation of conversation, can be deeply comforting. Watching television side by side. Simply being in the same room. The point is not what you do, but that you are there.

Avoid steering conversations away from the person who has died. If your friend wants to talk about them, let them. If they want to cry, sit with the tears. If they suddenly start laughing at a memory, laugh with them. All of it is part of grief.

Support for the long term

The most significant gap in support for bereaved people tends to come about six weeks after the death — when cards stop arriving, visitors become less frequent, and the world seems to have moved on while the grief has not. This is precisely when sustained support matters most.

Check in regularly. A text message on an ordinary Tuesday — "Thinking of you today" — costs nothing and means everything. Remember significant dates: their loved one's birthday, the anniversary of the death, the first Christmas, the first summer. On those days, reach out.

Keep saying the person's name. Do not assume that mentioning them will be upsetting — most bereaved people long to hear their loved one spoken of, and feel the silence around their name as a kind of forgetting. The most enduring gift you can give is to remember with them.

What to Say When Someone Dies

When someone we care about loses a loved one, most of us feel an urgent need to find the perfect words — and an equally powerful fear that we will say the wrong thing. The good news is that the bar is not as high as it might feel. Presence and sincerity matter far more than perfection.

The discomfort of not knowing what to say can lead people to say nothing at all — or to avoid the bereaved person altogether. This silence, however unintentional, is often felt as abandonment. A simple, imperfect message sent with genuine care is nearly always better than staying quiet.

Words that genuinely help

You do not need to fix anything or fill the silence. The most comforting things you can offer are acknowledgement, warmth, and the willingness to simply be present.

- *"I am so sorry for your loss. I am here if you need anything."*
- *"I have been thinking of you. There are no words, but I want you to know I care."*
- *"I loved [their name] too. Would it be okay if I shared a memory with you?"*
- *"You do not have to talk if you do not want to. I am just glad to be here with you."*
- *"I remember when [their name]..."* — sharing a specific, warm memory is one of the most powerful gifts you can give.

Notice that none of these try to explain, justify, or resolve the loss. They simply acknowledge it, and the person experiencing it.

Phrases that are best avoided

Most unhelpful things are said with the best intentions. They usually try to offer a silver lining or a reason — which, however kindly meant, can feel dismissive of the grief. Common ones to avoid:

- *"They are in a better place now."* — This may not align with the bereaved person's beliefs, and even if it does, it can feel like being asked to feel okay about the loss.
- *"Everything happens for a reason."* — Grief is not a puzzle to be explained. This phrase rarely brings comfort.
- *"I know how you feel."* — Even if you have experienced a similar loss, their grief is their own.
- *"At least they had a long life / did not suffer / are at peace."* — These minimise the loss rather than honouring it.
- *"You need to stay strong for the children / family."* — Grief is not a weakness. People need to be allowed to feel it.

Offering support beyond the first days

The first week after a death tends to bring a rush of support. What is often harder is the weeks and months that follow, when the world moves on but the grief does not. One of the most meaningful things you can do is check in later — a message a month on, a call on the anniversary, remembering to mention the person's name on their birthday.

Grief does not have a closing date. Remembering the person who died — and showing that you remember — is an ongoing gift that many bereaved people treasure more than they can say.

What to Write in a Sympathy Card

A blank sympathy card can feel enormous. You want to say the right thing, you are afraid of saying the wrong one, and so the pen hovers. Here is the reassuring truth: there is no perfect message, and the person receiving it is not looking for eloquence. They are looking to feel that their loss was seen and that they are not alone. Even a few honest lines do that. Sincerity matters far more than the words you choose.

Start by naming the loss

The most important thing a card can do is acknowledge what has happened, plainly and gently: *"I was so sorry to hear about your mother."* It can feel safer to talk around a death, but naming it is a kindness — it tells the grieving person that they do not have to pretend, and that you are willing to stand in the hard thing with them.

A few things that help

- Share a memory. If you knew the person, one specific memory is often the most treasured part of a card — a kindness they showed you, a phrase they always used, a moment that was unmistakably them. It tells the family their loved one mattered beyond their own home.
- Offer help you will actually give. "Let me know if you need anything" rarely gets taken up — a grieving person cannot manage the asking. Offer something specific instead: *"I'll bring dinner on Tuesday,"* or *"I'll call next week to take the kids for the afternoon."*
- Sit with the pain rather than fixing it. You do not need to make it better or find meaning in it. "I'm so sorry, and I'm here" is enough. Presence comforts; explanations rarely do.

