

# MEMORIAL PRE-PLANNING GUIDE & RESOURCE



*Create a lasting vision  
of love, so you can go on  
enjoying your life and  
have peace of mind.*



## CREATING A LASTING VISION OF LOVE

*Dear Families,*

“I don’t need to pre-plan my memorial or final arrangements!”

“I’m young and healthy.”

“I can worry about that later.”

Amazingly, responses like these are all too common in our society. But the reality is, making final arrangements before a death happens removes that burden from your family, ensures you get what you want, and will allow your family to grieve when that time comes.

Ideally, Dodds’ consultants want to meet with you and your loved one when everyone is healthy and thriving. This allows us to have open and engaged conversations about your family’s traditions and wishes, and about you and your loved one’s personality and life’s work.

In our experience, this brings a great deal of comfort to you and your extended family. A memorial pre-plan takes the burden off your family’s shoulders when you, your spouse, or another loved one passes.

Our planning begins by meeting with you – individually, as a couple, or as a family – to guide you through a much more thoughtful pre-planning and design process. With a memorial plan in place, you’ll have many of your most important decisions made – from how you want your life celebrated to the design of your memorial.

Dodds has created a guidebook for you that is available at one of our six convenient locations; this book will help walk you through the memorial selection process, or you can Call a Dodds office near you today to learn more and schedule a pre-planning consultation.

*Warm regards,*

*Neil Fogarty, President*

# WHY?

Excerpts from *Have the Talk of a Lifetime*

## Why Have the Talk of a Lifetime?

*Have the Talk of a Lifetime* is designed to help families talk about what matters most in their lives and how loved ones have made a difference. These discussions can give families important insights they can use to remember and honor the lives of their loved ones.

## Why is having the Talk important?

Deep down, most of us want to know that we, in some way, made a difference in this world. *Having the Talk of a Lifetime* can make the difference of a lifetime. It can help reacquaint us with our loved ones and help us get to know them in a new and different way. Sitting down with your loved ones to talk about their lives can be rich and satisfying. Learning about memorable events and people, places and favorite

activities, values and lessons they have learned can help bring us closer to those we care about most. The talk helps us reaffirm to our loved ones how much they have impacted our life.

## Who should Have the Talk?

You can have the talk of a lifetime with anyone you hold dear – your parents, children, grandparents, aunts and uncles, a spouse or a friend. It can happen anywhere you and your loved one are most comfortable – over a meal, at home, on a walk, at a family gathering or while playing a game. Your conversation can take place at any time, not just at the end of life.

For more information on the talk of a lifetime, go to [www.talkofalifetime.org](http://www.talkofalifetime.org).





*I think we dream so we don't have to be apart so long. If we're in each other's dreams we can be together all the time.*

– A.A. Milne  
(Winnie the Pooh)

## HAVE YOU CONSIDERED?

There are a number of things to consider when planning your end of life arrangements and there are a number of resources to help guide you. Below are some of the resources we find helpful.

### Guides:

- [theconversationproject.org](http://theconversationproject.org)
- [Deathcafe.com/blog](http://Deathcafe.com/blog)
- [Talkofalifetime.org](http://Talkofalifetime.org)
- [www.compassionchoices.com](http://www.compassionchoices.com)

### Articles:

Guide to longterm care – [www.longtermcarelink.net/eldercare/long-term\\_care.htm](http://www.longtermcarelink.net/eldercare/long-term_care.htm)

Dodds Blog — <https://www.doddsmemorials.com/dodds-blog/>

### Books:

- *Kicking the Bucket List*  
by Gail Rubin
- *A Good Goodbye: Funeral Planning for Those Who Don't Plan to Die*  
by Gail Rubin
- *Creating Meaningful Funeral Experiences: A Guide for Caregivers*  
by Dr. Alan Wolfelt
- *The Conversation: A Revolutionary Plan for End of Life Care*  
by Dr. Angelo Volandes

- *Estate Planning for the Sandwich Generation : How to Help Your Parents and Protect Your Kids*  
by Catherine Hodder

### Have you made your:

- Funeral Arrangements
- Wills
- Future Financial Plans
- Insurance Plans
- Memorial Plans
- Healthcare Power of Attorney
- Advance Directive
- Long-Term Care Decisions

# WRITING LOVES A WRITER

Many of the families we've worked with have chosen to write a future letter to their loved ones. This can be especially helpful for children when they've lost a close family member. Think of this as a gift you will leave as you head to eternity. Understand that it will bring comfort to those grieving your absence.

