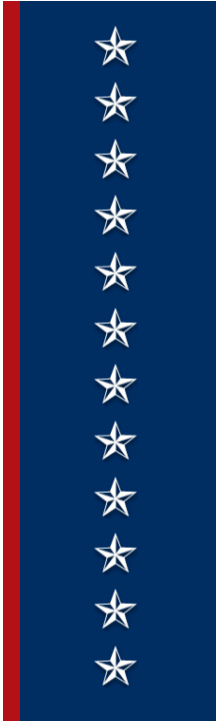


The Value of Funerals and Therapeutic Rituals

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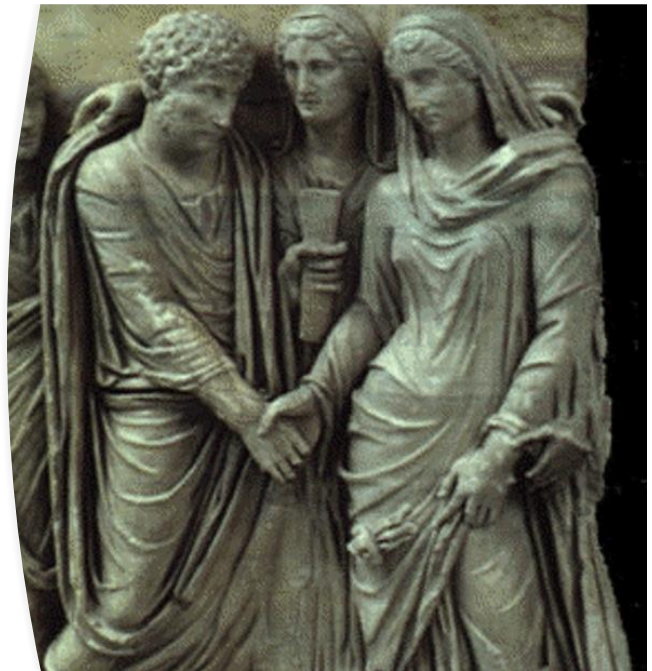
February 7, 2023



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Ritual

Origin of the word shared with "rite" the Latin term *ritus*, meaning religious observance or ceremony



2



Ritual

- Invests the commonplace with uncommon meaning
- Genep: Defined concept of “liminal”
- Meaning to moment

3

Liminal

- “At the threshold”
- Between life and death
- Between consciousness and unconsciousness



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Rites of Passage

- Funerals originally were designed to move the dead from the land of living to the land of the dead
- Unless that occurred, the dead could still trouble the living as they were caught between the living and the dead
- The funeral is one of the most common end-of-life rituals and can serve as a guide to designing other therapeutic rituals at life's end



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Evolution of the Funeral in the Christian West

- Originally the Funeral Mass was to help assist the deceased's soul to move from purgatory
- The Protestant Reformation changed funeral theology
- Unlike the Mass, the Protestant funeral offered no theology to assist the dead
- Funeral services then became for the living
- Other events such as funeral meals were now appropriate
- Other faiths had their own distinct rituals

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The Value of Funerals

- Psychological:
 - Confirm reality
 - Allowing “doing” and structure in a disorganized time
 - Allow sharing of memories and feelings
- Social: Support and community
- Spiritual: Interpret the death
- Value enhanced when personal and participatory