Short messages you can use

If you are staring at the blank space, borrow one of these and make it your own.

When words won't come

- "I'm so sorry for your loss. Please know you are in my thoughts."
- "There are no words for a loss like this. I'm here for you, in whatever way you need."
- "Holding you close in my heart during this heartbreaking time."

When you knew and loved the person too

- "[Name] was one of a kind, and I feel lucky to have known them. I will miss them too."
- "I will always remember [Name]'s kindness — the way they made everyone feel welcome. The world is warmer for their having been in it."

- "[Name] touched so many lives, mine among them. Their memory will stay with me."

When you want to offer help

- "I'm bringing dinner over on Thursday — you don't need to do anything but rest."
- "I'll call you next week. Until then, I'm holding you in my thoughts every day."

When you didn't know them well

- "I'm so sorry to hear of your loss. I'm thinking of you and your family."
- "Sending you my deepest condolences, and strength for the days ahead."

For a longer message, string two of these together — an acknowledgement, then a memory or an offer of help. That is a complete, heartfelt card.

What to leave out

A few well-meant phrases can land as sharp instead of soft. Gently avoid:

- Explanations of the loss — *"everything happens for a reason," "it was their time," "they're in a better place."* Grief does not want a reason; it wants company.
- Anything that begins with *"at least"* — it almost always minimises the loss.
- Comparing their grief to your own, or urging them to "stay strong" or "move on." There is no timetable, and they do not have to be strong for you.

How to sign off

Close simply and warmly: *With love, Thinking of you, With deepest sympathy, With heartfelt condolences, or Holding you in my heart.* Then sign your name. If there is a story or a photo you wish you had room for, you can always follow up — a call, a visit, or a memory shared later, when the first wave of cards has passed and the quiet sets in.

Whatever you write, if it is honest and kind, it will be exactly right. The card that means the most is rarely the most eloquent — it is the one that shows up.

Supporting Children Through Grief

Children grieve deeply and genuinely — but they express grief differently from adults, and they need different kinds of support. The most important thing any adult can offer a grieving child is honesty, stability, and the reassurance that their feelings are welcome.

Talking to children about death

Many adults, wanting to protect children from pain, reach for euphemisms: "passed away," "gone to sleep," "we lost them." While these are well-intentioned, they can confuse young children and create anxiety. A child told that grandpa "went to sleep" may become frightened of sleep. A child told that mum was "lost" may believe she might be found.

Clear, honest, age-appropriate language is kinder in the long run. "Grandma has died. That means her body stopped working, and she is not coming back. We are all very sad, and it is okay to feel sad." This kind of directness, while difficult to give, gives children something they can work with.

Answer their questions honestly, including the ones that catch you off guard. Children often ask very direct questions — "Will you die too? Will I die?" — and they deserve truthful, reassuring answers. "Yes, everyone dies one day, but I plan to be here for a very long time. Right now we are going to be okay."

How children show grief

Children's grief often looks different from adult grief. A child may seem fine — playing, laughing, seemingly unaffected — and then ask a heartbreaking question out of nowhere. They may become clingy, or conversely withdrawn. They may show regression in younger behaviours: bedwetting, thumb-sucking, separation anxiety. They may act out at school. All of this is normal.

Children also process grief in shorter bursts than adults. They will be deeply sad one minute and want to play the next. This is not denial or lack of feeling — it is simply how children protect themselves. Allow it.

Helping children carry a loved one's memory

Involving children in remembrance can be genuinely healing. Let them choose a photo for a memorial or keep a treasured object. Encourage them to draw pictures or write letters to the person who died. Create family rituals around remembering — lighting a candle on a birthday, visiting a special place.

Showing children that you also grieve — that it is okay and safe to feel sad — is one of the most powerful things you can model. You do not need to manage your grief perfectly in front of them.

Letting them see you miss someone, while also showing that you continue to function and to love them, is one of the most honest gifts you can give.

