

STARTING THE

FUNERAL PLANNING

CONVERSATION

A how-to guide



INTRO

One thing every person should do as an adult is create a plan about what they want for their afterlife care. Everyone in the funeral profession will tell you that preplanning a funeral is important and has many benefits. However, don't necessarily explain how to start the conversation with your loved ones. Having a conversation about death can be very challenging, especially if it is about your loved ones. To help you start this tough conversation with your friends and family about them preplanning their funerals, we have created a step-by-step guide.

The topic of death is surrounded by a lot of powerful emotions and talking about final wishes can be one of the most challenging tasks anyone has to do. The conversation of death tends to be strongly avoided by most people. However, initiating conversations about this topic early lets the people involved be more comfortable before and after the loved one has passed.

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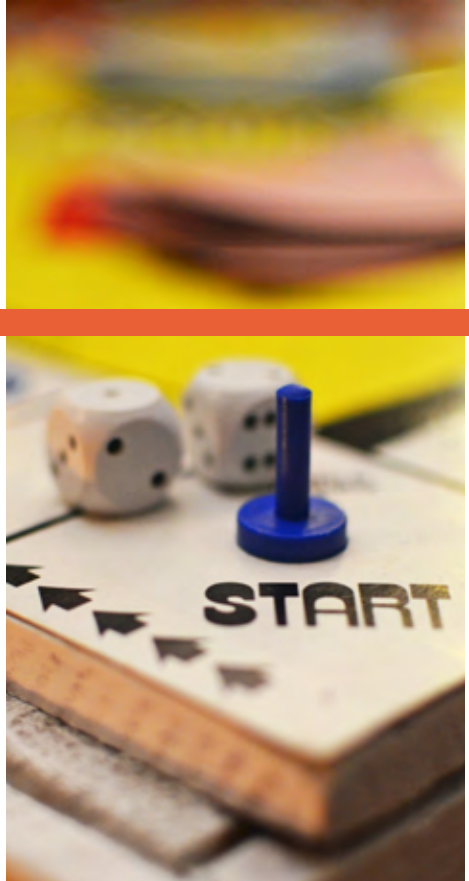
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HOW TO

START

Since everyone and every relationship is different there is no one perfect way to start the

preplanning conversation with your friends or family. However, since you know your loved one best, the first place to start is by thinking about who you are trying to have the conversation with. Think about what has and has not worked in the past when you had serious conversations with this person. The next step is to find a quiet space and moment, one that is preferably stress-free. Depending on the person, this could be at dinner, over coffee, on a walk or before bed.



Many people will find that simply bringing up the topic will be the hardest part. We recommend that you start the conversation by talking about yourself and being honest. This can be done in a few ways:

- Make your first statement to be one that shows you care and understand this is a sensitive topic.
- Following your opening statement, make the conversation about your own preneed funeral plans. You can mention your personal after-life wishes that you have already planned, or explain that you were thinking of making pre-arrangement funeral plans.
- Mention that you were reading something or saw something that made you think about your own after-life care.

If these ways seem too abrupt for your loved one, we recommend having a conversation about family traditions and the services of other loved ones who have passed away.



GUIDING

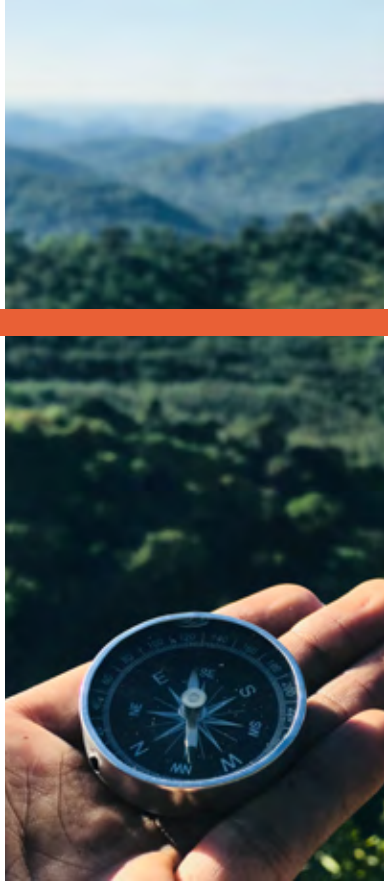
THE CONVERSATION

Even though the hardest part may be starting the conversation, you are going to want to be prepared to know

what questions to ask. Some simple questions to keep in mind are:

- Do they prefer to have a burial or cremation?
- Are they wanting a traditional funeral service, a memorial service or a celebration-of-life?

Do your research and talk to funeral directors in your area prior to having the preplanning conversation.



HOW TO

LISTEN

Although starting the conversation may be difficult, it can be even more challenging for your family member or friend to talk about making a preneed plan for their death. Many people have fears about talking about death and may take a while to open up. Some more common reasons behind people's fear to talk about death include:



- Having a fear that they will make the wrong decision
- Having a fear of loss
- Having a fear of death
(*others or their own*)
- Believing that the professionals would make better decisions
- Having a fear of disappointing family and friends

Preplanning a funeral is not something that needs to be done or that should be done all in one conversation. For more apprehensive friends or family, try having smaller conversations related to the topic (what kind of flowers they like, music or what they've appreciated in others' funeral services) until they are more comfortable. The best thing that you can do is take the time to listen to your loved ones without pressuring them or providing judgment.

THINGS TO

REMEMBER

Everyone's preplanning conversation is going to be different. However, there are a few things that you need to keep in mind when having these conversations. First, be patient with your loved one, pushing them to talk will not help anyone. Second, they may be more comfortable talking to someone else about their plans.



Do not take this personally, as some people have a harder time talking to loved ones about their death than an “impartial third-party.” Try using softer language such as, “when you pass away” instead of blunt statements like “when you die.” Remember to take your loved one’s emotions into consideration and validate that those emotions are okay to feel. Finally, make sure not to discredit their ideas. The plan is about their afterlife care and what they want for the end of their life.

Links & Resources

The Legacy Conversation: Talking About Funeral Arrangements
- AgingCare

Talking about death and dying - Dying Matters

Talking About Death - National Caregivers Library