

# Writing a Personal Eulogy



When someone you love passes away, your heart can break into a million pieces. It is hard to find ways to do “good grief”—grief that helps you process and express your experience of loss, while also honoring the relationship you had with your loved one. Loss is hard. You can honor the breadth and depth of your loss through the process of designing your own personal eulogy.

## USHER GRIEF THROUGH

There are various ways you can work with the grief that accompanies the loss of someone dear to you. Helpful grief work allows the complexities of the loss to be explored and expressed. Speaking or writing about your grief can be greatly beneficial, although there are other ways to communicate about grief and loss that do not involve words. Some people prefer to express their sorrow through dance, art, or other ways of observing or participating in creative expression. Others work with grief by getting active in the service of helping others, including those bereaved. Yet others turn to spiritual practices and rituals to help provide a sense of meaning in the loss.

## GRIEVING WITH WORDS

If you enjoy playing with language and words, writing a personal eulogy can provide a vehicle for processing the various aspects of the grief you feel. In a eulogy you have a chance to tell the story of your relationship with the person you’ve lost. You can speak about what they meant to you, and what you know about the life they lived. You can consider both the external and observable aspects of their life as well as the personal values and aspirations made visible to you in your relationship with this person. A eulogy offers a deeply personal response to the loss of someone who impacted your life. You may never be asked to offer this eulogy in a public way, but your personal eulogy can capture the nature of your relationship to this person—“your shared story.”

## IDEAS TO CONSIDER

- When did this person first come into your life?
- Do you recall your first impressions?
- Tell an early story about your early connection with this person.
- How long was this person in your life?
- In what ways was this relationship significant to you?
- What did you learn by being in relationship with this person?
- What impact have they had on you over the years?
- What did they teach you about family, work, values, joy, investment, growth, partnership, and fears?
- How did this person change you?
- How did others understand your relationship?
- How have you tried to emulate them?
- What seems to have been the highest priorities in this person’s life?
- How did this person tend to make you feel in their presence?
- What special memories of your relationship are most valuable to you?
- What have you learned about yourself, and your relationship, in the midst of their passing?

## SHARING YOUR EULOGY

You might consider sharing your eulogy with the family or friends of your loved one. You may want to give others a copy of your eulogy or read it aloud so they can witness and support you in the midst of your experience of loss.

**Give sorrow words; the grief that does not speak knits up the o-er wrought heart and bids it break.  
- William Shakespeare, Macbeth**

\*Thanks to Peter Bloom, PhD for sharing about the meaning he found in writing a eulogy for his dear friend Bob Weigl, PhD, February 2020.



**Elsbeth Martindale**  
CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST