

Say What You Say

As far as fluid drafts go, my first essay of this semester was the Aquaman of the written word. It took on new forms like a hydra, and I struggled from the beginning with making it concise. This assignment was all about saying exactly what you want to say, no more, no less. As it were, I chose the toughest topic I had ever attempted, which made for many revisions before I got to the draft included in my portfolio. This was a very personal essay, and it marked my first time writing about my family. In the first draft, I opened my essay with some random thoughts about the prompt, some of which I cut and others that I moved elsewhere. What I have included below become the new introduction in the second draft and onward.

First Draft:

Rarely will I have nothing to say, even when there is nothing to be said.

And some will say this is a flaw, no doubt.

Myself included.

But, it is a skill that has served me well, and one that I have come to like about myself.

And there are so few of those things for most people.

I get this from my Mother, the most likeable person I know.

The woman who raised me and my brothers always had a lot to say, when it needed to be said.

She is always well-spoken, and chooses her words carefully.

She is a natural leader, someone you could easily take for granted, and miss entirely when they are gone.

A person you might go to when you are in trouble.

Or when you need someone to talk to, because the silence is too much.

She is also a felon, but more on that later.

I am not very proud of this paragraph's merit, but I like that it has emotion involved. It is the first draft I liked enough to keep writing more afterward. I almost immediately recognized the first and last sentences as holding their own, and those sentences stay the same throughout all

coming iterations of this passage. Almost every other sentence gets significant edits going forward.

Second Draft:

Rarely will I have nothing to say, even when there is nothing to be said.

I get this from my Mother, the most likeable person I know.

The woman who raised me and my two brothers always has a lot to say, but only when it needs to be said. ¹ I try to soften this line, not sure why.

She is outspoken, well-spoken, and chooses her words carefully. ² I liked my usage of "outspoken" and "well-spoken" here, since the two are not always mutual. It had a nice ring to it in writing.

She is a leader, someone you could easily take for granted, and long for when they are gone. ³ This was better than the first draft, but still too cheesy.

A person you might go to when you are in trouble. ⁴ "Might" is a bad choice here, too conditional and not concrete enough. It makes my mom sound less reliable.

Or when you need someone to talk to. ⁵ Bad grammar and awkward.

She is also a felon, but more on that later.

In this draft of my essay I placed the passage above as the lead-in to the first paragraph, and I think this helped the essay tremendously. It was a suggestion from a peer review, and a great one. At this point, I started to open up to myself about the topic at hand as well, and also to focus on fixing the stream-of-consciousness feel that the original draft showed. I took out the self-effacing speech at the beginning and instead brought the focus to my mom a lot faster. I liked this version well enough, but it seemed a bit cheesy and I wasn't happy with some of the word choices I had made. I went into my third draft looking to cut the fat and spice things up.

Third Draft:

Rarely will I not have anything to say, even when there's nothing to be said.

I get this from my Mom.

She is the most likeable person I know. ⁶ In the spirit of concision, I decided to try
the second

Someone you might take for granted, and recognize when they are gone. ¹² I chose to use "recognize" instead of "notice" on account of it having more of a precedent. As in, you don't just notice my mother, you RECOGNIZE her. With gifts of frankincense and myrrh.

A person you turn to when you are in trouble.

Or when you need to bend an ear.

She is also a felon, but more on that later.