How to Write a Eulogy- in 5 Parts

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If you have been asked to write and deliver a eulogy, or if you have volunteered, consider it an honor. But also consider that writing and delivering a eulogy should serve as both a remembrance and a tonic for your listeners. It is not a time for you to grieve. While you may get choked up, you need to be in a place of strength to be effective and helpful.

Hopefully, you will have some time to write it and work on it a bit beforehand, but sometimes you may not. In the depths of grief, we do not always think as clearly as we would like. Hopefully, the following ideas will help make the process go smoothly.

Before you even begin writing, - brainstorm. **Brainstorm** and list the following ideas about the person who just died. Consider the following questions and prompts:

*What was the person's role(s) in terms of relationships with other people? They were obviously a daughter or son. Were they a husband, wife, mother, father, brother, sister, or work colleague?

*What did they do professionally? Were they/how were they involved in their community?

*What were their recreational pursuits, avocations, or hobbies? Were they outdoorsy? Did they like museums or travel? Run marathons or were avid skiers?

*Consider their personality in terms of their beliefs, tastes, inclinations, or preferences- list keywords or anecdotes. For example, did they love certain kinds of food? Were they extremely organized? Were they also early to events? Were they a night owl? Did they love the mountains, the ocean, the desert?

*You may wish to consider their quirks so long as it/the messaging is delivered with lightness and kind humor in intent. For example, maybe they were always late? Or a collector of things? Maybe they were on the messier side or always misplacing their keys.

*Anecdotes or stories of this person that would enlighten or embellish, creating a picture for your listeners. Write quotes they said if remembered.

*Spirituality- did they participate in religion or practice a faith?

*You may wish to include such details as where they were born or how they met their spouse, but these are usually mentioned in the obituary. You are delivering a eulogy that is intended to capture the character of the deceased and honor them.

*As the above ideas are considered, remember that you will want to leave your listener with memories of how the deceased improved and positively affected the lives of those around them.

Allow these ideas to percolate for a few days and continue to add to the list(s) as more ideas occur to you or information presents itself. Reach out to close friends and family members if you need to generate more data, material, or accounts. If you have any doubts as to the accuracy of your information, make sure to fact-check it with close family or friends who would be knowledgeable.

If you are struggling to generate ideas, imagine that you are sitting with a good friend who has never met this person. And they ask you, "Tell me about _____." Begin. Begin to write your ideas as though you were speaking about this person to your friend.

Pay attention to song lyrics, as you may wish to include these in your eulogy. Pay attention to random ideas that keep popping into your head. When I was writing Grant's eulogy, the image and thought of a barn cat kept returning. After consideration, I made the connection as to why and tied that into his tribute.

Part 1

1) Introduce yourself and state how you know the person who just died. Many people attending the funeral will not know who you are- even if you are a child of the deceased. If you are not a family member, you may also wish to include how long you've known this person; it puts things in context for the listener.

Parts 2, 3 and 4- look to the brainstormed notes referenced above

2) In this section, tell about their role in terms of their family and their profession. You may wish to tell a story or two shared by their family member(s) or their employer or employees with a reminder that the goal is not to list their resume but rather, how they will be remembered or what legacy they left.
3) Mention their avocation or recreation. Think about how they embraced life and enjoyed what it had to offer. Include their faith and spirituality if it played an important role in their life.
4) Infuse and fold in descriptors about their preferences or tendencies throughout the above two sections to better create a picture of the deceased's character and sensibilities.

Part 5

5) As the eulogy comes to a close, it should draw to an end with a feeling of hopefulness. State or restate from above the ways in which the person positively impacted those around them, what was learned from them, and how they will be remembered and leave a legacy.

A few tips for delivering the eulogy.

If you are not accustomed to public speaking, here are some tips to help you.

*Type the eulogy double-spaced. It will be easier to track while reading. Use your left thumb to track the sentences while you're moving down the page. This will help you keep track of where you are when you lift your eyes to look around the room.

*The eulogy needn't be memorized. Reading from your notes is acceptable. However, you will want to be familiar enough with the content so that as you are presenting it, it is as though you are talking, not reading. It will also allow you to make eye contact with the audience.

To do this, you will need to:

*Practice it. Practice it in front of the mirror. Notice if there are parts that are emotionally painful for you. They tend to crop up in the same place(s).

*Read, go slowly, and remember to project with your voice as you look around the room between sentences.

*It's ok if you get choked up. We are all human and it is normal and to be expected. If this happens, pause, take a deep breath exhaling all the way.

Writing and delivering a eulogy is both an honor and a privilege. You are giving the deceased's family and community a gift by taking on this role. And while doing so, you are supporting your own grief and healing.