

# Using AI to Enhance, Personalize Grief Support

by Welton Hong



These days it's par for the course to stop mid-scroll and be met with a realistic AI-generated image of a Siamese cat driving a Tesla or a video of the U.S. president doing a TikTok dance trend.

And you're probably already used to—if not reliant on—being presented with a wide variety of AI-powered Netflix suggestions for what TV series to binge next based on what you've already watched before you've even finished watching it. Or maybe you regularly indulge in a playlist AI crafted to fit your music taste.

Artificial intelligence (AI) technology can tell your fortune (to its best ability), choose your spouse's next birthday gift or write a best man speech—and a whole lot of other tasks you'd never consider outsourcing in the past.

And while I suspect none of these rather frivolous capabilities are likely to help your funeral home, their common thread is personalization—something that can, in fact, assist funeral directors in a more serious capacity.

In deathcare, one of the most promising and versatile ways to integrate AI technology is providing personalized grief support.

Now you might be skeptical about using AI in this arena—especially after the examples mentioned above. As you're well aware, grief is a deeply personal journey, and what offers

solace to one person might be ineffective for another. The personalized nature of grief, though, is what makes AI useful in this realm. I'll explain.

By leveraging data on an individual's preferences, cultural background and even their interaction history with grief support resources, AI can tailor recommendations specifically for that person—from reading materials to support groups to coping strategies. More importantly, it's available around the clock. As we all know, grief can't tell time.

With that being said, AI is no human. It doesn't have feelings; it can only try to understand them, not experience them. This is why I encourage you to think of AI as an addition to the grief support you're already offering, not as a replacement.

### AI TOOLS FOR PERSONALIZED GRIEF SUPPORT

Here's some AI tools worth looking into for your funeral home:

- **Chatbots for Immediate Assistance:** While you might wish you could serve grieving families in your community 24 hours a day, you're only human. AI-powered chatbots can provide immediate, 24/7 support to those in need. These chatbots, which are equipped with natural language processing abilities, can offer empathetic responses and guide individuals to the appropriate resources when you're unavailable.

- **Data-Driven Grief Counseling:** AI can analyze data from counseling sessions to help identify patterns and tailor the approach to each person. This ensures the individuals you serve get the most out of each session.

- **Customized Content Delivery:** AI has a knack for building personalized media recommendations—just look at Netflix and Spotify. This becomes handy in grief support, because AI can curate and suggest grief resources (e.g. articles, books, videos and more) that might be helpful for someone based on his or her individual preferences. AI might share content based on the nature of the loss, such as losing a spouse or losing a child.

### ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR USING AI IN GRIEF SUPPORT

All the aforementioned tools might sound incredibly helpful. But, after giving it some thought, you might be wondering if it's even ethical to use AI for grief support.

It's a fair concern—and one you should certainly take seriously. My response to it lies less in "if" you use it and more in "how" you use it.

One of the primary concerns with using AI in grief support is the emotional sensitivity required in dealing with grieving individuals. While advanced in processing and analyzing data, AI lacks the innate empathy and emotional intelligence inherent in human interactions.



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This gap reiterates what I mentioned earlier: AI is best used as a supplement to human-led support, not a replacement. The personalized nature of grief means a one-size-fits-all approach, often inherent in algorithm-driven solutions, might not be appropriate for everyone. The role of funeral directors and grief counselors remains crucial, as you provide a human touch, a deep understanding of emotions, AI simply can't replicate.

Another ethical consideration arising with AI is privacy and data security. Grieving individuals share deeply personal and sensitive information, and it's imperative their data is handled with the utmost confidentiality and security. That's why I recommend full transparency with the families you serve. Clear AI data policies are the key to building trust and ensuring individuals feel safe using your services.

There's also the risk of over-reliance on technology—a dilemma you've probably run into a time or two after your Wi-Fi lost signal or you spilled coffee on your laptop. Like any technology, AI can be an asset, but it's essential to maintain a balance. My advice is to keep the human element central in grief counseling and support.

Implementing AI in funeral services isn't just about installing technology; it's about integrating it in a way that enhances the human elements of the service. And the key to

accomplishing this is training staff on how to use AI tools effectively and ethically.

### THE FUTURE OF AI IN GRIEF SUPPORT

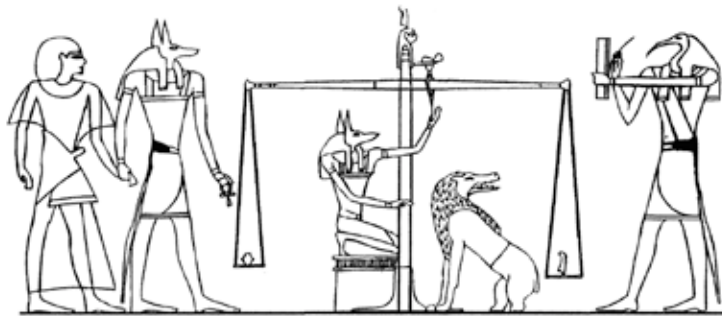
AI is only getting better, and we have to adapt accordingly.

You can expect AI's role in grief support to expand as it increasingly becomes more sophisticated. This could look like virtual reality experiences that help people process their grief to predictive analytics that anticipate individuals' needs during the grieving process.

AI's emergence in the funeral industry signifies a shift toward more personalized and accessible grief support. By embracing this technology, you can offer a new level of death-care that's not only deeply rooted in your emotional intelligence and empathy, but also augmented by the precision and personalization AI provides.



Welton Hong is the founder and CEO of Ring Ring Marketing, a marketing firm specializing in solutions for deathcare firms, and the author of *Making Your Phone Ring with Internet Marketing for Funeral Homes*.



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