A STRATEGY FOR FUNERAL HOME DESENSITIZATION

It's possible you may consider the prospect of visiting a funeral home as enchanting as open-heart surgery. You conclude that ANYTHING would be more desirable than subjecting yourself to the confines of such abysmal chambers.

Lie down on the couch for a moment. Let's talk about your fears. Clearly, you seem to be "funeralhomophobic." Did something happen when you were an impressionable child that made you think this way? What traumas have colored your perceptions?

First, let's establish a climate of unconditional acceptance. You are just fine, though your viewpoints are maladaptive. Your condition may not even be listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. But we need to address this issue now. Otherwise, with foreboding visions of doom and gloom fogging your mind, you could easily make the mistake of seeming cold-blooded when you enter one of these places.

Of course, you can't change funeral homes, but you CAN change your reactions to them. Be less of a victim and more in control. Let's try some behavioral modification.

Naturally, you'll probably run into people wearing dark apparel and speaking in subdued tones. But don't make an assumption that you'll have to take on the demeanor of the attendants in the building. Rather than trying to conform to a stereotypical prototype of propriety that dictates how you think one should act in such a setting, retain your characteristically cheerful countenance so the employees can get acquainted with you. That way, they're more apt to be pleasantly welcoming the next time you arrive!

A word of caution, though: If, as you ascend (steps, that is) into a funeral home, you encounter a solemn ceremony taking place at the entrance, temper your spirited overtures a bit. Make an effort to blend into the milieu as you pass under a military arch. Try to be dead (serious) as you climb the steps between rows of rifles forming a canopy over your head. Grimace sullenly when you pass the bagpipers in full regalia filling the air with shrill sounds of shrieking.

Low-key your exuberance until you have passed (through the front door). In spite of your ragged jeans and flip-flops, people won't necessarily notice that you are not one of the mourners. Just be sure to clutch a well-saturated tissue in your fist as you weave your way through the assemblage.

But once you're inside, don't be shy. March right in and act like you are as comfortable as you would be if you were in a preacher's bedroom, a similar place with purported inactivity.

And always remember: when you visit a funeral home, don't be lifeless. Let this be your mantra: YOU DON'T NEED TO BE STAID WHEN YOU PREPARE TO GET LAID!

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Excerpt from the recreational pre-planning book,
Pondering Leaves: Composing and Conveying
Your Life Story's Epilogue
(no longer available)

Mary Ellen Markant

Signature Sunsets

ponderingleaves@gmail.com