If a child's grief seems stuck — persistent nightmares, refusal to go to school, prolonged withdrawal lasting more than a few weeks — consider reaching out to a child psychologist or grief counsellor experienced in working with young people.

PART THREE

Planning a farewell

Planning a Celebration of Life

A celebration of life is a memorial service that places the emphasis not on mourning a loss, but on honouring a person's life — who they were, what they meant to others, and the joy they brought into the world. It can be as formal or as informal, as intimate or as wide-gathering as feels right.

How a celebration of life differs from a traditional funeral

A traditional funeral tends to be structured, often religious, and focused on the ceremony of farewell. A celebration of life is more flexible — it might take place days, weeks, or even months after the death, allowing more time to plan and for far-flung family and friends to attend.

The tone is usually warmer and more personal. There may be laughter alongside tears. Music, food, stories, and photographs often feature prominently. The goal is for everyone who attends to leave feeling that they truly knew and honoured the person — and that the gathering itself was a reflection of them.

What to include

The best celebrations of life are shaped by the person being honoured. Ask yourself: what did they love? What would they have wanted people to feel as they left? Some elements to consider:

- Music they loved. A playlist of their favourite songs creates an immediate sense of presence and often moves people in ways that words cannot.
- A photo or video tribute. A slideshow or memorial of photographs through the stages of their life invites shared memory and connection.
- Stories and tributes. Invite a few people to speak — not necessarily formally, but to share a memory or a quality they want remembered. The more specific, the more moving.
- Food they loved. A meal or gathering after a service, featuring dishes they enjoyed, can feel deeply personal.
- An activity they enjoyed. A walk in a favourite place, a game they always played, a craft they loved — incorporating their personality into the event itself.
- A memory-sharing station. A place where guests can write down their favourite memory of the person, which becomes a lasting collection for the family.

Practical planning

The venue can be anywhere that feels right: a garden, a family home, a function room, a pub they loved, or an outdoor space with meaning to them. You do not need a funeral director's involvement — a celebration of life can be entirely family-organised.

Give yourself and others enough time to prepare. A celebration held several weeks after the death, when the immediate shock has settled slightly, often allows for a more considered and meaningful event.

Most importantly, release the idea that it needs to be perfect. The people in that room will not remember whether the arrangements were right. They will remember whether they felt something — whether they left feeling that the person had truly been seen and loved.

How to Write a Eulogy

Being asked to give a eulogy is one of the greatest honours — and one of the most frightening. You may be grieving deeply, unsure you can hold yourself together, and convinced you are not a good enough writer or speaker to do the person justice. You do not need to be either. A eulogy is not a performance or a test. It is an act of love, spoken aloud. The people listening do not want polish; they want the person — seen clearly and remembered honestly.

What a eulogy is

A eulogy is a short spoken tribute, usually given at a funeral or memorial service, that remembers a person and honours their life. It is different from an obituary: an obituary is written and factual, while a eulogy is spoken and personal — a portrait painted in memories, not a list of dates. There is no single right way to give one. Your voice, your relationship, and your honesty are exactly what make it right.

How to begin

The hardest part is the blank page, so do not try to write the eulogy yet. First, gather the raw material:

- Sit quietly and write down every memory that comes, in no order — moments, phrases they always used, the way they laughed, small ordinary days.
- Ask others who loved them: *"What is the first thing you think of when you picture them?"* You will collect stories you never knew.
- Notice which memories keep returning. Those are usually the heart of the eulogy.

What to include

You cannot fit a whole life into a few minutes, and you should not try. Choose a few things that are true and specific:

- Who they were to you — and to the people in the room.
- One or two stories that show their character better than any adjective could. A single well-told moment is worth a paragraph of praise.
- A detail that was unmistakably them — a habit, a saying, a kindness, a stubbornness.
- What they gave — what they taught you, and what the world had because they were in it.
- A closing — a final line that lets everyone say goodbye. It can be a memory, a thank-you, or something you wish you had said.

Finding a simple shape

A eulogy does not need a complicated structure. A simple arc works best:

1. Open with a moment or a story — not *"We are gathered here today,"* but something that puts the person in the room.
2. Move through the shape of their life, or of your time with them — lightly, not exhaustively.
3. Say what they meant — to you, to family, to their community.
4. Close with a goodbye.