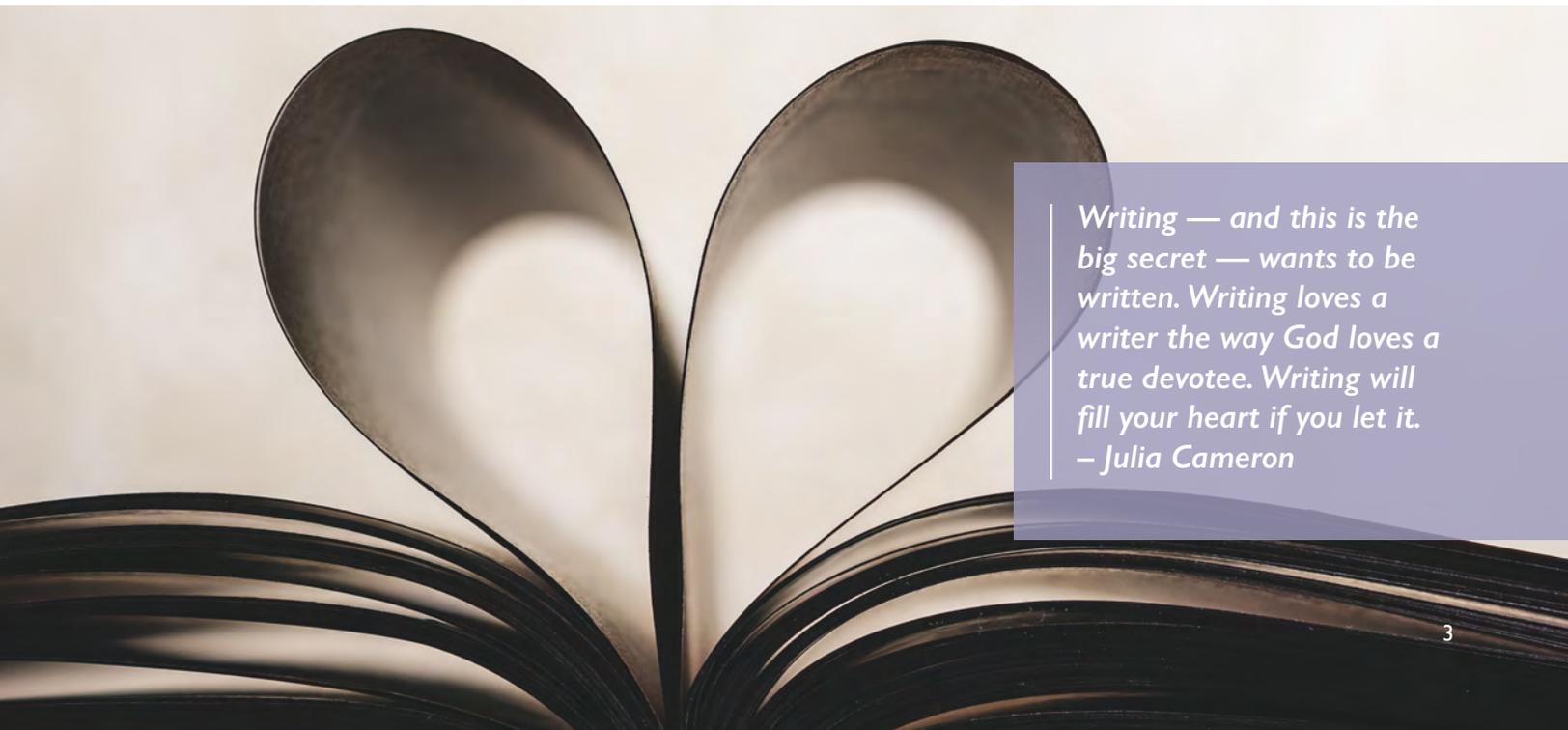
Please remember there is no wrong way to do it. This is an opportunity to express yourself in a direct way. It may also be meaningful for your family to do something special with the letters in the future.

Some ideas include:

- 1) Placing them in a safe deposit box to be opened with the will.
- 2) During a family gathering or at a remembrance dinner:
  - a. Have each family member read their letter out loud.
  - b. Collect their letters in a jar that they have decorated in your honor. Keep the jar on their mantel and re-read these letters from time to time.
  - c. Hold a ceremony outside and place them in a small fire.

Create an Audio or video recording for your loved ones to watch later. This will bring them comfort and peace during the grieving process.

Throughout history, across many cultures, fire has been a symbol for the transition from life to death. This can be a way for your family to send you their love and prayers. Of course, there are as many ideas for how to best speak to your loved ones as there are families. Choose what will work best for you and your legacy.



*Writing — and this is the big secret — wants to be written. Writing loves a writer the way God loves a true devotee. Writing will fill your heart if you let it.*  
— Julia Cameron



*Remembrance is the only paradise out of which we cannot be driven away.*  
– Richter

## REMEMBRANCE FOR TODAY... AND FOR GENERATIONS

Service and ritual are vital elements that help families cope with loss. Remember, these gathering are for the living to begin coping with loss. As you begin the process of planning the memorial service, think about what you and your loved one would like – the words, music, and other considerations to make your loved one's service memorable and in honor of who they are and what they've meant to those around them.

