

The importance of heart centered after death care and our ability to grieve healthily

Holly Lyon-Hawk

Holistic Funeral Director, United Kingdom



Abstract

Statement of the Problem: In our society it has become normal for people to die anywhere but at home with over 75% of all British deaths occurring in hospitals, care homes & hospices and only 23% happening at home. Many medical institutions feel they have failed when someone dies, they struggle to be open and honest about what is happening in someone’s body with many people dying whilst still undergoing treatment rather than the doctors feeling confident enough to be able to talk openly about death and move that person on to palliative care instead. Our society does everything it can to deny death, to make death a bad thing and one that should be feared. But death is natural, it is normal and to make something so intrinsic to ourselves an all out disaster leads to a very healthy society that lives in a perpetual state of fear of something that is inevitable. By gently supporting and guiding people in the care of their dead rather than whisk the body away to be hidden at an undertakers, in an attempt to protect people from the reality, causes more fear, more disassociation and repression of feelings. I have experienced over the years of supporting and helping families help care for the relatives after death enables them time to just sit with death, sit with death in a safe space, being supported and held, this in all cases. I have helped support is a profound and important experience in their lives, one which helps them, they come away feeling more at peace, more able to express and share their feelings, not being fearful of their feelings, understanding that grief is normal, it’s not something that can be thought through but rather felt through. I believe it is time to change the way families are supported after death. It is not enough to have faceless undertakers who are there for purely the practical, we need compassion, we need open heartedness, a willingness to be with people in their pain, not run from it and hope it never happens to us.

Biography:

Holly Lyon-Hawk originally trained as a veterinary nurse before moving into becoming a sculptor and then through a personal experience after her grandfather died, she became aware of a more holistic way of caring for people after death. She set up a holistic funeral director. She has supported hundreds of families over the years to be able to have a farewell that helped them honor and say goodbye to their relatives. Holly is an end of life Doula for both people and for pets, a sound healer and is trustee for the Association of Green Funeral Directors.



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