

Sustainability Challenge: Intermediate

Sustainable Grieving Practices



The rituals and practices surrounding death and grieving can have a significant environmental impact. From the materials used in caskets and urns to the land required for burial, traditional practices often do not prioritize sustainability. This challenge addresses a topic that is often overlooked in discussions about sustainability but has a significant impact on our planet. It also poses complex ethical and cultural questions that can inspire innovative thinking.

Objective

Design a new, culturally sensitive approach to grieving that minimizes environmental impact while still providing a meaningful way for people to honor and remember their loved ones.

Constraints

1. The solution must be respectful of various cultural, religious, and personal beliefs.
2. The solution should be legal and adhere to any relevant regulations.
3. The solution must be cost-effective and accessible to people from various socio-economic contexts.

Design Thinking Steps

1. Empathizing: Role-play interviews with religious leaders, funeral directors, and families who have recently experienced a loss to understand the needs and constraints around grieving practices.
2. Re-defining to understand: Identify the environmental issues associated with current grieving practices, such as land use, material waste, and carbon emissions. Create a human-centered problem statement.
3. Ideating: Discover potential innovative solutions. Consider a Circular Economy approach.
4. Prototyping: Create prototypes or conceptual models of your sustainable grieving solutions.
5. Evaluating: Share your prototypes with a diverse group of stakeholders. Collect feedback/feedforward and iterate your design.
6. Implementing: Draft a plan for starting a business around your sustainable grieving solution, taking into account regulatory constraints, potential partnerships, marketing, and customer service.