Write it the way you speak. Short sentences. Real words. If you would not say it to a friend, do not write it.

Getting the tone right

Warmth matters more than eloquence. It is not only allowed but welcome to include humour — the funny stories are often the truest ones, and laughter in grief is a gift. Be honest about who they were; a person remembered as flawless is a person no one recognises. A gentle, affectionate truth honours them far more than a perfect portrait.

How long should a eulogy be?

Most eulogies are three to five minutes long — roughly 500 to 750 words. When in doubt, err on the shorter side. A brief, heartfelt eulogy is remembered; a long one is endured. If several people are speaking, keep yours tighter still.

Delivering it on the day

Writing it is only half of it. To give it well:

- Print it large and double-spaced, on paper rather than a phone. Number the pages in case they slip.
- Read it aloud several times beforehand — it settles the words and calms the nerves.
- Mark where to pause and breathe. Slower than feels natural is about right.
- Keep water nearby, and arrange a backup reader — a friend or relative who can step in and finish if you cannot. Arranging this in advance frees you to try.
- It is alright to cry. Pause. Breathe. The room is with you. No one is measuring your composure; they are grateful you are standing there at all.
- Look up when you can. Even a glance at the faces who loved them turns a reading into a remembrance.

You will not say everything, and you do not have to. If the people listening leave with one clear, true picture of the person they loved — *yes, that was them* — you will have done exactly what a eulogy is for. That is more than enough.

How to Write an Obituary

Writing an obituary is one of the most meaningful things you can do to honour a person's life — and one of the most daunting tasks to sit down with in the midst of grief. Approach it as an act of love, not a test. There is no perfect obituary; there is only an honest one.

What to include

A good obituary weaves together the factual and the personal — the life lived and the person who lived it. Consider including:

- Full name and any names they were known by
- Dates and places of birth and death
- Family — who they are survived by, and who preceded them in death
- Career and education — particularly if it was central to their identity or community
- Passions and interests — what they loved, how they spent their time, what made them themselves
- Character — a sentence or two about who they were, how they made people feel, what their presence meant
- Service details — if a public funeral or memorial is planned
- Donation wishes — if the family requests charitable donations in lieu of flowers

Getting the tone right

The best obituaries feel like the person. If they had a dry sense of humour, let that show. If they were quiet and steady, let the writing reflect that steadiness. You are not writing a formal document — you are writing a portrait.

Try to include at least one specific, concrete detail that makes this person distinct: the garden they spent every Sunday in, the way they always had a pot of tea ready, the fact that they never missed a grandchild's school play. These particulars are what turn an obituary into a memory.

If you are struggling to start, try writing down three things you will miss most about them, and three things you hope people remember. The obituary often lives somewhere in that space.

Practical tips

- Ask for help. Gather information from family members, particularly for details about earlier life you may not know well. This can also be a healing process of shared remembering.

- Write a first draft without worrying about length or perfection. You can always cut, but you cannot recover what you did not write down.
- Read it aloud. This is the best way to find the moments that feel stiff or formulaic and replace them with something more natural.
- Check the facts. Dates, spellings of names, and survivor details should be confirmed carefully.
- Consider the audience. A newspaper obituary has different constraints from a tribute printed in a funeral programme or shared on a memorial website.

An obituary does not need to capture everything. It needs to honour the essence of a person and give those who knew them a moment of recognition: yes, that is who they were. That is enough.

PART FOUR

Remembering and honouring a life

Creating a Lasting Digital Memorial

A digital memorial is a dedicated online space where a person's life — their photographs, their story, the tributes of those who loved them — is gathered and preserved. It is a place to return to, not just once, but always. And for a family spread across the world, it can become a shared home for grief and for memory.

Why digital memorials matter

Physical photographs fade. Printed tributes are lost in moves. Family stories go untold between generations. A digital memorial offers something more durable: a space that holds the photographs, the videos, the written tributes, and the messages from those who came to visit — all in one place, accessible to anyone the family chooses to share it with.

For families who are geographically separated, a memorial can be a unifying presence — a place where an uncle in another country, a grandchild who never met the person, or a childhood friend can contribute their piece of the story and feel part of the collective remembering.

Digital memorials also serve a quieter, more private need: the ability to visit a loved one's space on a hard day, to look through the photographs again, to read a tribute that makes you smile or cry or both. This kind of private return is deeply valuable to many bereaved people.

