

THE BEACON

How to Throw a Funeral

You don't need a garden stake, a polished rock, or even a Bible to have a funeral. But as you think about what is causing you to be stressed, examine your expectations. What hasn't happened that you think should have? Or conversely, what did happen that you never thought would? Grieve a little, and then write it down. Maybe you have a memento sitting around that you'd like to bury with your list – a photo, an old love letter, a piece of costume jewelry (nothing expensive – you don't want to have an exhumation!). Box everything up, or maybe wrap it in a “shroud.”

Now, dig a hole. Say some appropriate words, preferably aloud so they go back into your ears and to your brain, completing the circuit. Bury the memento. Mark the grave with some sort of durable item that you can look at, perhaps a self-contained fountain, a cement angel, or a pretty conch shell. You may want to also find a small, colorful polished stone. I carried mine around in my pocket for a couple of days before ensconcing it on the kitchen shelf. Whenever you're tempted to mentally dig up and mourn those dead expectations, look at your garden marker or your memorial stone and remind yourself that you buried those expectations.

I saw a book not too long ago that advocated something similar. The author suggested that readers take an earth/air/fire/water approach. Bury, tear up into tiny bits and toss into the wind, burn, or flush those expectations. Want to get really fancy? Magicians' shops carry special papers that dissolve instantly in water, or that flare up in a poof and disappear without ashes. You could write your unmet expectations on those and make them disappear without a trace. You still want some sort of a memorial marker, though, as a visual reminder of your decision.

Life is often unpredictable and sometimes very hard. Clinging to unmet expectations is like picking at a scab – counterproductive and hurtful. I recommend letting those expectations die and giving them a decent funeral, and then getting on with life. It's worked for me. I'm confident it will work for you, too.

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