

First, I want to thank everyone for being here today to share in the joy, love, and impact my mom had on this world. I knew my mom's passing was inevitable at some point. I knew her presence was a huge part of my life. I understood that losing her would leave a hole, but I was completely unprepared for the magnitude of the loss I would feel and all the areas of my life she touched.

When people ask me to describe my mom, I've always said she was my biggest cheerleader. This wasn't so much because of what she said, but because of how she made me feel. With my mom, I always knew I had someone in my corner, believing in me, supporting me, and convincing me that nothing was out of reach. Whether it was doing stand-up comedy, changing careers, or going back to college in my forties, she made me feel unstoppable, even in moments of doubt. Her cheerleading wasn't just about pushing me to grow; ultimately, she just wanted me to be happy. Even when those decisions were difficult for her—like when I moved to California—she supported and encouraged me anyway.

My mom was the most nurturing person I think has ever existed on this planet. Many of you may not know this, but she was so nurturing that even bees loved her. We used to call her a bee charmer because bees would land on her, and she could simply walk them outside or cup them gently in her hand. She could mend anything from my favorite skirt, a broken toy, or my broken heart, with a hug, a kiss, or by letting me curl up in her lap while she rubbed my head. She could make an "owie" feel better, make medicine taste better, comfort me after a nightmare, and even as an adult, she somehow remained my soft place to fall.

She had this incredible ability to pick me up and keep me going during the times I didn't have the strength to hold myself up. There were moments when life felt too heavy, and my house reflected the chaos in my heart. My mom would come over, sit with me, and slowly help me put my house and my life back in order, one small step at a time. It wasn't about her doing the work; it was about the support and clarity she gave me so I could do it.

One of the most frustrating and comforting things about my mom is that she was an empath. She knew when I'd had a bad day before I even walked through the door. Half the time, she knew what I was feeling before I did. Sometimes it felt invasive, because for whatever reason I wasn't ready to talk about or even acknowledge what I was feeling. But it was also deeply consoling to be seen and understood without having to say a single word.

While my mom worked hard to make life magical and special, she did it in the most beautiful everyday ways. She kept a strong relationship with Santa, so he continued to deliver gifts to the Gallaher's long past our childhoods. She made our costumes by hand, painted our sliding glass door with holiday-themed Charlie Brown or Sesame Street scenes, and she could turn a storm into a prime-time light show. We'd turn out all the lights, build a fire, and watch the thunder and lightning together as a family.

Ultimately, it was the simple everyday things that she made the most special. We loved welcoming our favorite season; fall, by making nuts and bolts (also known as Chex Mix). My mom made it for as long as I can remember, and then I took over as she became unable to. We also had the tradition of watching *Hocus Pocus* as I decorated the house while she directed me from the couch. The last few years, we added *Hocus Pocus 2* to the tradition, even though we

always agreed the first one was better. It was a way for me to care for her in the same way she had cared for me. And at Thanksgiving, we had the Annual Thanksgiving Airing of *The Bad Seed* because nothing says “family holiday bonding” quite like a 1956 thriller about an eight-year-old psychopathic killer. It became one of those perfectly weird traditions that made us laugh and feel close.

When I think about the moments I loved most with my mom, I think about wandering the aisles of Fred Meyer. We had some of our deepest, most connected conversations there. It was the place where we could solve the world’s problems between the home goods and the frozen foods. I would somehow open up about whatever feeling I wasn’t ready to share before as we strolled down the dairy section, and she would tell me about whatever was on her mind: challenges at work, something weighing heavy on her heart, or how my dad had once again forgotten to wipe down the kitchen counter while sharing a dressing room. As we wandered down the cleaning aisle, we just... talked. Really talked. As my mom’s mobility declined, we both missed those afternoons, and we always brainstormed ways we might make one more trip together.

I moved into my parents’ condo complex in 2019 so I could be closer and help care for my mom. On weekends, I would walk over with my dog, Angus, in the mornings to walk their dog, Finnegan. My mom would usually still be in bed, and when I came back from walking the dogs, I’d crawl in bed next to her or sit in the bedroom, and we would talk. My dad would wander in, and we’d all just be together. I didn’t realize how special that time was until after she passed. Even though I saw her every day, those quiet mornings were when we connected on the deepest level.

Throughout my entire life, my mom and I said “I love you” all the time; every time we left each other, hung up the phone, or even when we were just sitting next to each other on the couch. We even created a special handshake that we shared every time I walked out the door. Those little rituals, simple and constant, became the foundation of our relationship. They weren’t just habits; they were reminders that no matter what was happening in our lives, our love was steady, present, and never taken for granted. Those moments are stitched into me, and they’re memories I will carry with me for the rest of my life.

My mom’s love, kindness, and joy were felt in every corner of our lives, and even though she is no longer here in person, her spirit will always be with us. She taught me how to care deeply, laugh fully, and find magic in everyday moments. I see her in the little things; the way I cook, the way I hug, the way I make time for the people I love. While I will always miss her, I am grateful for every moment we shared, every lesson she taught me, and every memory that reminds me of her. Today, as we celebrate her life, I hold on to the love she gave so freely and the example she set for all of us. Her legacy of joy, compassion, and unwavering love will live on in each of us who were lucky enough to know her.