What to include

The most meaningful memorials tend to contain:

- Photographs across the stages of their life — not just recent years, but childhood, young adulthood, the moments and relationships that shaped them. If you are facing thousands of photos spread across phones and social media, our guide on [choosing the best photos for a memorial](#) walks through how to narrow them down.
- Videos, even brief ones — the sound of a voice, the way they moved, a birthday sing-along. These become more precious over time than we can imagine at the moment of loss.
- A written tribute — the story of who they were, told with the warmth and specificity that only family can bring.
- Their dates and biography — birth, death, the life in between.
- A place for visitors to leave messages — so that the people who loved them can make their presence felt, even from a distance.

Sharing and privacy

A good memorial platform gives families control over who can see the memorial. Some families want a public tribute — a place anyone can find and visit. Others want something private, shared only through a direct link with the people who knew the person. Both are valid choices, and the right one depends entirely on what the family needs.

Keeping it private makes it no less of a memorial. The intimacy of a space kept just for the people who loved someone is its own kind of tenderness.

Whatever you choose, the act of creating a memorial — of gathering the photographs, writing the tribute, deciding what represents a person — is itself a form of grief work. It is an act of love, done in love, that becomes something the whole family can hold.

Creative ways to honour a loved one

When someone we love dies, grief often arrives with a restless wish to *do* something — to keep them present, to give all that love somewhere to go. There is no single right way to honour a life, and no timeline for it. Here are gentle, creative ideas, from the quiet and everyday to the lasting, that families have found meaningful.

Plant something that grows

A tree, a rose bush, a corner of the garden, or a windowsill pot of their favourite flowers. Tending something that lives and changes with the seasons gives grief a place to go, and gives you a living tribute to return to. Years from now, the tree that was a sapling when they died will offer shade — a quiet measure of how far you have carried them.

Give in their name

Donate to a cause they cared about, volunteer somewhere they would have loved, or ask for donations in lieu of flowers at the funeral. There is something deeply fitting about a person's kindness continuing to work in the world after they are gone — their compassion outliving them, one small good at a time.

Keep their recipes and traditions alive

Cook the dish they were known for on their birthday. Teach it to the grandchildren who never got to taste it from their hands. Keep the Sunday phone call, the annual trip, the silly holiday ritual they started. Food and tradition carry memory like almost nothing else — a taste or a habit can bring someone back to the table for a moment.

Gather their story in one place

Photographs live scattered across phones, drawers, and social media; stories go untold between generations. Gathering them into one [online memorial](#) — their photos and videos, a written tribute, and space for everyone who loved them to leave a message — creates a permanent, shareable home for their memory. Family near and far can visit it, add to it, and return to it on the hard days. It is one of the most lasting ways to honour a life, and the act of building it is itself a form of grieving well.

Finish what they started

Complete the garden bed they were planning, mail the letter they meant to write, take the trip they always talked about, or learn the skill they never got to. Finishing something on their behalf — or doing the thing they always meant to do — can feel like walking a few more steps alongside them.

Put it into words

Write them a letter you will never post. Keep a journal addressed to them. Try a poem, or simply a list of the things you never want to forget — the sound of their laugh, the phrase they always used, the way they made a room feel. You do not need to be a writer; you only need to be honest. Many people find that writing to someone they have lost keeps the relationship quietly alive.

Carry a piece of them with you

A ring reset with their stone, a pendant that holds a photo, a scarf that still smells faintly of them, a keepsake in your pocket. Something small to hold on a difficult day — a private, wearable reminder that they are still with you, wherever you go.

Begin a tradition in their honour

Light a candle on their birthday. Take an annual walk to a place they loved. Host a gathering each year that brings the people who knew them back together around their memory. Rituals give grief a shape and a rhythm — a date on the calendar when the whole family, wherever they are, is remembering the same person at once.

Whatever you choose — grand or small, public or quiet — the act itself is the point. To honour someone is simply to keep loving them out loud. Do one of these things, or none of them, or something no one has thought of yet. There is no wrong way, and there is no finishing line.

