

# Family Involvement

## *A Gentle Guide*

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### Making Space For Difference

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When people come together to plan a funeral, they bring their own grief, their own ideas, and their own capacity. They also bring their own relationships with the person who died, close, distant, or complicated.

This guide offers gentle ways to navigate those differences. To make decisions together where possible. To honour quieter voices. And to create a ceremony that reflects care, in whatever form that takes.



# What This Guide Offers

This is not a set of rules.

It is simply a few ways of thinking about how families move through planning together.

You will find:

- Acknowledgment that different griefs are normal
- Questions to help start conversations
- Ideas for navigating different comfort levels
- Ways to share the load
- Gentle guidance for when relationships are complicated

You do not need to read this all at once.

You can take what is useful.  
Leave what is not.

# Acknowledging Different Grievs

No two people grieve in the same way.

Some people want to talk.

Some people withdraw.

Some focus on practical tasks.

Some feel everything all at once.

Some feel close to what has been lost.

Some may feel distant, or unsure what they feel.

Some may be carrying complicated or unresolved emotions.

These differences can show up in planning.

One person may want a detailed ceremony.

Another may want something simple.

This is not wrong.

It is not a problem to fix.

It reflects different relationships,  
and different ways of coping.

There is room for more than one way.

# Starting the Conversation

It can help to slow things down and ask simple questions.

You might begin with:

What feels most important to you?

What would honour them, in your view?

What feels manageable right now?

Is there anything you feel strongly about?

Is there anything you don't want?

Not everyone will find these questions easy to answer.

Listening matters as much as speaking.

Not everything needs to be agreed on immediately.

# Navigating Different Comfort Levels

People will have different limits.

One person may want to speak.  
Another may not want to be seen.

One may want tradition.  
Another may want something more personal.

Where possible, you can make space for more than one approach.

This might look like:

- including both formal and personal elements
- sharing roles so no one feels exposed
- giving people the option to opt in or out

Inclusion does not mean pressure.

Not everyone needs to participate in the same way.

Where differences can't be fully resolved,  
small compromises can still allow multiple voices to be present.

# Sharing the Load

Planning can be tiring.

Grief can make even small tasks feel heavy.

It can help to divide things gently.

You might ask:

- Who has the capacity to take this on?
- What feels manageable for each person?
- What can be shared, or simplified?

Some people may take on practical roles.  
Others may contribute in quieter or smaller ways.

Capacity may change from day to day.

No one needs to carry everything.

# When It's Complicated

Sometimes relationships are strained.

There may be distance.

Disagreement.

Unspoken history.

Or long-standing hurt.

Grief can bring this closer to the surface.

In these situations, it can help to keep the focus simple:

What honours the person who died?

What protects the wellbeing of those still here?

You do not need to resolve everything.

You do not need to agree on everything.

Clear boundaries can be part of care.

In some situations, working alongside a celebrant, like myself, or another support person can help hold the process and reduce pressure.

# Moving Forward Together

A ceremony does not need to be perfect.

It needs to be possible.

It needs to reflect care,  
in whatever way that can be managed.

There may be compromise.  
There may be moments of tension.

There may also be quiet cooperation.  
Shared intention.  
Small acts of generosity.

Even partial agreement can be enough.

You have done something difficult in  
navigating this.

The ceremony you create will carry that  
forward.

That is enough.

