

Discussing death with your parents

By Bruce Hulquist

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The death of a parent can be one of the most difficult times in a person or family's life. No matter what our relationship with them is like, parents play a significant role in every stage of our lives and their loss can be devastating. In this time of tragedy, planning a funeral and making burial arrangements add unnecessary stress at a time when a person needs to grieve. Talking to your parents about how they wish to be remembered is a difficult conversation, but it will reduce the stress and confusion when they die and ensure that their final wishes will be honored.

Many of us avoid asking our parents about their end-of-life wishes. People think the conversation will be too emotional, awkward or embarrassing and would rather steer clear of the subject altogether. However, discussing what should happen before your parents pass away pays off in the future. This eliminates any uncertainty about what they would have wanted, allowing you to carry out their final wishes without questioning the decision. It also can alleviate a major financial burden as advance planning often allows no-interest financing, making the cost affordable for all budgets and preventing loved ones from overspending out of guilt for the deceased. Starting the conversation is difficult, but there is often great relief for both parties once it begins. This discussion prevents confusion or stress about what needs to be done after a parent passes away or where to find important documents. It is important to discuss each aspect of a parent's life, such as accomplishments, will, insurance policies and bank accounts. Funerals and burial arrangements require numerous decisions. Meeting with funeral directors and cemetarians in advance can guide you and your parent with this conversation and pre-arranging final wishes. Pre-planning and selecting funeral products, memorization and burial preferences with your parents will allow them to make thoughtful choices on determining how they want to be remembered.

Talking to your parents about their final arrangements is easier said than done - no one likes to face their mortality, but the reality is we are all going to die someday. The benefit of having this conversation now outweighs the cost of not having it at all for all those who are involved. Having a discussion about their final arrangements eliminates confusion in a tragic time and ensures that their wishes will be met.

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operate four cemeteries in the Archdiocese of Baltimore: Most Holy Redeemer and Sacred Heart of Jesus in Baltimore, St. Mary's in Annapolis and St. Mary's in Ellicott City. For questions about burial and funeral planning, call 410-284-0648.

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