

# Ideas for Preparing a Group Prior to a Ceremony

## K'riah

In Jewish funeral tradition, right before the funeral service begins, the Rabbi and close relatives may perform 'K'riah' – rending the garment. This can be an actual tearing of a piece of their clothing, but is often symbolized by cutting a ribbon that is pinned to their clothing. The Rabbi goes around and rends, or cuts each person's ribbon, and there is a blessing that the mourners say together. In this tradition, the ribbon is worn for a week. You can [read more about K'riah here](#).

## We Remember You

A secular approach could be to gather the closest mourners in a small room, just before the ceremony is to begin. This is not always easy to do, as some people will be rushing about getting everything ready. And this is exactly why this short preamble is so needed. It will give them the time and space to become present, and prepare them to open their hearts. Have them move close together in a circle while a celebrant stands in the center.

Say why you are there: 'We have come together to prepare ourselves for the funeral of <name>.'

Ask them to breathe: 'Together, let's give our bodies some much-needed, life-affirming breath. Let's breathe in and out deeply, three times.'

Then the celebrant goes to each person, puts her hand on their heart with a gentle pressure, hold eye contact, and says, 'Together, we will remember <name>.'

Then lead them out to the funeral ceremony.

# The Great Letting Go: Being with a Person who is Dying

This ceremony is an excerpt from [Home Funeral Ceremonies: A primer to honor the dying and the dead with reverence, light-heartedness and grace](#), by Donna Belk and Kateyanne Unullisi. Use it when a person is actively dying. Caretakers and loved ones gather and wait as the dying person goes through the work of dying.

*In this short Life that only lasts an hour  
How much - how little - is within our power*

*Emily Dickenson*

This dying process marks the beginning of a 'time out of time' period, a liminal space. Create your own intentions for blessing and releasing <name>, to assist in his final letting go of the body. Keep the room quiet, gentle and soft as he would prefer. Stay clear in your intention to support the dying process, and find means to support yourselves too. This is a time of great love. It is the great letting go.

You can share the ceremony with any who cannot be at the bedside. Tell them the time, so that many others far away can join in the intention all together.

Keep the room soft, quiet, and the light low. Turn off or remove all cell phones and items that transmit wireless energy. If there is medical equipment, do your best – perhaps cover with scarves. You will know what is right.

Have the group gather together outside of the room, to center and to affirm their intention to support one another and to release <name> freely. That is part one of the ceremony.

For the second part of the ceremony, gather near to <name>. His comfort is primary, so it is up to you and the situation if you touch, hold or cradle him. If able, everyone holding hands to create a circle would be helpful.

**Ceremony one: Centering and intention-setting, away from the dying person**

We love <name>. And we are grieving, dreading his death.

Perhaps our grief and dread are impeding his work of dying. Perhaps our grief and dread are keeping us from being fully present for him, for one another and for ourselves.

Let us be clear in our intention to shift these feelings, and to do it together. Let us breathe in, into our clenched and fearful hearts, the light of love. We breathe in light, into our hearts. And we breathe out fear and dread.

<breathe in slowly. Release breathe slowly>

Let us come together around <name>, and share our love for him and for each other. Let us bring compassion into this moment, and acceptance, for what is happening now. We breathe in loving compassion to that place in our bodies that is shut away, is in hiding, is in pain. We breathe out the feelings of vulnerability and fear from that place.

<breathe in slowly. Release breathe slowly>

We are not ready for this. And we are because there is no way around this time. We walk through it together. We are now ready to assemble at <name>'s dying place, and mindfully say goodbye. We breathe in the light of love into our bodies, feeling into the place that does not want to release him. We breathe out our grip on him, we loosen our grip, we begin to let him move on.

<breathe in slowly. Release breathe slowly>

*Divine Mother  
Mother of the Universe  
Bless us with peace  
Within and without.  
jalaja bonheim - 2000*

## **Ceremony two: At the bedside of the dying person**

We have come close to <name>, to gather with one another and him as he lays dying.

<Name>, we are here to thank you, to bless you, and to release you. We love you. We will always and forever love you.

It is a lot for you to let go, to move out of your body, and to die. It is a lot for us to witness this, to hold onto our love for you, while at the same time opening to the knowing we will soon not have you with us.

We do this together, with the support and care we have for one another. We do this with you.

May the divine love of all that is surround you and help you find release. May divine love surround us as we wait with you, and bring comfort to all here in this time of the great letting go.

We are so full of gratitude for the life we have shared with you. We will miss you. We wish you easeful passage, and we will love you forever and ever.

<You could read a prayer or a poem here. And then go around the circle to individually say what each person there is grateful for and to say goodbye.>

*Divine Mother  
Mother of the Universe  
Bless us with peace  
Within and without.*

*jalaja bonheim - 2000*