How to Make a Memorial Slideshow

A slideshow of photographs is often the most quietly powerful moment of a memorial — the point at which a room full of grief softens into recognition, and sometimes even laughter. It is also, if you are putting one together in the days before a service, one of the more daunting tasks on the list. The good news: you do not need to be technical, and you do not need it to be perfect. Here is how to make a memorial slideshow that feels like the person, whether you build it yourself or let a tool do the work for you.

How many photos should a memorial slideshow have?

A good rule of thumb is 30 to 60 photos for a slideshow shown during a service. At roughly four to six seconds per photo, that fills a comfortable three-to-five-minute run — long enough to tell a life, short enough to hold everyone's attention within the flow of the service.

If the slideshow will loop quietly in the background at a reception or wake, you can include more; people watch it in passing rather than all at once. Either way, resist the urge to include everything. A carefully chosen set is far more moving than hundreds of near-duplicates — the goal is the essence of a person, not a complete archive.

Choosing the photos

The photographs are the heart of it. Aim to gather images that, together, tell the whole story:

- Span their whole life — childhood, youth, the milestones, and the recent, familiar years. Seeing someone as a laughing child and a grandparent in the same few minutes is what moves people most.
- Include the people they loved — partners, children, grandchildren, lifelong friends. A memorial slideshow is also a portrait of a family.
- Mix posed and candid. The formal portraits matter, but the unguarded shots — mid-laugh, mid-cooking, mid-dance — are often the ones that catch the throat.
- Show them being themselves — at their allotment, on their boat, in their armchair with the dog. The specific, ordinary details are what make it unmistakably them.
- Check the quality. Favour clear, well-lit images. If you are scanning old prints, scan them at a good resolution so they don't look soft on a big screen.

For more on this, see our guide to choosing the best photos for a memorial.

Putting them in order

There are two natural ways to order a memorial slideshow, and both work beautifully:

- Chronological — from earliest to most recent. This tells the arc of a life and is the classic, gently powerful choice.
- Thematic — grouped by family, friends, passions, and places. This suits a personality-led tribute, especially for someone whose life was defined by what they loved.

Whichever you choose, open with a warm, strong portrait so everyone settles into a clear image of the person, and close on something peaceful and resonant — a favourite photo, a landscape they loved, a quiet final smile.

How long should it be?

For a slideshow shown as part of a service, three to five minutes is the sweet spot — matched to one or two pieces of music. A slideshow that runs much longer than a couple of songs can lose the room, however lovely the photos. For a looping slideshow at a gathering afterwards, length matters far less.

Choosing the music

Music does a great deal of the emotional work, so choose it with care:

- Pick songs that meant something — their favourite piece, a hymn, a song from a wedding or a road trip, or something that simply sounds like them.
- One or two songs is right for a service-length slideshow. If the words feel like too much, a gentle instrumental carries the emotion without competing with it.
- Match the tone you want — reflective and tender, or warm and celebratory. Both are valid ways to say goodbye; let it reflect the life.

The ways to make one

There are three common routes, from simplest to most hands-on.

The simplest way — upload to an online memorial. Rather than making a video file yourself, you can upload the photographs (and any short video clips) to an online memorial and let it assemble the slideshow for you — with gentle transitions and background music, playing full-screen on any phone, tablet, or screen at the venue. Because it lives at a shareable link (or a QR code), family and friends who can't attend can watch it too, and it stays afterwards as something to return to. This is what [Memory Keep](#) does: you upload the photos and choose the music, and the slideshow is built automatically — nothing to render, export, or learn. You can [start one for free](#).

DIY slideshow software gives you full manual control if you would rather build it frame by frame. Common options include Apple Photos and iMovie (on Mac and iPhone), Google Photos, Canva, and

PowerPoint or Keynote. You arrange the photos, add the music, and export a video file to bring to the venue on a laptop or USB stick. It takes longer and there is more to learn, but you control every detail.

Ask the funeral home. Many funeral directors will put a slideshow together for you from photos you provide, and can play it on the day. If time or energy is short, this is a perfectly good option — just ask what format they need the photos in and by when.

A few gentle tips

- Start gathering early. The photos almost always take longer to collect than the slideshow takes to make — ask relatives to send their favourites as soon as you can.
- Test it on the real screen. Play it once on the actual device or venue screen beforehand, and check the sound. It saves a stressful moment on the day.
- Keep a copy. Whether it's a video file or an online memorial, the slideshow becomes a keepsake — something the family will quietly return to for years.
- Don't chase perfect. A heartfelt, slightly imperfect slideshow moves people far more than a flawless one. If the photos show the person clearly and warmly, it is already right.

