Planning for Death

Contributed by Laura
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What you might or might not want to do, and why it is ok if you don't. There is nothing that can prepare you for the death of your child. And thinking about death when your child's life is just beginning is a cold and cruel irony. Some parents feel better focusing on life, and on fighting for their child. That is ok. Some feel better preparing for the details of death ahead of time so that they will not have to do it when they are in the midst of coping with fresh loss. Either way is ok, and I strongly encourage parents to do what they feel best about doing. Information for both approaches is here.

For some people, preparing ahead for a funeral brings a sense of comfort. Many parents call a funeral director and get information on costs, options, and requirements prior to the birth of a child who has a condition classed as "incompatible with life". Some also feel better if they arrange for burial clothing, or write up a funeral service plan. Many people even purchase the cemetary plot ahead of time. These are things that you can do if it helps you to feel better prepared.

If you choose not to prepare for a funeral, do not feel bad and do not worry that you will be caught unprepared. Funerals and burials are handled in emergencies all the time, and hospitals and mortuaries are well equiped to assist you in a compassionate manner and to walk you through the decisions that need to be made. It is good to focus on life and keep a positive attitude if this is what you feel you need to do.

If you have no financial resources, then this is not something you need to worry about in most cases. In most areas there are mortuaries which will reduce costs, or in some cases donate a casket and services for an infant. When you receive donated services, you may not have choices; the funeral may be done in the least expensive manner available in your area. If a cemetary plot is donated to you by the cemetary (also not uncommon), then the fee for the plot and for perpetual care will generally need to be paid prior to the placement of a headstone, but it can be done at any time in the future. Usually there are resources available to assist those experiencing financial hardship so that they can give their infant a respectful and appropriate burial. To find out what resources are available in your area, you can call a mortuary, or if you are more comfortable doing so, contact the OB floor of a local hospital and ask for a nurse who can give you information on handling infant death.

Comment:

We did not plan ahead for our daughter's death. I could not face it. The one thing that gave me a great deal of comfort was asking my sister to knit a white dress for her. If she lived, we would use it for her blessing. If she died, we would use it for her burial. I packed it to take to the hospital, along with a white onesie, and white socks. We were prepared in this one thing for life or death, and it gave me a sense of peace to have her dressed in that little dress which had been made for her with love by her aunt.

After Sidney died, the mortuary donated a casket for her. She was not embalmed, and we did not have a funeral. The cemetary donated the plot, but we were able to pay for it shortly after when a relative who wished to help gave us the funds for it. It cost us $153 for the plot, opening and closing, and the perpetual care fee, combined. We are now saving for a headstone. - Laura, Sidney's Mom

Resource:

http://www.nilmdts.org/ - Donated photography services for critically ill infants.