

Organizing During A Difficult Time

Bereavement

The trauma associated with the loss of a loved one can be overwhelming. Many things **must** be done when a death occurs. Many people must be contacted. Arrangements must be made. Paper work must be completed. Insurance claims must be filed. The list seems endless.

When these tasks are completed, spouses and other family members must then deal with making decisions about what to do with the possessions of the loved one. Often they have no idea where to begin. They are at a loss as to how best to help the grieving spouse, parent or child.

Karen Kenney is particularly sensitive to the needs of people who have suffered such a loss. Widowed at the age of 32, Karen had to face all of these tasks and more. This painful experience taught her many things. She learned that:

- people handle grief differently.
- family members and friends want to help. They want to do the right thing, but they are not sure what that might be.
- people often do not know what to keep, give away, or throw away.
- some people want to keep everything. Other people want to give everything away or throw it all away.
- adult children often want something that will help them remember Mom, Dad, Grandma or Grandpa. They take items and later realize that they do not want or cannot use these things.
- adult children, or other family members, will often take unwanted items because they believe that refusing them would cause hurt feelings.

Based on her own personal experience, and the knowledge she has gained from working with so many people during their bereavement, Karen offers some important suggestions for people who are trying to help.

- Be kind and understanding.
- Listen to the person who is grieving.
- Do not try to make decisions for them.
- If they seem unable to make any decisions, offer them encouragement. Perhaps suggest that they keep something that will make them laugh – something from a happy time.
- Suggest that they keep something that gives them comfort. Karen has kept some sweatshirts for those times when she feels the need for a “hug”.
- Suggest that they save some pictures.
- Encourage them to offer something meaningful to others who are also grieving. If possible, let the other person select something.
- If they are downsizing, suggest that they take only those things that will be needed in their new home, and those special items they have chosen to remember their loved one.

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Often times during bereavement, family members become overwhelmed while trying to help. That is the time to call Professional Organizer **Karen Kenney**. She can:

- act as a buffer between family members who are struggling with this loss and their need to “do the right thing” for their loved one. Many times family members are at odds as to what each person should be doing. Karen can help guide family members toward achieving solutions that are good for everyone.
- help make decisions about what will be needed in the new home.
- help find a place to donate items no longer needed or wanted, but that someone else would love to have.
- help make decisions about which things should be kept as a reminder of the loved one. Perhaps just taking a photo of an object is all that is needed.

Is an organizer for you?

Perhaps M. Cahn from Concord, MA says it best.

“Karen Kenney has an excellent understanding of the how and what of working with the tangibles of death. Do I throw away or save? Do I make a clean sweep or store? These are critical questions when dealing with the loss of a loved one, and complex questions when there is a complicated grief. Karen’s calm manner, organizing expertise, and experience with grief, work to provide an excellent resource for others. Her help was invaluable after my husband’s death and my mother’s death.”