

# HUMANIST CEREMONIES

## HUMANIST NAMING CEREMONIES

A humanist naming ceremony is a **non-religious** ceremony. The parents are free to decide where to hold it, what happens, and what they want to say. **Freedom** is very important to humanists. The focus at a naming ceremony is often on the child's freedom to discover for themselves what they believe and to decide how they want to live, and on the responsibility of other people to **support** them to find happiness. Typically, family and friends will make promises or offer advice to the new child.

Humanists don't believe in a god. The **connections** we make with other people and the love and support they can offer is therefore very important to many humanists.



**“**To celebrate a new life is an essential part of being human... every life is one which is filled with opportunity, filled with potential, and filled with so many possibilities...”

**SIMON**, humanist celebrant



Humanist ceremonies are conducted by a humanist celebrant.

### Statements from humanist naming ceremonies:

‘We promise to use all our wisdom, patience, and love to help you fulfill yourself and help others throughout your life.’

‘We have the responsibility to help you to develop your own opinions, beliefs, and values.’

**“**‘A humanist naming ceremony is a very joyous occasion. It’s the opportunity to welcome the child into the world... It’s very important within a naming ceremony to acknowledge that we’re not labeling the child in any way. We make it very clear that it is for the child to choose their path guided by those who are important to them.’

**ISABEL**, humanist celebrant

**“**‘Humanists feel that this is the one life we each have. It’s about each of us trying to find a way of living that is fulfilling and hopefully leaves something good behind for the generations to come... Most people I’ve worked with to put together naming ceremonies have chosen that way to welcome their child because they want their child to be free to decide for themselves when they’re old enough what they do or don’t believe.’

**HANNAH**, humanist celebrant

Look at the statements and quotes above and highlight any words and phrases that you think help to illustrate a humanist approach to life.



## HUMANIST WEDDINGS

There are no special rules, traditions, or rituals at a humanist wedding. The couple are free to choose where and how to celebrate and they are encouraged to write their own promises to each other. There will often be music and readings that have special meaning for the couple. What is important for humanists is that the ceremony is personal and meaningful to them.



**ISABEL** 'It's a very creative process and the couple will create a ceremony that really has heart and meaning for them, that really reflects who they are, what their values are, what their relationship is, and the things that they want to build their marriage on together.'

**ISABEL**, humanist celebrant

'I love the person that you are and I promise to give you space to be yourself and to never try to change you. I promise to respect your opinions even if they are different from my own. I promise to talk and to listen, to trust and appreciate one another; to respect and cherish each other's uniqueness; and to support, comfort, and strengthen each other through life's joys and sorrows.'

***A promise made at a humanist wedding***

Not all humanists have humanist ceremonies, but they are becoming increasingly popular. In Scotland in 2019 there were more humanist weddings than Christian weddings. Humanist funerals are attended by over one million people in the UK each year.

Humanists support **equality** and celebrate **diversity**. They believe we should be free to choose who we love. Humanists have carried out ceremonies for same-sex couples for decades (before civil partnerships and same-sex marriages were legally recognised) and will often carry out weddings for couples with different faiths or beliefs. They believe people should be free to choose whether they marry or not and who they want to marry, and that both people should hold equal status in a marriage.

**SIMON** 'What I personally like so much about the humanist approach is that there is no discrimination in who shall choose to marry, who shall choose to make those vows – it's the fact that they have chosen each other. That's what matters.'

**SIMON**, humanist celebrant



## HUMANIST FUNERALS

Humanists do not believe in an afterlife. Many feel that the words and sentiment at a religious funeral would not be appropriate for them. A humanist funeral makes space for sadness but is also a celebration of a person's life. There will often be a focus on the impact the person had on other people and on the world around them. For humanists we live on through our children (if we have them), in people's memories, and through the contributions we made to society.



### QUESTION

- **What words do you think you might hear at humanist namings, weddings, and funerals?**