The following questions serve as a meaningful start for what you'd like to include at the memorial service as well as other considerations, such as designing your monument or other memorial.

- How should they be remembered? Were they known for their volunteerism or community activism? Did they serve in the Armed Services? Are there hobbies that define who they are? Did they have a distinguished career? What do you want them to be known for?
- Was there a defining moment in their life that should be recognized?
- Is there a favorite charity or cause that you want people to donate to in their honor?
- Who had the biggest influence in their life? Is there a way you'd like to honor that person?
- Do they have a favorite author or musician? If so, are there special quotes, passages, or lyrics you think should be included in the service?
- Who should speak at the memorial service? Are there dear friends or particular family members who your loved one would want to speak in their honor?
- Are their particular religious or spiritual passages that would best honor your loved one?



Excerpt from *The Velveteen Rabbit* by Margery Williams

*“What is REAL?” asked the Rabbit one day, when they were lying side by side near the nursery fender, before Nana came to tidy the room. “Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?”*

*“Real isn’t how you are made,” said the Skin Horse. “It’s a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but Really loves you, then you become Real.”*

*“Does it hurt?” asked the Rabbit. “Sometimes,” said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. “When you are Real you don’t mind being hurt.”*

*“Does it happen all at once, like being wound up,” he asked, “or bit by bit?”*

*“It doesn’t happen all at once,” said the Skin Horse. “You become. It takes a long time. That’s why it doesn’t happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get all loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don’t matter at all, because once you are Real you can’t be ugly, except to people who don’t understand.”*

## A LEGACY THROUGH STORYTELLING

Family and friends gathering to tell stories is one of the most important and powerful ways we can grieve and heal from loss. Storytelling can be formal, such as selecting key people from your loved one’s life to tell a story at their memorial service or it can be ongoing, informal stories as life moves forward. Take the time to identify your favorite stories and the stories about you that mean the most or illustrate who you are.

### Stories and books you love

Is there a favorite book or story you read to your children? That you like to hear during holidays?

### Stories about...you!

List some of your favorite stories from your past – you may choose to write out the full story or, for this planning guide, simply write down a few words to remind you of the story.

...And who should tell them? Are their particular friends or family members who experienced these stories?

# LIFE CELEBRATIONS PLANNING GUIDE

Many of us are familiar with Julie Andrews' most famous role as Maria from "The Sound of Music." During a particularly bad thunderstorm, she sings to the children to calm their fear. Her universal message is that when we think about our favorite things, we won't feel as bad as we did. For memorial planning – and to help our family through their grieving process – it may also be helpful to think about and gather our favorite things around us.

## Places and Activities

For both you and members of your family, list the places and activities

that are/were favorite things to do. From walks in the park to favorite restaurants to playing music – or social or sporting events – making plans with your family to enjoy some of these things can inspire meaningful family time for storytelling or just being together in support of each other.

## Belongings and Keepsakes

It can be healing to offer one of your favorite things to family members and close friends. It can be a way for them to process their grief while feeling connected to them. Better yet, give them the keepsake while

you are alive so you can enjoy it together.

Is there a favorite shirt or other item of yours that a family member would wear to help their grieving process? Are there important items that can be made into a shadowbox? For instance, if you are a cook, you can use your favorite wooden spoon, a recipe page, and your oven mitt and frame in a shadow box. Hang it in your home, or the home of a family member who would benefit from such a gift. Don't hesitate to add a note to tell the story of the objects as a lasting gift.



# LIFE CELEBRATIONS

You've now written letters. You've identified how you want to be honored and the stories that are important to tell. Now, we want to dedicate a page to planning what you want your life celebration to include. Make sure to include family and friends in the discussion.

When we talk about creating a lasting vision of love, we think of that vision as all-inclusive – from how we grieve to how we gather together in their honor, to how we choose to memorialize our loved one for this and future generations.

## Gathering

Do you want a large group of family and friends or a more intimate setting? Formal or informal? When should the celebration happen – right away or later on? These are just a few questions you may want to consider in your planning. Use this space to write down your ideas

and preferences.

## Food, Music, and Activities

What sort of food would you like to serve? Family recipes? A particular cuisine your loved one enjoyed? Catered or potluck? Live music or CDs of your favorite musicians? Any special songs or hymns? Here, you can write down your ideas for what would work best to create the right celebration.

## Location

At a funeral home, church, or park? Indoors or outdoors? At your home or a rented space? Should it be decorated with a formal tone or more relaxed?

