

7 Ways to Honor a Loved One's Memory

The loss of a loved one turns our life upside down. Our world as we knew it has changed and those changes require that we in turn adjust to a new "normal." Accepting loss and moving forward can create anxiety for many people. They assume that letting go means forgetting the person and denying that the relationship ever existed. Nothing could be further from the truth. Letting go means releasing the sorrow but cherishing the memories that you shared together and recalling the joy that each of you brought to the relationship.

Setting up a memorial can be a way of holding your special memories close to you and at the same time sharing them with others. There are no set rules for erecting a memorial however, before you decide on a specific project spend a few minutes considering what would summarize the person's life in a loving and meaningful way. Ask friends and family for input. Below are a few suggestions that might help you get started.

Memorial Garden - It can be a simple flowerbed or an elaborate garden that includes a fountain and/or a pond. Be sure to include flowers and/or plants that had special significance to the person you're honoring.

Memory Book - Put together a collection of memorabilia that was meaningful to the person. It can include awards, pictures, newspaper clippings, art, etc.

Video - Encourage others to contribute pictures going back as far as possible. Include dates, and captions with the pictures and add his/her favorite music. Keep it cheerful and lighthearted.

Website - Write a page about the influence the person had in your life and in the lives of others. Include accomplishments at work and in the community and any volunteer work or charitable organizations they were involved with. Include pictures, stories, testimonials from friends, awards and accomplishments, etc.

Donate - Make a contribution to his/her favorite charity or foundation in their name. Ask if the foundation will allow a plaque to be hung in their honor.

Volunteer - Consider spending two or three hours a week volunteering at their favorite charitable organization or one that they were associated with during their lifetime.

Scholarship - Consider setting up a brand new foundation that will help young people realize their dreams and enable them to acquire a higher education or help kids that are at risk to receive counseling and mentoring as a preventative measure.

While it's important that we give ourselves permission to grieve and mourn when we've lost a loved one, it's equally important that we give ourselves permission to accept healing and move forward with renewed hope and purpose.