



# Personalized Funeral Services could provide 'good grief' in Hong Kong and should be a new benchmark for funeral service

Dr Bobo Lau

Department of Counselling & Psychology, Hong Kong Shue Yan University

Dr Ning Fan

Founder & Chairman, Forget Thee Not

# Why do we conduct a funeral for our loved ones?

## For the deceased

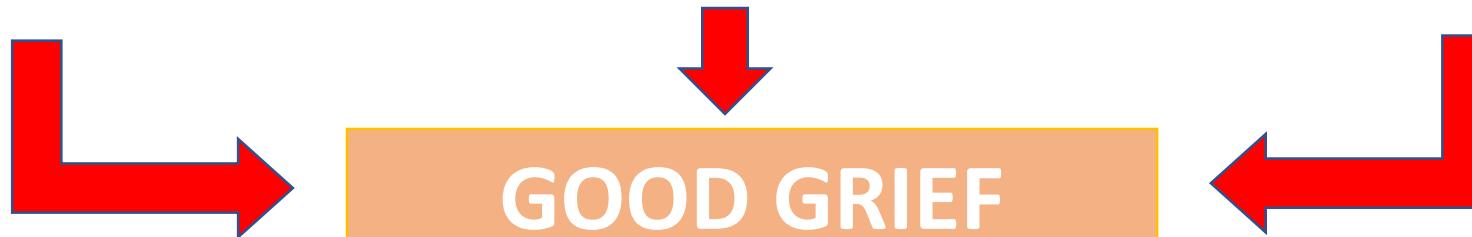
- Fulfil their wishes
- Ritual that delivers them to a pleasant afterlife

## For the closest family

- Last service: A closure of relationship
- Transformation of bonds
- An occasion for solidarity & succor

## For attendants

- Announcing the death
- Celebrate deceased life



(Stroebe & Schut, 2001; Hibberd, 2013; Stroebe, Schut, & Boerner, 2010)

# What is a 'good funeral'?

- People tend to expect traditional event, but with few experiences to refer to when holding one.

Content (spiritual focus, style of services, rituals)

Facilitation and logistics (smooth operation)

Emotional functions (catharsis, healing)

Exchange of support

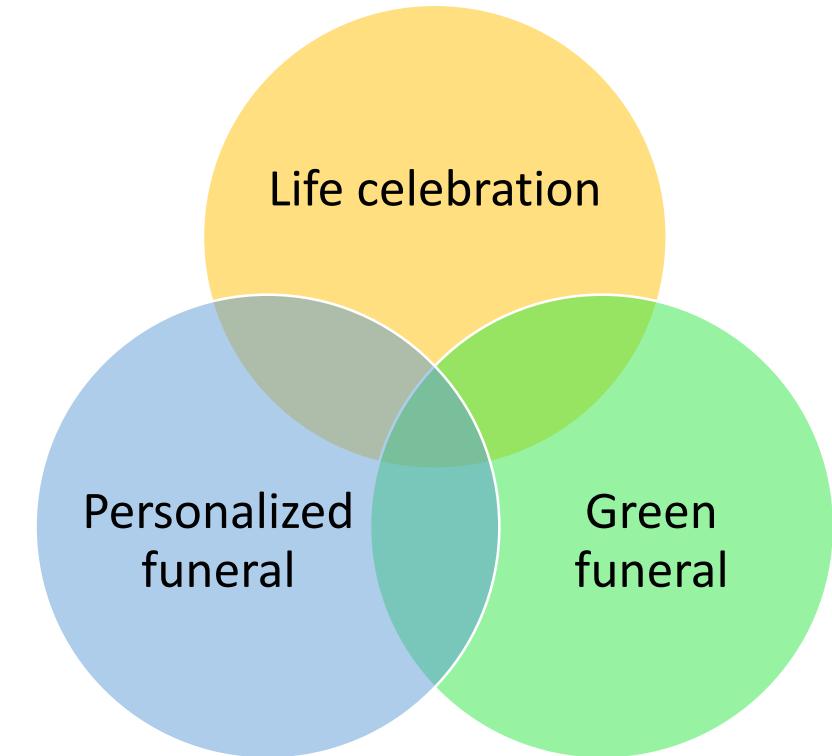
Usefulness (testimony of deceased's life, reaffirmation of life's meaning)

Closure (acceptance of death, reconciliation)

O'Rourke, Spitzberg and Hannawa (2011)

# Forget Thee Not 「毋忘愛」

- A Non-governmental Organization (NGO)
- Founded in 2013
- This study is a qualitative service review of 40+ personalized funerals conducted between 2018-2019 using face-to-face interviews and thematic analysis.



