

Hosting a Virtual Funeral Reception



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Why do we have funeral receptions?

Brene Brown, university professor and a specialist in social connection, says: "A deep sense of love and belonging is an irresistible need of all people. We are biologically, cognitively, physically, and spiritually wired to love, to be loved, and to belong." Psychologists from Maslow to Baumeister have repeatedly stressed that a sense of social connection is one of our fundamental human needs.

When someone we love dies, one of our most important human connections is lost. The strength and value of that connection differs from person to person, but nonetheless there is an unquestionable gap.

A sense of reconnection can be achieved through all the other connections we have in our life. That reconnection starts in earnest when sharing in collective grief at the funeral reception.

Having others to share your stories with and talk about your feelings with is the safe space that is created at a funeral reception and it is a very important part of grief. It reminds you that you are not alone, you are supported and how important the person who has died was to so many.

Social distancing and virtual funeral receptions

At this moment in our lives, the thought of having a funeral service you cannot attend, possibly for a loved one you were not able to be with when they died, is terribly difficult. Being forced by the social distancing rules, to refrain from gathering together to share in your collective grief does not need to mean that you cannot gather at all.

The incredible power of technology gives us the opportunity to still feel that connection at a virtual funeral reception. Of course it will not be the same as being able to hug or hold hands, though there are ways to make it really meaningful and inclusive. This will leave you and all those who participate with a sense of warmth and well-being, knowing that you made the best of the situation you are faced with.

Here are some ideas to bring your 'community' together for a virtual funeral reception.

Send an invitation by post, email, via social media or by phone, letting people know when your 'virtual hug' will take place. Your invitation should include details of how you will connect, for example by Skype, Zoom, or Facetime. Have a structure, much like an order or service, so people will know what you hope to achieve through holding this gathering.

Ask people to:

- **Prepare a personal memory to share.** The memory should be something loving, moving, funny or inspirational about that person's connection to the one who has died.
- **Have a candle** ready to be lit in unison, during the reception and hold a moment of silent reflection together.
- **Choose a song** that reminds them of the person so you can prepare a playlist in advance to have on in the background during your reception.
- **Pick a favourite photo** or short video to share and explain why it means so much, where and when it was taken and who was there at the time.
- Invite people to **share a poem** or reading.
- **Prepare a eulogy.** If you have never done one before, see our "Guide to writing a eulogy" for tips or contact us and we may be able to help. www.cpjfield.co.uk/articles-and-features/how-to-write-a-eulogy
- **Have a drink ready to raise a glass** to and toast the person you are all there to remember. Whatever the tipples, be it a hearty cup of tea or a glass or fizz, raising your cups in recognition of the your loved one, in a collective movement and moment is powerful, reflective and meaningful.



Platforms to host your virtual funeral reception

There are a number of resources and options available for setting up a virtual gathering. Below is a selection of free and accessible platforms you can use:

1. Zoom
2. Microsoft Teams
3. Skype
4. WhatsApp
5. FaceTime
6. Houseparty

Here are guidelines to help you set up each platform.

1. Zoom

1. Install Zoom: <https://zoom.us> and create a free Zoom account by clicking on 'sign up for free'
2. Open the Zoom app and sign in
3. Click on 'New meeting'
4. Click on the 'Invite' button at the bottom of the meeting window
5. A new window will appear allowing you to invite people using the list of contacts (if you have one) or through email and sending an invitation
6. Enter the recipients to who you'd like to send the invitation to
7. Wait for the recipients to join the call

2. Microsoft Teams

1. Go to: <https://teams.microsoft.com/#/iscover> and use the web app or download and install Microsoft Teams on your computer or phone. You can create a free online account if you don't already have one.
2. You will receive a link which you can use to invite others to join in. You can also use the 'Teams' tab on the left later to add more participants.
3. You can join a meeting by clicking on the email link or using the 'Teams' tab on the left and selecting 'Join a group'
4. Select 'Join now' to enter the meeting

3. Skype

1. Download the Skype app here: www.skype.com/en/get-skype
2. If you don't have an account you can create one by clicking 'Create an account'
3. Choose one of your friends you'd like to have a call with and click on the '+' icon to add people.

4. Pick the names of the people you'd like to video call and click 'Add'

5. Start the group video call by clicking on the 'Call' button at the top of the conversation panel

4. Whatsapp

1. Download WhatsApp here: www.whatsapp.com/download. You can download it on iOS, Android, Windows Phone and Mac and PC
2. Open WhatsApp and set up an account if you haven't already got one
3. Tap the 'Chats' icon, followed by the 'New group' to add in participants
4. Click on 'Video call'

5. FaceTime

1. Open FaceTime on your iPhone or iPad
2. In FaceTime, choose the + at the top right
3. Enter the names or numbers of the people you want to call (you can add up to 30 contacts)
4. Tap 'video' to make a FaceTime video call

6. Houseparty

For House Party, you can set up a number of virtual 'rooms' so you can have multiple conversations happening at the same time. To set up the Houseparty app please visit:

- For your iPhone or iPad visit: www.wikihow.com/Use-Houseparty-App-on-iPhone-or-iPad
- For your Android device visit: www.wikihow.com/Use-Houseparty-App-on-Android



For further information or guidance please visit www.cpjfield.co.uk or call 01444 230 430.

It's our job to walk beside people as they make their way through this part of their grief. We won't stop looking for ways in which we can continue to do this. In whatever form that takes we'll always give it our all.

Care for the living and the dead

Because every life is unique