

# LIVING FUNERAL CEREMONY

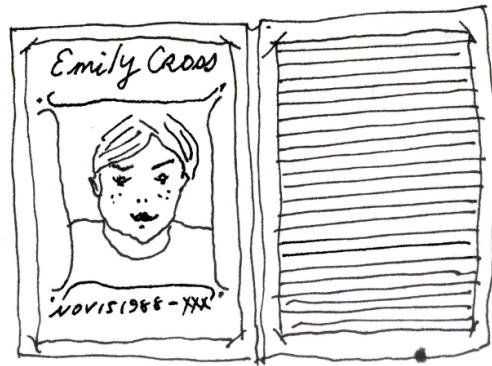
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GENERAL GUIDE  
*(in-person)*



## At-home setup

Printing my participants' memorial photos and assembling the booklets is usually my first step. I cut off ticket sales 24 hours prior to my ceremony to give myself adequate time to get everything in order. Using the provided memorial frame psd file, begin entering photos, your participants' birthdays, and the date of the ceremony (death date). You may use your own memorial template if you wish!



Print the images on photo paper and set them aside for assembly. Once you have printed your images, simply place them into your booklets alongside a blank sheet of notebook paper. Gather the booklets and make sure you have enough supplies for each setup.

## Arriving at the venue:

Depending on how much time your particular venue will allow you to arrive early, I recommend booking another hour on top of how long the ceremony itself will last. Setup, especially for your first time, could take up to 30 minutes to complete. You do not want to be rushing this process, as setting the space up should be done with love and intention. Some venues will give you a 30 minutes 'buffer' before and after the rented

time, but more typically it is 15 minutes. It may seem like an unnecessary expense, but you will be glad you gave yourself this extra time! Make sure you are well acquainted with the space—know where the bathrooms and all exits are.

### Setting up your participants' places:

Note that you can customize your setups however you'd like to! Your materials list may look different than the following setup.

Setting up can be done in any order, but it's best to work somewhat methodically. I normally start with laying out my ground blankets so I can get a handle on the layout of the room. Leave plenty of room to walk in between each person, and also behind and in front of them. They should be spaced far apart enough from other participants to feel like they have enough room to move around and dive inward, but close enough so that they are able to hear their neighbors throughout the sharing exercise.

Next I put out the foldable tables at each place. Again, there is no 'correct' order, this is simply how it works best for me! I position the tables at the 'feet-end', just in front of the edge of the blanket. Please refer to the setup illustration provided at the end of this document if this is difficult to picture in your mind.

On each table there should be a flower of your choice, ( I normally hit the market on the way to the ceremony setup and choose a hardy variety such as carnation or baby's breath ) a handkerchief, a battery-operated candle, a pen, and the participant's memorial booklet. I tend to like putting the candle within the propped-open memorial booklet, so that the participant's photograph is beautifully illuminated.

Place the shroud fabric somewhere next to the ground blanket, folded neatly but not tightly. Keep in mind that you will have to unfold the shroud fabric fairly quickly so that the last person to be shrouded has not been waiting for an inappropriate length of time.

Place the eye pillow on top of the shroud fabric, or next to it.

### Your participants arrive:

Welcome your participants one by one with a nod and a smile. I advise not to make a big to-do about their arrivals, as they can often feel quite nervous about being there. Scope out a good place for them to put their shoes, and direct them to remove them at the designated spot. You may want to direct them to place their cell phones and other personal belongings there, too, but use your judgement. At the beginning of the ceremony, I tell people to turn their phones on airplane mode if they still have them, and place them under their personal tables.

In general people naturally find their way around the room, but sometimes it may be necessary to guide a participant to their photograph. I sometimes announce quietly with every few people who arrive to find their place at their photograph. Once everyone has found their seat, suggest that they get comfortable and, if they want, do some light stretching to prepare for the next few hours of sitting/lying down at their place.

Have chairs available for people who have trouble sitting on the floor. I normally include this detail in an e-mail I send out to participants the day prior to the ceremony. Have the chairs visible to the participants so they are easily accessible if someone wants to get one.

Once everyone has arrived, you are ready to begin reading the script.