# What do HK people look for in a personalized funeral?

***Rather than a traditional ritual, ...***

An occasion to emotionally process the death

Celebration of the colourful and unique life of the deceased

Reflect on the meaning of life







環保吉儀  
循環再用，減少一次性消耗





# Example 1: Miss Q (10 yr old)

## *From a scary, cold ritual to a colourful farewell*

*Personalized and welcoming decorations*

*Drawing blessings on the coffin*



*Creative rituals*

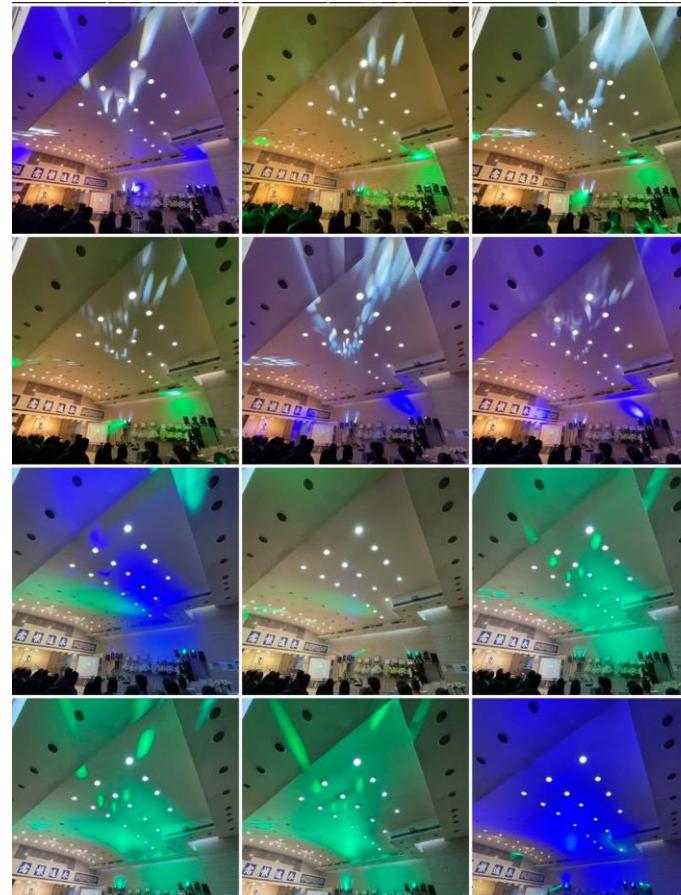
# Example 2: Mr Kelvin

## *From planning for loved-one to planning for himself*

### *Commemoration*



### *Buddhist ritual with a twist*



### *Forwarding knowledge to others*



# Example 3: Ms Lee

## *From user to alliance*



# What makes a good personalized funeral in HK?

Preserve dignity of  
the deceased

Attentive to  
psycho-social-  
spiritual needs

Adaptable to  
individual  
demands and  
tastes

Empathetic  
companionship to  
after-funeral  
periods

Warm and  
peaceful context

# Conclusions

- By tradition, funerals serve as a religious occasion providing a standardized protocol for the attendants to pay tribute to the deceased.
- As most (>70%) Hong Kong Chinese are non-religious, religious rituals in traditional funerals become foreign and irrelevant at best, scary and unwelcoming at worst.
- Most deaths are now foreseeable. People can exercise autonomy at their last journey.
- Personalized funeral fills in the gaps by enabling the funeral relevant to the life of the deceased, thereby serving the commemoration, emotional and social functions for the attendants, and a way to celebrate the life of the deceased according to his/her preference.



毋忘愛相信每個生命都有獨特和  
值得肯定之處

We believe in the uniqueness and  
affirm every life.

喪禮是讓先人的愛及精神

永遠留傳於後人心裡成為生命動力

繼續積極人生

Funerals are a way to continue the love  
and the spirit of the deceased, and  
enable them to empower the living.



[www.forgettheenot.org.hk](http://www.forgettheenot.org.hk)



<https://www.facebook.com/hkgreenlife/>