

Why Should I Attend?

By Ryan Helfenbein

We do not like funerals or visitations. It is typically a time of sadness, mourning and much awkwardness felt by both the family and friends all jumbled together in one room. So then why go to a funeral or visitation? What are we to do when we get there?

These are actually very common questions. Perhaps you have asked this of a friend or relative, "Are you going to her visitation tomorrow night?" We ask this because we want to go to show our love and support, but we truly don't want to be there.

A common reason we go to funerals and visitations is that we want to be of assistance to the survivors, let them know we are here for them in their time of difficulty and ultimately make them aware that we care. While very important, these are also the reasons why everyone else is there, and this can become quite overwhelming to the bereaved. Perhaps it shouldn't be so much about letting them know how we feel, rather we should let the family know how their loved one impacted our lives and how they will never be forgotten for it. The answer may be to come to the funeral or visitation with a funny story, or a memory that we will never forget about the one who died. It could have happened on the golf course, on a boat, or during a walk in downtown

Annapolis. This shared memory not only shows the family that we are there for them and truly care, but that their loved one mattered.

Another common question: "But hold on, what if I don't know the deceased and only know one of the relatives?" This happens all the time. For example, the person who died is the father of a friend at our place of work. In this case it is next to impossible to bring a story of the person who has passed, because we most likely have never met them or any of their family members. When it comes time to walk up to see this dear friend, we are first greeted by the widow, then the siblings and so on. This often creates an awkward feeling and ends up with the well-worn sentiment, "I'm sorry for your loss."

Fortunately, many bereaved families work with progressive undertakers who place nostalgic items around the room that remind them of their loved one. It could be golf clubs, fishing rods, pictures of favorite vacations or Christmas decorations. The memorabilia allows the bereaved to gain a personal connection through sharing memories with visitors, who also can take advantage of these displays as conversation points.

Visual displays are not the only sense called upon at today's funerals. It has become common to see things such

as wine bars, ice cream sundae stations, steel drum music in the background. The point is to create surroundings that avoid the stereotypical morbid dark "funeral" feel and provide a comfortable home-like environment for family and friends to share in the memories of a life lived.

In doing this, we have seen people walk out of a funeral home with a tear in their eye and a smile on their face, both at the same time. While the loss of a loved one is not easy for anyone, distant relatives and friends want to be there to help the family in their time of need. Sharing memories is a wonderful way to lend support to the bereaved, something we won't dread doing at a funeral or visitation.

Ryan, owner, supervising mortician and preplanning counselor at Lasting Tributes on Bestgate Road in Annapolis, offers solutions to high-cost funerals. He can be reached at 410.897.4852 or Ryan@LastingTributesFuneralCare.com

Bay Bytes

To help in identifying prescription pills in an easy-to-follow guide log onto www.drugs.com/pill_identification.html. It includes pictures.