You may choose to do some grounding exercises or stretching/movement prior to jumping into the script—feel free to make it your own.

### Reading of the Script:

I recommend going over the script in its entirety before performing your first ceremony. This will create a more natural-seeming delivery, and eventually it will become second nature to you. Feel free to add in some of your own language to help it feel even more natural. The script is written in *my* voice, and I urge you to make it feel like *yours*! Don't worry if at first it feels a bit robotic. The more you perform this ceremony, the better it will feel. It is of utmost importance that you speak clearly and do not rush through it. Speak slowly with gaps between sentences in a calm, confident manner. We will go over the script together, so don't worry about this too much!

You may choose to print the script, or read it off of an e-reader or tablet. Either is fine, but if reading from a tablet, please ensure that the brightness is adjusted so that it is not distracting for your participants.

### Moving around the room:

As you speak, you may feel like walking around or you may feel like staying stationary. This is up to you and your personal preference. I enjoy walking around the room and in-between people, but will occasionally make a place for myself to sit to deliver the script from my seated position. This detail is not so important as long as you are speaking loudly and clearly.

### The writing exercise:

You'll want to keep an eye on the time, depending on how many people you have participating in your ceremony. Since they will eventually be sharing what they are writing, be considerate of how many people's writing exercises you need to get through. You want your participants to feel as if they have plenty of time, but be mindful. I have never had to call for participants to stop writing! The writing exercise will generally take 15-40 minutes.

### The sharing exercise:

This will take time. Your participants will read at their own pace and will stumble over words...it's okay! There is a note in the script about allowing an opt-out for your participants during this sharing portion. Some choose not to partake, especially because they did not have prior knowledge that they would be sharing. It is important that you honor and respect their choice not to participate in this aspect of the ceremony.

### Laying your participants to rest:

Use caution while navigating through your participants to cover them with their shrouds. As quietly as you can, unfold the shroud fabric beside a participant. Shake out the shroud so that it can fall gently down upon the participant, as light as a feather. Focus on covering the majority of the body— do not worry if it does not cover the entire body, so long as the head and torso, at least, are fully covered.

Next, place the eye pillow on top of the eyes, applying light pressure for a few seconds. I use this moment to send them some gratitude. If an eye pillow happens to fall off after some time, simply leave it be. It is more disruptive to go and place it back on than to leave it.

After their bodies have come 'back to life', carefully remove the eye pillow and shrouds from each participant, one by one.

