

Ways to Participate: Finding Your Role in the Ceremony

A Relective Guide

There is no one right way to show up.
Only the way that feels right to you.

This guide is practical and exploratory.

It helps you consider how you might want to be involved, based on your comfort, capacity, and your relationship with the person who died.

*That relationship may feel clear.
It may feel complicated.
It may be somewhere in between.*

*This guide focuses on options and choice.
You can take what fits.
You can leave what doesn't.*



Ways to Participate

Not everyone participates in the same way.

Some people speak.

Some people do.

Some people organise.

Some people simply sit and witness.

All of these are forms of participation.

There is no right way to be involved.

Only what feels manageable.

Only what feels true for you.

Participation Looks Different for Everyone

Grief affects energy, confidence, and capacity.

You might feel clear about what you want to do.

You might feel unsure.

You might change your mind.

You might want to be visible.

You might prefer to stay in the background.

You might feel deeply connected.

You might feel distant, or unsure how you feel.

All of this is normal.

Participation is not about performance.

It is about connection,

in whatever form that takes for you.

Starting With Presence

You do not have to do anything.
Being there is participation.

Sitting.
Listening.
Witnessing.

Holding your own thoughts.
Holding space for others, if that feels possible.

This is enough.

There is no need to take on a role if it feels like too much.

Presence, on its own, carries meaning.

Behind-the-Scenes Roles

Participation is not always visible.

Some of the most important contributions happen quietly.

This might include:

- greeting people as they arrive
- handing out programs
- organising photos or music
- helping coordinate the day
- preparing food or supporting the gathering afterwards

These roles help hold the structure of the day.

They support others to arrive, to settle, to feel cared for.

This kind of involvement matters just as much as anything that happens at the front.

If you're interested in selecting music, my guide on shaping sound may be helpful.

[Music as Ritual: Shaping Sound in a Funeral Ceremony.](#)

Speaking Roles

Some people choose to use words.

This might include:

- reading a poem or passage
- sharing a memory
- offering a short reflection or toast

There is no expectation to be polished.
Simple is enough.

You might speak for a few minutes.
You might speak for a few lines.

If speaking feels right, it can help to ask:

- What do I want people to understand or remember?
- Is there something I want to acknowledge or name?
- What feels honest for me to say?

Your words do not have to tell a whole story.

They only need to reflect your experience.

If speaking does not feel possible, you can:

- write something for someone else to read
- record your words
- include your writing in a printed program

Your words still have a place, even if you are not the one who speaks them.

If you're unsure what to say, you might find support in my guides on writing a tribute or choosing readings.

[A Guide to Finding Your Words](#)

[A Guide To Choosing Poetry](#)

Action-Based Roles

Sometimes grief lives in the body.

Action can give it somewhere to go.

This might include:

- lighting a candle
- placing flowers or objects
- carrying or accompanying the coffin
- pouring water, sand, or another symbolic gesture
- inviting others to take part in a shared action

These roles can be done alone or alongside others.
They can be quiet and simple.
They can be shared across many people.

Action can offer something words cannot.

A way to move.
A way to express.
A way to be present.

If you're drawn to symbolic actions, my ritual guide offers ideas you can adapt.

[Creating Personal Funeral Rituals](#)

Or explore my blog on ritual here:
[The Role of Rituals and the Power of Symbolism](#)

Choosing What Fits

If you are unsure where you sit, you might gently ask yourself:

How much energy do I have?

Do I want to be seen, or would I rather stay in the background?

Do I feel comfortable speaking, or not at all?

Would I rather do something practical?

What feels like it honours this person, or reflects my relationship with them, however that relationship looked?

You might write a few thoughts down, or simply sit with these questions.

You do not have to decide quickly.

You can take your time.
You can change your mind.

Whatever you choose,
large or small, visible or quiet,

it is enough.

