# End-Of-Life Ceremony Planning Guide

IT'S YOUR LIFE. IT'S YOUR CHOICE.

DYING WITH DIGNITY CANADA

**End-of-life preparations involve several important steps, such as creating an Advance Care Plan, outlining your financial directions, and designing a ceremony that reflects your life and values. An end-of-life ceremony could be a funeral, a celebration of life, or another type of gathering. Planning ahead not only ensures your wishes are honoured, but it lightens the emotional and logistical load for your loved ones. While these conversations can be difficult, they offer a vital opportunity for open communication with those closest to you.**

## FACILITATION

Traditionally, end-of-life ceremonies were coordinated by funeral service professionals at the local funeral home, but today, more people choose to plan their own service outside of conventional and faith-based facilities. Nonetheless, for some, it may be helpful to have a guide, an event planner or facilitator to coordinate your wishes.

**FUNERAL DIRECTOR:** A professional, generally associated with a funeral home, who can help you consider your options, and the costs associated with funeral services.

**DEATH DOULA:** A trained, non-medical professional, who provides support and guidance when someone is nearing end of life; this can include ceremony planning.

**FAITH/SPIRITUAL LEADER:** An individual, associated with your faith, qualified to assist in end-of-life support or ceremony planning. Funeral professionals typically collaborate with faith/spiritual leaders.

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## HELPFUL RESOURCES

For information about Advance Care Planning and selecting a Substitute Decision-Maker, Dying With Dignity Canada has a helpful

**Advance Care Planning Kit**

available for free online.

Download resources at **dyingwithdignity**.ca

## VALUES AND WISHES

Thinking about your own mortality can be a heavy task – contemplating it when dealing with a serious health issue makes it even more difficult. Take your time and consider the following:

- **What is important to you?**
- **When you imagine your celebration of life, what do you envision?**
- **What do you not want?**
- **How do you want your body handled?**

The more elaborate the event, the more there is to contemplate. We've outlined some key considerations below.

## CEREMONY

Your ceremony can be as unique as you are. Think deeply about the things that matter the most and ask yourself the following questions:

- **Are there any religious or cultural traditions you would like included in your ceremony?**
- **Where do you want the event to take place? For example, in a faith-based facility, in your home, or in a park. Different locations will have their own pros and cons.**
- **Do you want your celebration of life to occur before you die? This is becoming more common for those with a terminal diagnosis or a planned assisted death.**
- **Who do you want invited? Would you prefer a large event or a smaller, private ceremony?**
- **Are there specific readings, music, photos, flowers, food, or drinks you would like at the ceremony?**
- **Are your wishes best achieved at a certain time of year or season?**

Some people may not want any ceremony at all, but we encourage careful consideration here. Loved ones often appreciate a ceremony as closure to support a healthy grieving experience.

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## HELPFUL RESOURCES

**Plan for tomorrow, so you can live today**

Other helpful DWDC resources for end-of-life preparations include our **Preparing a Digital Legacy Guide**, and our **Financial Planning Guide**.

**Download resources at dyingwithdignity.ca**

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## FINAL DISPOSITION

The death-care industry respectfully uses the term 'final disposition,' referring to the steps taken between the time of death and one's final resting place. Giving thought to your final wishes in this regard is crucial. Your loved ones deserve to know your final wishes. Consider the following:

- **Would you like to provide your family and friends one last opportunity to see you and say goodbye?**
- **How do you want your body handled? For example, do you want your body embalmed, buried, cremated, and/or do you want a green burial?**
- **Do you want your casket open or closed, or do you want a special urn if you are cremated?**
- **Where do you want your final resting place to be? For example, in a cemetery, in a family plot, in an urn, or do you want to have your ashes spread in your favourite place? Many cemeteries have 'scattering gardens' for this purpose. Scattering elsewhere may be possible, but confirming such beforehand with a funeral service professional in your area/jurisdiction is highly recommended.**
- **Would you like to donate your body for scientific research or your organs for transplantation? Learn more through your provincial or territorial health authority.**

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## ABOUT DYING WITH DIGNITY CANADA

### Who we are

Dying With Dignity Canada is the national human-rights charity committed to improving quality of dying, protecting end-of-life rights, and helping people across Canada avoid unwanted suffering.

### What we do

Ensuring access to quality end-of-life choice and care through advocacy, education, and support.

### Contact us:


Email:
***info@dyingwithdignity.ca***

Toll-free:
**1-800-495-6156**

Website:
***dyingwithdignity.ca***


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## YOUR LEGACY

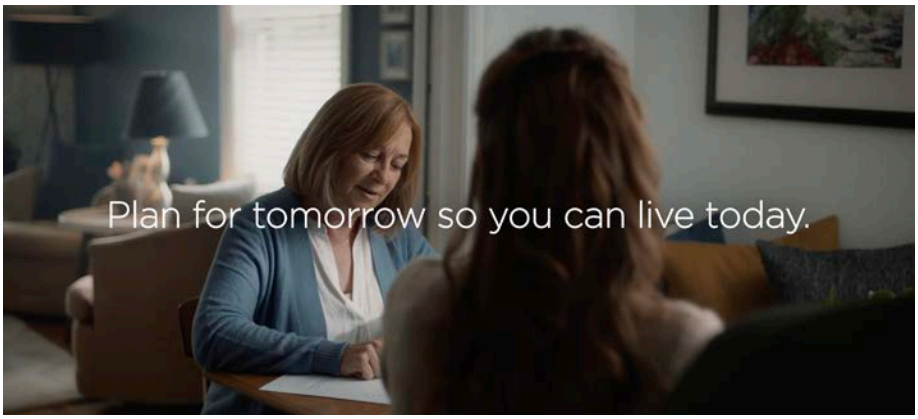
Following your death, there are many ways that you can be remembered and leave a legacy. Here are a few things to consider:

- **Writing letters to those closest to you**
- **Preserving specific memories for future generations**
- **Writing your own obituary**
- **Donations in your name to a charity or organization**
- **Recording a video for your loved ones to watch at different milestones**

## RECORD AND SHARE

It is important to record your wishes for your end-of-life ceremony and share them with the appropriate and trusted people. Openly discussing your final wishes with those closest to you is essential. It can also help identify who will oversee your affairs after your death. The only way to specify who you want in this role is to establish a valid will. This is discussed in our Financial Planning Guide. The importance of this cannot be overstated.

Involving those closest to you in these discussions will result in greater clarity, proper documentation, and more peace of mind.




**This document is a guide and not meant to provide legal advice. It was, however, reviewed by experts on the topic for people who live in Canada.**