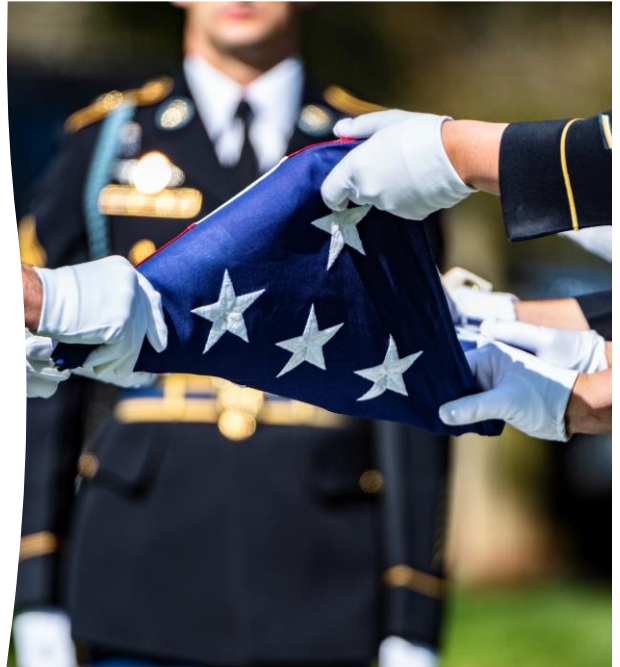
Funerals



- Most current funeral practices evolve from a time when the death rate of younger persons was relatively high
- They may have less relevance for an aged, more disengaged individual
- *How can we create funeral rituals that have more relevance?*

The Challenge of Contemporary Funerals

- As the population ages, attendees of funerals are likely to be there to support mourners but may have a tenuous connection to the deceased
- For funerals to enhance relevance, they must address the needs of these attendees as well as the grieving family
- The Dual Process of funerals – oscillation between celebrating a life and mourning a death



A Therapeutic Problem

- A dearth of end-of-life rituals, particularly in Christian traditions
- For example, in the Catholic tradition, the demise of Last Rites (now Anointing of the Sick) means no exclusive rituals for the dying process
- The lack of post-funeral rituals in many spiritual, ethnic, or family traditions, with some exceptions:
 - Kaddish and other Jewish rituals (sitting Shiva)
 - The Catholic Anniversary Masses
 - Liturgical Protestants (Lutheran, Episcopal) All Saints Day
 - Buddhist (prayers every week for 7 weeks after death, with a mourning period of 49 days)



The Value of Therapeutic Ritual

- Liminal
- Bridge to spirituality and culture
- Family-centered
- The value of “doing”



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Therapeutic Rituals in the Grieving Process

- Continuity
- Transition
- Reconciliation
- Affirmation

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Types of Ritual

Continuity



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Types of Ritual

Transition



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Types of Ritual

Reconciliation



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Types of Ritual

Affirmation



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The Possibility of Group Ritual

- Arise from collective experience
- Participants allowed to “own” the ritual



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Creating Ritual

- Arise from narrative
- Objects are visible and symbolic
- Planned and processed
- Use primal elements (Fry)



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A Lesson from the Past



The first permanent settlements of humans were cemeteries (Mumford)

Early humans understood the power of ritual and memorials; we should not forget it

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KIA (Killed in Action) Rituals

Unit Memorial Service

- Final roll call
- Battlefield cross
- Burial at sea



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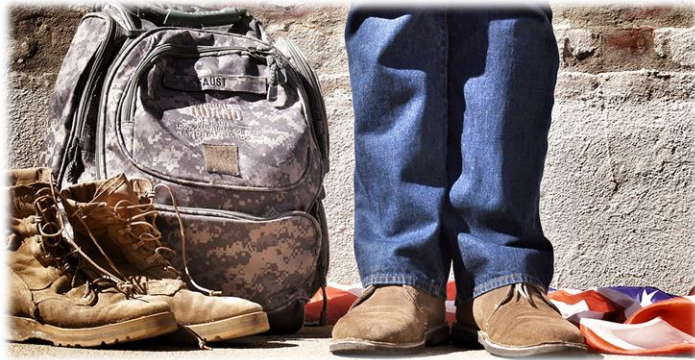
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After War

Reintegration

- Get a job
- Go back to “normal”
- Unresolved grief



The Battle Continues

- Suicide
- Cancer and other illnesses from burn pit exposure
- Often perceived as Active Duty



