

Green burials: how death is becoming more environmentally friendly

Increasingly, people who adopt ecologically sustainable practices during their lifetime are forgoing traditional burial practices in favor of those that are more environmentally friendly. Here's what you should know.

Natural burials

Traditional burial practices rely on coffins and urns that release toxic chemicals into the soil. Plus, the carcinogenic compounds used in embalming and treating wood are likely to end up in the water table.

In contrast, natural burials are interment practices that return the deceased's body to the Earth with a minimal amount of environmental impact. They use either biodegradable shrouds, or coffins made of cardboard or untreated pine wood.

If cremation is preferred over burial, biodegradable urns that grow a tree can be used.

Eco-friendly cemeteries

An increasing number of cemeteries are eliminating environmentally damaging practices, such as using pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers to maintain their grounds. Many are also opting to use small, flat grave makers made of locally sourced stones or plants instead of large headstones.

If you want to be buried in such a graveyard, you'll have to respect fairly strict rules. For instance, some green cemeteries prohibit the use of coffins altogether, or won't allow embalmed remains to be interred on their grounds.

In order to help limit carbon emissions, it's also common for these places to restrict the ways bodies can be transported to their final resting place.



If a natural burial is right for you, consider pre-planning your funeral to ensure your wishes are respected.

What to do if a loved one passes away abroad

Learning about the death of a loved one is never easy, especially if they passed away while abroad. Managing formalities in a country where the language, laws and customs differ from your own can make the grieving process that much more harrowing for family and friends involved. If a loved one has sadly passed away while abroad, continue reading to find out the right course of action.

First, it's necessary to choose a representative who can make decisions on behalf of the deceased's entire family. The designated individual must then procure all of the usual documents related to someone's death: will, insurance agreements (travel, life, etc.), social insurance card, etc.

Next, the person appointed must communicate with the deceased's travel insurance company, if necessary, to inform them of the tragic incident. Then, a funeral home must be chosen (preferably one that has experience dealing with international affairs) in the country where the body is found. The representative must also obtain an official death certificate from local authorities (ideally several copies). Depending on the country and the circumstances surrounding the person's death, the authorities may need to lead an investigation. If this is the case, the representative must wait until a verdict has been reached and the subsequent reports (medical, police, autopsy, etc.) have been filed before the body can be repatriated.

If needed, the representative can always ask consular officials for help, especially if they're unfamiliar with the foreign country's language, laws and customs. Consular officials can communicate with the police, hospital or morgue in order to obtain information regarding the body's location as well as details surrounding the deceased's death. They can also help identify the body if local officials, family members or friends aren't in a position to do so.

Funeral arrangements

The representative must quickly decide if the deceased's body will be repatriated (either in a coffin or urn) or buried in the country where the tragedy occurred. It's important to keep in mind that funeral practices and related costs (burial, cremation, etc.) vary greatly from one country to the next. In fact, certain regions in the world prohibit cremation while others impose strict time constraints for embalming or incinerating a corpse.

Furthermore, specific documents and certificates are necessary in many cases. Depending on the circumstances and place of death, long delays, among numerous other factors, can interrupt the body's repatriation. In addition, every airline has its own requirements and restrictions in relation to the transport of coffins or cremated remains.

Finally, all the costs related to the funeral arrangements and repatriation of the deceased's corpse or ashes are the family's responsibility. In the case where the deceased had travel insurance, the insurer may cover the entire or partial cost of related expenses.



Creating Advance Directives

You've heard advance directives mentioned on TV medical dramas or on the news. But what are they and how should you use them?

Advance directives are legally binding agreements that determine end-of-life processes and include living wills and medical powers of attorney.

It is important to note that emergency personnel cannot honor advance directives. Once on duty, they must exercise every effort to stabilize a person for transfer to a hospital.

Advance directives can be implemented only after a physician fully evaluates the person's physical state and determines the underlying conditions.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Advance directives are legal-

ly valid throughout the United States, according to the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO.org). Even if the directive isn't drafted by an attorney, your documentation becomes legally valid upon you signing them in front of the required witnesses.

If you do decide to seek the services of an attorney, be sure to ask about compliance regulations and standards in your state.

STATE-BY-STATE

The way advance directives work in one state are not always the same as another. Many states will honor out-of-state directives if they are similar enough to their own law, but the difference between state requirements can be confusing.

Check with your state offi-

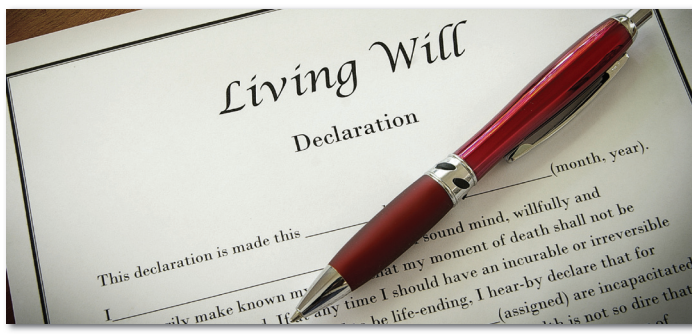
cial to get updated information on advance directives. The NHP- CO recommends that people who spend large amounts of time in multiple states should complete the directives in all of them.

DO ADVANCE DIRECTIVES EXPIRE?

Advance directives do not expire but can be invalidated if

a new one is completed. Experts urge you to periodically review your advance directives to ensure their alignment with your wishes, which can change as life progresses.

If you want to edit your documents, then you should complete a whole new draft.



'Do not grieve as those who have no hope'



Dale Kovar

HJ GENERAL MANAGER

During the past year, our family experienced the sudden variety, on the heels of a premature birth.

When we hosted all our kids and their families together at a cabin last summer, daughter Chelsea and son-in-law Brian used the opportunity to announce that another family member would be added to our ranks.

We were all excited, and everything was going well until one Saturday night in late October.

I had already stayed up way later than usual watching a World Series game. Linda was attending an event with her sisters and returned home even later.

Then the first call came. Chels and Brian were at the hospital and it was possible labor could begin in the next 24 hours.

About 20 minutes later, another call: a lot was happening and they'd keep us posted.

A few more minutes later: "You better come."

By the time we got there, Peyton was born at 21 weeks, 3 days, being just nine inches long and 13.3 ounces. Within a few minutes, he died in Brian's arms.

Our pastor was able to come comfort everyone and pray with us before Sunday services that morning. Then we went about the unpleasant task of letting other family members know.

Later it was back to the hospital where everyone gathered again. The Star Legacy Foundation, a support organization for

pregnancy loss, sent a representative – a young mom who had experienced the same thing – for an extended photo shoot.

Part of the grieving – and healing – is the acknowledgment and memories of what was, even as short as it was.

My point, for a newspaper section about death, is coping with death.

My go-to-verse for death has become 1st Thessalonians 4 which reads in part "... do not grieve as others do who have no hope."

So what hope is there?

Jesus not only died for our sins; he took his life back, overcoming death through his resurrection.

Scripture promises he will come for us again, at which point we can spend eternity with him, if we haven't already chose the other option.

That chapter of Thessalonians also describes how the dead believers will be resurrected, and then those who are left will join them to meet the Lord in the air. The hard part is waiting until then – a daily lesson in patience.

When we lose a loved one, even one we only knew for minutes, that is our hope – our only hope. But as long and far off as it may seem, we also know it is certain.



Peyton's footprints (actual size)

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