A memorial slideshow is not really a technical project. It is a love letter written in pictures — and however you choose to make it, what matters is that the people watching see the person they loved, clearly and warmly, one photograph at a time.

Meaningful ways to use your memorial QR code

Every Memory Keep memorial comes with a high-resolution QR code — a small square that, when scanned with any smartphone, takes the viewer directly to your loved one's memorial. It is generated at around $1,900 \times 1,900$ pixels, large enough for engraving, professional printing, or framing. Here are some of the most meaningful ways families have chosen to use theirs.

Funeral and memorial service programmes

Printing the QR code on the order of service is one of the simplest and most impactful uses. Guests who have travelled from far away, or who are unable to attend at all, can scan the code and visit the memorial from wherever they are. For those who are there in person, it gives them a way to find the memorial again after the day — when they are ready to look through the photographs quietly, in their own time.

A short line of text beside the code is all that is needed: *"Scan to visit [Name]'s memorial."* Most people will understand immediately.

Headstones and grave markers

An increasing number of stonemasons offer QR code engraving as a standard service. Carved or laser-etched into stone, the code becomes a permanent part of the memorial — a bridge between the physical place of remembrance and the photographs, videos, and tributes held online.

Someone visiting the grave for the first time, perhaps a grandchild who never met the person, can scan the code and see who they were. A childhood friend returning after many years can scan it and find photographs they have never seen. The grave becomes not just a place to stand, but a doorway into a life.

When planning engraving, download the QR code from your dashboard and share it directly with your stonemason. The high resolution ensures it will scan cleanly at any size above roughly 2 cm square.

Memorial benches and tribute objects

If a memorial bench, tree, or named dedication has been arranged in a public space — a park, a garden, a seafront — a small weatherproof plaque carrying the QR code can be added alongside it. Visitors who pause there can learn about the person the bench was placed for, and leave a message if the memorial allows it.

Memorial cards and keepsakes

Memorial cards — small enough to fit in a wallet — are often given out at services or sent to those who could not attend. The QR code fits naturally on the back. Many families choose to include a photograph on the front and the code on the reverse with a brief dedication.

The same format works well for bookmarks, small framed prints, or any keepsake that will sit in a home for years. Each one becomes a gentle, permanent invitation to visit the memorial whenever the person is missed.

Printed obituaries and death notices

Whether a notice is placed in a local newspaper or printed in a community newsletter, adding the QR code alongside it extends the reach of the tribute. Readers who knew the person — perhaps from a chapter of life the immediate family knows little about — can visit the memorial and, if messages are enabled, add their own piece of the story.

Framing the code itself

Some families choose to frame the QR code — printed cleanly on white card, perhaps alongside a favourite photograph — and hang it in the home. Anyone who visits and scans it goes directly to the memorial. It is an understated way of keeping the memorial present in everyday life, without being heavy or intrusive.

A simple design works best: the person's name, the QR code, and their dates. The memorial holds everything else.

Celebration of life events

For a celebration of life held weeks or months after the funeral — perhaps when distant family have been able to travel, or when the immediate weight of grief has lifted enough for something warmer — the QR code can be displayed on a card at each table, printed on the event programme, or projected briefly as part of a presentation.

Guests who upload their own photographs through the memorial in the days after the event add to it collectively, and the memorial grows into something richer than any one person could have built alone.

Downloading your QR code

Your QR code is available from the QR Code tab in your memorial dashboard at my.memorykeep.online. It downloads as a high-resolution PNG, alongside an engraving-ready vector SVG for stonemasons and professional printers.

If you are planning to have yours engraved, our guide on adding a QR code to a headstone or memorial marker walks through the process step by step — from choosing the right file format to working with a stonemason and making sure it scans cleanly for years to come.

WHENEVER YOU NEED IT

Keep the words close

Some questions are easier to ask out loud. Whenever you need it, the Memory Keep companion is here — free and private — to help you find the words, at memorykeep.online/companion. You do not have to find them alone.

With care, Memory Keep