Is there a theme that best expresses your life and legacy? Write down your ideas and wishes for where to hold the memorial celebration.



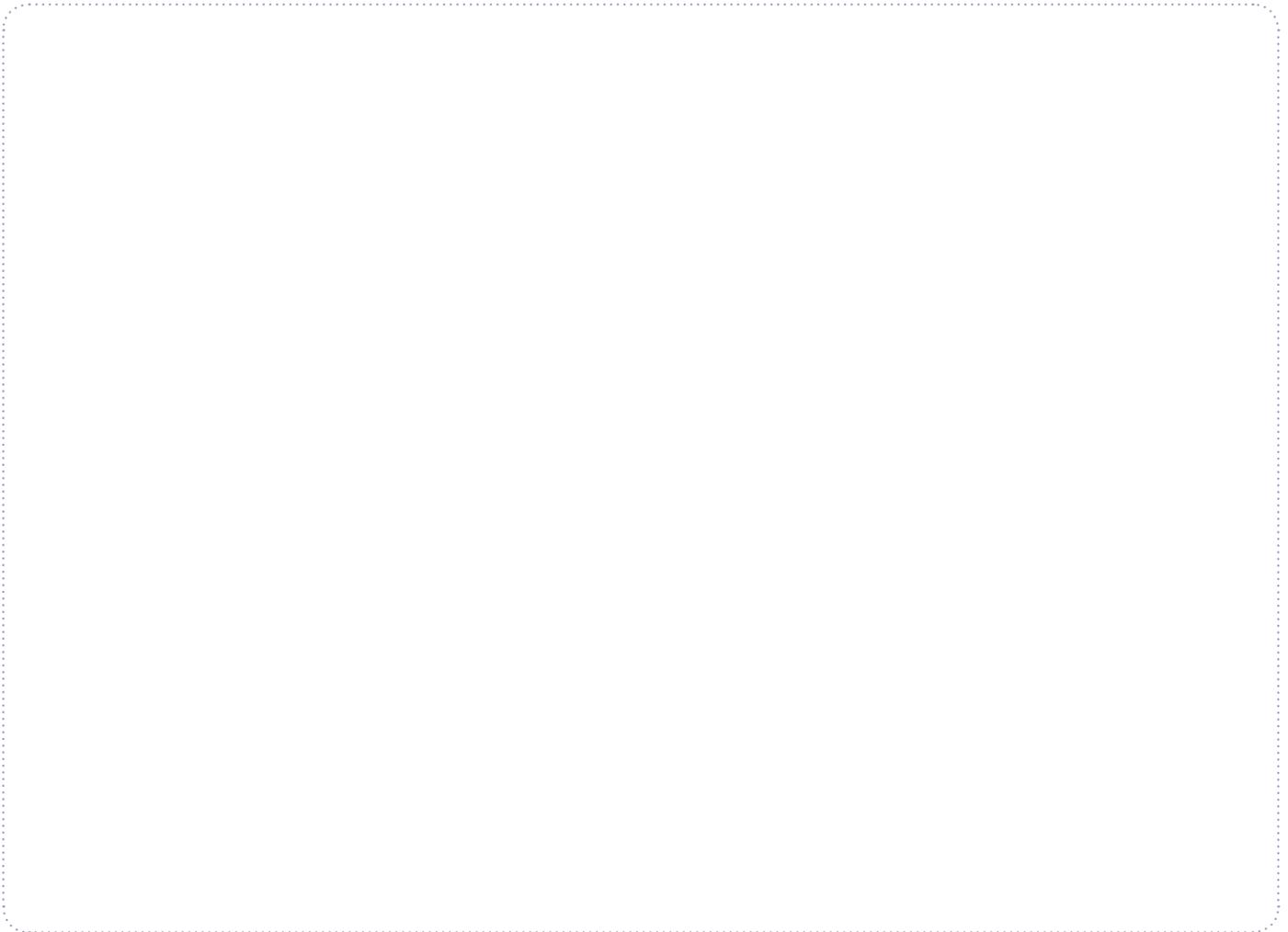


# DESIGNING YOUR MEMORIAL

Please use this page to sketch ideas for what you envision for your memorial. Take the stories, keepsakes, and memories you compiled during the celebration planning and think of representing some of them on the memorial. Remember, if you plan to share a memorial it needs to tell a story fit

for everyone it represents. Use a pencil and consider the shape of the monument. Think about what you'd like written on it and any images you'd like added – such as a religious symbol, a military designation, a favorite pastime or other image that represents who you are and how you lived. You may choose to design

a monument with a custom shape. Sketching your ideas is a great way to generate ideas and will help you work with a memorial designer when the time comes. Be sure to bring this Memorial Planning Guide with you when you visit your local Dodds Consultant.



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