Honoring Our Brothers & Sisters

- KIA bracelets
- Coins on headstone
- Physically strenuous activity
 - Physical pain is easier than emotional pain
- Creating foundations/events
- Drinking



The Military Funeral

Military Honors (Standard)

INCLUDED

- Two branch representatives
- Playing of "Taps" (live vs. ceremonial)
- Folding and presentation of flag

NOT INCLUDED

- Rifle salute
- Live bugler
- Chaplain
- Bagpiper
- Patriot Guard Riders
- Flyover



When a funeral home is involved, the funeral director is responsible for coordinating military honors, and all additional elements of service

25 AUG 1969 AN LOC, Rep. of Vietnam

“Bandido Charlie Company”

1st Sgt. Alfredo G. Herrera

- Sustained injury to lower extremities
- Shrapnel
- Two ambushes



Military Career

- Retired as Command Sgt. Major
- Bandido Charlie Association
- Military Order of the Purple heart
- Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs



Terminal diagnosis
 Prearranged funeral:

- Immediate burial
- *“You’ll drive me home, right?”*

“I’m no hero.”

“I was just doing my job.”

“I don’t need all the bells and whistles.”



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What We Did Instead

- Public viewing
- Chapel funeral service
- Military honors rendered in national cemetery
 - (Interment was not in national cemetery)
- Catered reception
- Eight-hour procession to cemetery for interment
- Escort provided by Combat Veteran Motorcycle Association
- Live bugler
- Bagpiper



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Honoring Their Legacy



NEVER FORGET



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What can we do?

- Talk straight
- Don't sugarcoat
- Have the courage to challenge
- Set realistic expectations
- Honor our promises



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Upcoming TAPS Institute Programs

February 21



Helping Grieving Kids as They Grow

Live Webinar, Noon-1:00 pm ET

Pamela Gabbay, EdD, FT, *Director of Operations and Training for The Compassionate Friends, Co-founder of The Satori Group, and a National Trainer for The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) and TAPS Advisory Board member*

April 18



Empathy and Grief in the Workplace

Live Webinar, Noon-1:00 pm ET

Rachel Kodanaz, *TAPS Advisory Board and Principal, Embracing Life's Challenges*

Visit taps.org/institute to learn more and RSVP!

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About the TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing®

Launched in March 2018 through an alliance with HFA, the TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing® serves as a resource and training center, providing programs for both professionals working in the field of grief and loss and the public.

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Continuing Education

1. Go to educate.taps.org

If this is your first TAPS certificate, click "Create a new account"

2. Enter the CE Code: **VFTR**

3. Complete the exam

You must pass at 80% or above and may retake the exam as many times as needed

4. Choose your board category and board

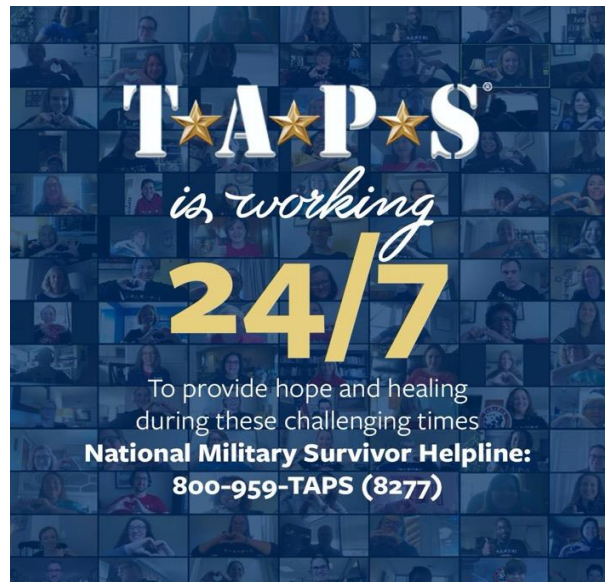
5. Complete the program evaluation

6. Submit payment

7. Print your certificate

CE Code expires February 6, 2024

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