

IDEAS FOR THE ANNIVERSARY DATE OF YOUR CHILD'S DEATH

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After the flowers were dried up and gone, after the visitors stopped coming, I wondered just what I was supposed to do in the weeks, months and years following my daughter's death. Would I be the only one who remembered her? Determined that each year she would still be remembered, I began to keep a list of the wonderful remembrance ideas that other parents have used on the anniversary day of their child's death. Some of these ideas take a lot of planning months in advance, but others can be done easily in minutes or hours with very little effort. Whatever you do for that special day, make a plan.

1. Create a scholarship and present it on that day. This can be for a school or an organization that is meaningful to you. There are always children who need a financial helping hand. Make sure that you clear this in advance with the officials who may need to set up a time of day and organize a gathering for the presentation.
2. Take flowers, toys, etc. to other kids in a hospital. It can be hard to revisit a place where your child may have spent much time, but it can also be very healing. Donate money or memorial gifts to a hospital, church or children's group.
3. Make a memory stepping stone with your child's name and add trinkets. This can be done as a family project and set in a place where you can see it year `round.
4. Give away something that belonged to your child, and include the story of why that item is going to a certain person or place. It can become a source of comfort to know that something of your child's will be cherished by another.
5. Make your child's clothes into something else. One family I know made pillows to sleep on for each of their other children. Other ideas are to create a quilt or stuffed toy to cuddle. Customize the items by including your child's picture or name and special dates.
6. Have a T-shirt made with your child's picture on it and wear it all that day. Make T-shirts for other family members, too.
7. Buy something your child would have liked-not to give away, but to keep as a memento for the day.
8. Make scrapbooks or fill frames with pictures of your child. Buy a hope chest or armoire or shadow box and store in them the most precious things that belonged to your child.
9. Decorate something (a cabinet or library shelves) at your child's school. Customize it with his or her name and significant dates.
10. Do the unveiling of the marker with friends or have a foot marker made. Spend time sitting in the cemetery, arranging new things on the grave or leaving flowers. Make a grave blanket or spread his or her cremains in a ceremony on that day.
11. Have a balloon send-off on that day, or use butterflies or birds or even a kite. On the balloons, you can write special messages or insert flower seeds that will scatter.
12. Go to the library and read grief books. Take a box of tissues and pretend you have a cold.
13. Cook your child's favorite meal or eat at his or her favorite restaurant.
14. Have a star named after your child (www.starregistry.com) or support other memorials. An example is The Southport Lighthouse in Kenosha, Wisconsin. (www.griefwarehouse.org/southportlight.html)
15. Have a sketch, a portrait or a sculpture of your child done by a professional. Or, have a doll made in the likeness of your child. Many parents are happy with these look-alikes.
16. Have a piece of jewelry made with your child's name or picture on it. An inexpensive option is to make it yourself, using alphabet beads and a small picture of your child.
17. Get a tattoo with your child's name or a special image that reminds you of your child.

18. Give everyone a ribbon on that day and tell them what it's for. If your child died of cancer, a gold ribbon is traditional to mark that disease.
19. Donate blood or platelets on that day. There is always a need for blood products. If your child needed them, what better way to remember him or her than by giving some back?
20. Light a candle, say a prayer. This can be done in the privacy of your home, in solitude, or in a public place such as a church or a park.
21. Hold an annual charity event, i.e., a golf tournament or charity race/walk. This can be very time consuming, so enlist lots of help for this choice. The rewards culminate on the big day.
22. Get involved in a cause, volunteering your time and efforts toward something that is already established. There are annual stamp campaigns, food pantries and many children's charities that could use a helping hand.
23. Adopt a child for a day and do what you would have done with your child. My child loved the movies and eating at fast food restaurants. Other children may enjoy boating or theme parks-whatever fun is available.
24. Start or update a web page for your child. Many children become known because their web pages are shared by their parents.
25. Compose a poem or song and send it to everyone you know. This is a beautiful way to share a loving tribute to a child.
26. Plant a tree or a bush or a flower garden in memory of your child. This can be done on your property or at your child's school. We also have a tree at the baseball field where our daughter loved to play ball.
27. Watch videos of your child if you have them.
28. Reread all the cards, notes and letters you saved from the days after your child died. Write notes to those whose messages especially touched you.
29. Reach out to a newly bereaved parent. Think of things you wish someone had said to you, or be prepared to just listen to them talk. It is the best gift you can give.
30. Ask others to write down a memory or impression of your child. Read them aloud at a gathering such as an open house or at a party for all your child's friends. Set up a remembrance table with some of your child's special things.
31. Have a new family picture done, but include a large picture of your child or an object that reminds you of your child.
32. Whatever it is that you choose to do on that day, be prepared to lead the way in talking about your child. For it is in planning something special that you can create good memories and happy times on a day that seems to bring only sadness. May the day give you some peace.