A Gentle Guide to

Talking to Your Family About Your Final Wishes

A calm, compassionate guide by Faye Cox Celebrant



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By Faye Cox, Independent Funeral Celebrant

> *"One conversation today can spare your family a thousand questions tomorrow."*

This is a calm, supportive guide to help you begin a conversation many loving families avoid. Not because they don't care, but because they care so much.

By the end, you'll feel clearer about what matters most to you, and more confident about how to talk about it gently, naturally, and without pressure.

Inside this guide	You'll be able to...
Why your wishes matter more than the details	Start the conversation with warmth (not fear)
The most common myths (and what's true)	Respond when loved ones avoid the topic
Gentle prompts to discover "what matters most"	Put your wishes somewhere your family can find

A note from me
I'm Faye Cox. As a funeral celebrant, I have the privilege of standing beside families at one of the hardest moments of their lives. The sentence I hear most often is: *"I just hope we're doing what they would have wanted."*
This guide exists to help your family never have to guess.



1) Why this conversation is one of the kindest gifts you can leave

Let’s be honest: almost nobody wakes up and thinks, *“Today feels like a good day to talk about my funeral.”*

And yet, the families who have had even one simple conversation carry something precious later on and that’s ‘*certainty*’.

When someone dies, grief is unavoidable. But uncertainty is optional. Uncertainty is what creates the spiralling questions, the second-guessing, and the quiet guilt that can linger for years.

Key takeaway: You don’t have to plan every detail. You’re simply giving your family a steady handrail to hold onto when the world feels unsteady.

What families remember (it’s not the flowers)

The practical details matter, of course. But they rarely become the thing people talk about months later.

What lasts is the feeling that the farewell truly reflected the person they loved; the music, the stories, the little touches that quietly say, *“We knew you.”*

“Knowing we got it right didn’t remove our grief , but it softened the edges.”



A gentle reflection: “What matters most?”

You don’t need answers to everything. Just begin with one true thing.

Complete one or two of these sentences:

- If tomorrow wasn’t promised, the one thing I’d want my family to know about my goodbye is…
- I’d love the atmosphere to feel… (quiet / warm / uplifting / simple / full of laughter / something else)
- The song that feels like me is…
- A story I’d want told is…
- If people describe me, I hope they say I was…

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2) What’s stopping you? (and why it makes sense)

If you’ve been thinking about your wishes for a while but haven’t said them out loud, you’re not alone.

Most people aren’t avoiding this conversation because they’re careless. They’re avoiding it because they’re loving. Parents protect children. Children protect parents. Partners protect each other. Silence can feel like kindness.

But in the end, that silence often leaves the people you love carrying a heavier load than they needed to.

Three gentle myths (and what’s true)

Myth 1: “If I talk about it, I’ll upset everyone.”

- Truth: People are often relieved. Someone simply gives the family permission to talk.

Myth 2: “I’m too young.”

- Truth: This isn’t about expecting the worst. It’s about caring enough to prepare, just in case.

Myth 3: “My family already knows what I’d want.”

- Truth: They might know pieces, but unless you’ve said it, they’re still guessing.

Reassurance: You are not being morbid. You are being considerate. This is a love conversation, not a death conversation.

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3) How to start the conversation (without making it heavy)

After hundreds of ceremonies, I genuinely believe the hardest part isn't deciding what you want. It's finding the first sentence.

So let's make that easy.

Choose a moment that feels ordinary

Some of the most meaningful conversations happen while you're doing something simple: making a cup of tea, walking the dog, gardening, driving. Side-by-side often feels safer than face-to-face.

Conversation starters you can borrow

Try one of these:
"I've been getting a few things organised and I'd love your thoughts."
"Can I tell you something I've been thinking about?"
"I don't expect us to sort everything today, but I'd just like to start the conversation."

Notice how none of those begins with fear. They begin with care.

Keep it simple: think "a series of conversations"

You don't have to cover everything in one sitting.

- One day you might talk about music.
- Another day you might share where important paperwork is kept.
- Another time you might mention burial, cremation, or a celebration of life.

Each small conversation is a quiet gift to your future family.

If they don’t want to talk (what to say gently)

Sometimes people change the subject because they love you and don’t want to imagine life without you. If someone says, *“Don’t talk like that,”* you could try:

> *“I’m not planning on going anywhere. But whenever that day comes, I’d love you to feel confident you’re doing what I would have wanted. Talking now means you won’t have to guess later.”*

If tears come, it doesn’t mean you’ve failed. It often means you’ve touched something tender. Something that matters.

> **It’s okay to pause.** If emotions feel too big, simply say: *“Let’s leave it there for today. We can talk again another time.”*

A quick reflection: your “top three”

If you could tell your family just **three things** about your goodbye, what would they be?

1. 1) _____
2. 2) _____
3. 3) _____



4) Write it down (so your family can find it when they need it)

There’s something deeply reassuring about seeing your wishes written down — not because they’re legal, not because they’re perfect, but because they’re yours.

Even a single page can be enough to replace uncertainty with peace.

Your Letter of Wishes (a simple, personal guide)

Unlike a Will, a Letter of Wishes isn’t a legal document. It’s a personal note that helps your family understand what matters to you.

Include (as little or as much as you like)	Examples
What you'd like the day to feel like	Quiet and simple / Warm and uplifting / Full of stories and laughter
Music	A song as people arrive; a piece that feels like "you"; a final song
Style of goodbye	Traditional funeral / Celebration of life / Direct cremation then gathering later
Personal touches	Colours, dress code, favourite readings, a poem, a message you'd like shared
Practical notes	Where key documents are; who to contact; anything you don't want overlooked

Remember: You're not leaving instructions to control people. You're leaving a map to guide them.

Create your "One Last Gift" folder

In the first days after a death, everything can feel like a whirlwind. One clearly labelled folder can soften that overwhelm.

What to include:

- ☐ Your Will (and where the original is stored)
- ☐ Your Letter of Wishes
- ☐ Key contacts (executor, solicitor, close friends/family)
- ☐ Life insurance / pension details (if relevant)
- ☐ A note about any digital accounts or subscriptions (if appropriate)
- ☐ Any messages you want your family to have

The most important step: tell one trusted person where the folder is kept.

Reflection
Who is the one person you trust to know where everything is?
Name: _____
When will you tell them? _____

The things money can't leave behind

Over and over again, I see families cherish the simplest keepsakes: a handwritten recipe, a note in a birthday card, a voice message, a photo with a story written on the back.

If you'd like to leave something lasting, consider one small, beautiful thing:

- A letter to your children (or grandchildren).
- A playlist of songs that tell your story.
- A "things I've learned" page.
- Your favourite recipe with a memory attached.

A final word (from me to you)

If you've made it this far, thank you. Not just for reading, but for choosing care. You don't need to do everything today. Simply begin.

One conversation. One paragraph. One song. One note saying where things are kept.

That's enough to change the experience for the people you love.

My promise: I have heard countless people say *" I wish they'd told us what they wanted."* or *"I wish we'd asked."*



Ready to take the next step

If this guide has helped you, you might be ready to gently record your wishes in one easy place.

My **One Last Gift** booklet is designed to help you do exactly that; simply, calmly, and with love , so your family can feel confident when the time comes.

Simply, use the QR code or use the link 🌐 One Last Gift to purchase your copy today!



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