

The best party you will never go to...

The Co-op recently published a study which said 70% of us want a celebration of life when we die. That change in our attitude to death has happened over the almost 20 years that I've been a humanist celebrant.

Funerals can be depressing, but humanist ones are uplifting, because we celebrate the life more than we mourn the death. When I started, people told me that was a weird way to look at it, but they don't think that now.

In a humanist funeral, we're not talking about death; we're talking about life but more importantly, we're talking about love, and just as there's no one way to express our love, there's no one way to leave our life.

Just a few months ago, I compered a living funeral for a lady living with a terminal diagnosis, and 70 people flew from around the world just so they could tell her how much they love her before she dies. In theory it was 'a living funeral' but in reality, it was just a great party.

Having said that, not all funerals can be celebrations of life, and it would be wrong to insist that they should be.

I once conducted a funeral for a young woman who had fallen to her death in the Alps, the morning after she had accepted her

boyfriend's proposal of marriage. Her death was particularly tragic, but as the mourners were leaving, one of them grabbed me by the shoulders and said, "thank you, thank you – that was so uplifting!"

What he helped me realise was that the way to make such an appalling situation better is to talk about how we feel, and I think it's that openness and honesty that people are looking for when they choose to have a humanist funeral.

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Faye and the girls







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