

UNDERSTANDING CREMATION

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Cremation has been part of the fabric of civilization for at least five thousand years. It was a popular way to honor the deceased until the emergence of Christianity. Today the use of cremation is on the rise in the United States. Some people struggle with the concept of cremation because it raises questions regarding memorialization, grieving and saying good-bye. However, there are many options that can help us remember our loved ones when the choice is cremation.



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What Is Cremation? The word cremation means to reduce the body to ashes and bone fragments. This occurs through the application of intense heat. Cremation is an irreversible process. Once this decision is made and the cremation is conducted you cannot then bury the body as it was before the cremation.

The service: Just because you choose cremation does not mean you cannot have a funeral or memorial service for your loved one. A service provides a way for people to say good-bye to the one they loved. Some of the following are options for people who have chosen cremation. One or all of them can be selected.

1. **Visitation:** Many funeral homes offer the choice to buy a casket that was built for cremation or rent a casket for a viewing.
2. **Funeral/Memorial Service:** A traditional funeral or memorial service can be held if you choose that for yourself or your loved one. A casket can be purchased or rented for this service. Just as in a traditional funeral, music selection, video presentations, memorial boards, choice of service location, and religious services can all be used. Family and friends are welcomed to attend.

Memorialization: After the cremation has been preformed there are multiple ways to remember your loved ones. Depending on the type of person and the way you grieve one alternative might appeal to you more than another.

1. **Placement In A Mausoleum:** A mausoleum or columbarium is a building where you can house cremated remains. It is normally located on the grounds of a cemetery. The remains are placed in an urn and generally placed in a niche on a wall. There are multiple selections for urns available through your funeral home or mausoleum.
2. **Placement In Your Home:** Some people prefer to put cremated remains (cremains) somewhere in their own home. Usually an urn or some other container that has special meaning is used and placed on a mantel or bookshelf.
3. **Garden Memorialization:** Companies are now providing options to build your own memorial garden in your backyard. If you move you can take the garden with the plaque, along with the cremains, with you.
4. **Scattering The Remains:** Depending on your local laws, there are specified scattering gardens where you can scatter the cremains. Within the garden you can purchase a spot to place a memorial plaque. You also, with permission, can scatter the remains in the ocean or other natural environments.
5. **Placed In Burial Plot:** The remains can be placed in a family burial plot or a new burial plot can be purchased.

Cremation offers many alternatives when it is chosen. Flexibility and creativity are possible, in addition to all the benefits of traditional committal when cremation is selected.