### In closing

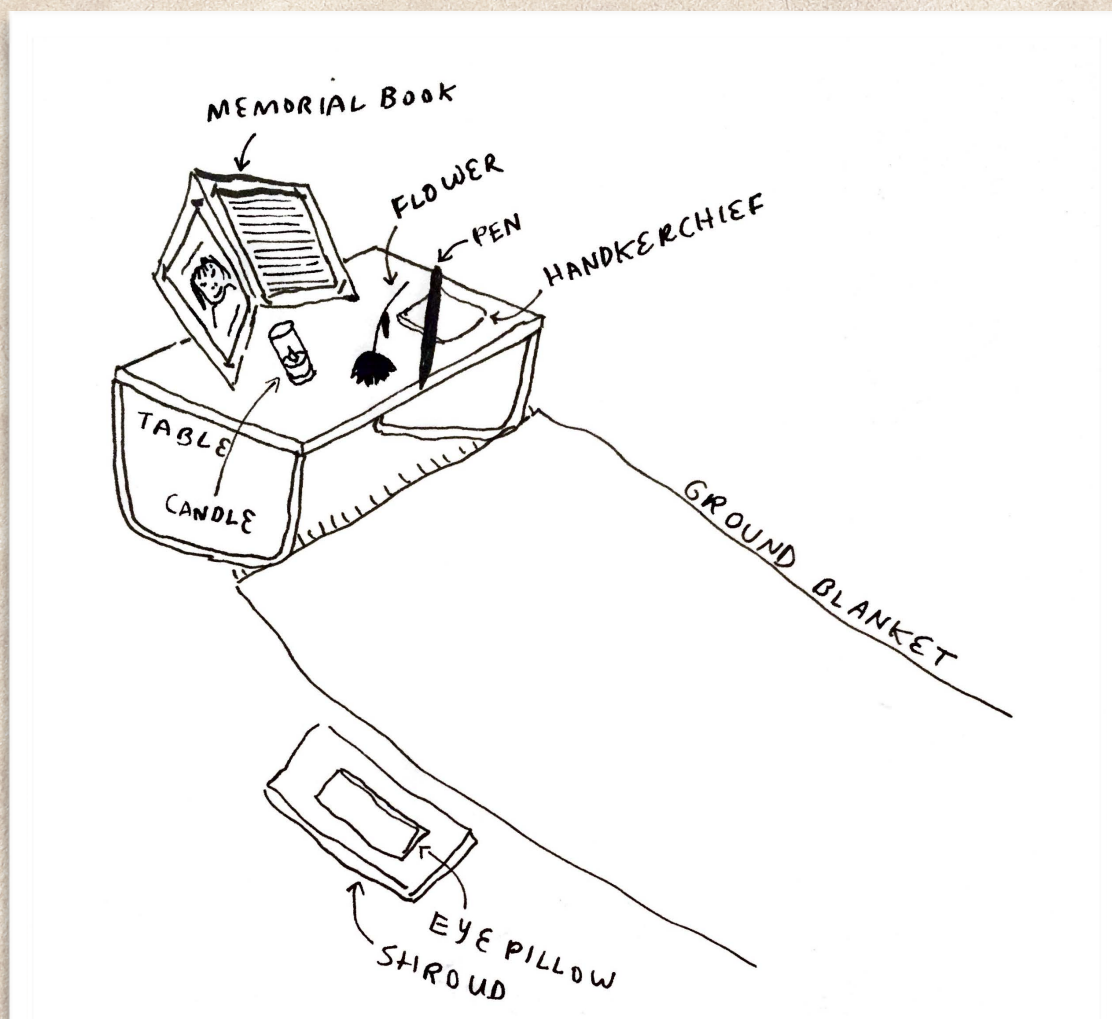
Let people transition out of the space at their own pace. They have been through an intense experience, and it's vital that they have time to re-acclimate into the 'real world'! You may choose to wait around for further discussion in or outside of the venue, and some people will offer to help

clean the space. How you handle this after-ceremony time is up to you! Be gentle with your participants and let them know how grateful you are to have had them there with you.

Optional items to consider:

- Flashlight- lighting can be unpredictable. Because we want the lights at a low level, it is a good idea to be prepared to pass around a flashlight when it's time for the sharing exercise.
- Bell, meditation bowl, or tuning forks: Sound cues can be nice when bringing your participants out of the death visualization exercise. When I use sound cues, I strike a chime or ring a bell when the time for them to 'be dead' has come to an end. I then guide them back into their bodies.
- Extra water: Always good to have on hand in the case that someone forgets their water. Many venues will have water on site, so check with them ahead of time if you have never been there before.

How your setup can look:



### Sample e-mail blast for day prior to the ceremony:

Below is a sample e-mail I send 1-2 days before the ceremony. The e-mail functions as a reminder and also offer peace of mind to your participants. The e-mail should detail where the ceremony is, where you will be, what

Hi, all!

I hope this finds you well. I just wanted to send you a little check-in with some info about tomorrow. When you arrive at 6, I will be waiting for you in the breezeway to welcome you in to Rose Movement Studio. I'm attaching a map ( that they provided ) so you'll be able to find it- it can be tricky since it's a plaza with many businesses. Feel free to give me a call if you get lost : 512-783-6079

Please arrive on time!

**What to bring:**

All you need is your water bottle!

**What to wear:**

Comfortable, breathable clothing is recommended. You will be asked to remove your shoes, so please wear socks if you're more comfortable that way. There will be chairs available to you if you have trouble sitting on the floor.

Your phones will be on silent for at least 2 hours, so please let your loved ones know you won't be able to be reached.

Let me know if you have any questions prior to the ceremony, I'm here!

they need to wear and bring, how long they will be there, and other notable details about the space itself.

Congratulations on this new and exciting venture! Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or comments you may have. Thank you again,

Emily