

# What to Read When You're Grieving

## *Making Sense of the Journey*

**B**ereavement is an often-lonely journey. Many people in grief, however, find solace in reading about other people who have made the journey—discovering strategies that work, ideas about coping, and explanations of what the terrain ahead might include.

We have prepared this list of “best books” to encourage you on the pathway. If you are looking for books to help you face your grief, you will find no better starting point than these.


*How To Go On Living When Someone You Love Dies* by Therese A. Rando (Bantam Doubleday, 1988).

This useful volume is an excellent resource for the person in grief, explaining many of the disturbing experiences of bereavement. Though most people in early grief have difficulty concentrating to read, this book’s organization make it easy to find help fast.

*The Grieving Teen: A Guide for Teenagers and Their Friends* by Helen Fitzgerald (Simon & Schuster, 2000). Fitzgerald has used the stories of teens to help teens, and the author’s creative numbering and cross-referencing of sections makes it easy for a teen to quickly find what he or she needs at the moment. With each of the 111 topics Fitzgerald treats, she offers a section entitled “What You Can Do” that provides practical, useful ideas for adolescents (as well as those who care for them.)

*When Parents Die: A Guide for Adults* by Edward Myers (Penguin, 1986). Filled with sensitive, practical help, this book explores the experiences of adult children when a parent dies. Whether a parent dies after a long, debilitating illness or suddenly in an accident, murder, or suicide, the son or daughter will find help for dealing with the shock, sadness, and guilt that accompany a parent’s death. In addition to the chapters on how we face these losses, caregiving professionals and volunteers will find the sections on settling estates, family and personal changes, and support groups to be very useful.

*The Grieving Child: A Parent’s Guide* by Helen Fitzgerald (Simon & Schuster, 1992). One of the most practical resources for parents and professionals alike, this book provides helpful



information in a question/answer format. Fitzgerald addresses trauma situations (like explaining suicide to children), funeral attendance, developmental concepts of death, and shares a multitude of other ideas.

*Sudden Money: Managing a Financial Windfall* by Susan Bradley and Mary Martin (John Wiley, 2000). Unlike many books on financial management today, this one deals with both the financial and emotional aspects of receiving a large sum of money. After overviewing some principles for managing money after a “windfall,” the authors explore the unique dynamics of several different kinds of windfalls such as an inheritance, a divorce settlement, or winning the lottery. The book ends with a list of “universal do’s and don’ts” for managing a large sum of money.

*The Gift of Peace* by Joseph Cardinal Bernardin (Image/Doubleday, 1997). Reflecting on his life dying from pancreatic cancer, this leading figure of the Roman Catholic Church in the U.S. shares his intimate struggle of diagnosis, personal issues, and discovery of the peace his soul experiences in the latter chapter of his life.

*Dying Well: The Prospect for Growth at the End of Life* by Ira Byock (Riverhead, 1998). Written by a renowned hospice physician, *Dying Well* brings readers to the homes and bedsides of families with whom Dr. Byock has worked. He artfully tells their stories of love and reconciliation in the face of pain. His chapters on accepting care when one feels like a burden and writing one's family story are excellent.

*A Grace Disguised* by Gerald L. Sittser (Zondervan, 1998). After a tragic accident took the life of the author's wife, mother, and young daughter, he chronicles his discoveries about the true meaning of God's grace in such epic tragedy. He concludes that when we come to the end of ourselves, we are in a place to receive the grace only God can provide.

*Grievors Ask: Answers to Questions About Death and Loss* by Harold Ivan Smith (AugsburgFortress, 2004). This excellent compendium of ideas, written in a convenient Q&A format, provides insights from one of North America's best loved bereavement professionals. Harold Ivan Smith has done a masterful job of dealing with the common issues faced by newly bereaved people, including the duration of grief, questions about God, dealing with forgiveness, and chapters specifically related to parental grief and the bereavement of a child.

*How to Survive the Loss of a Child: Filling the Emptiness and Rebuilding Your Life* by Catherine A. Sanders (Three Rivers Press, 1992). Following her own experience with the death of a young adult

child, Dr. Sanders reflects on her understandings of bereavement and the chaos that was part of those early months. She provides compassionate, practical advice and perspective for other parents from one who "has been there."

*Widowed* by Joyce Brothers (Ballantine, 1990). After an 18-month battle with cancer, Dr. Milton Brothers died, leaving his well-know psychologist wife as a widow. In this readable book, Dr. Brothers tells her story and the stories of countless others with whom she has worked. She ends the book with a laundry list of one-page practical suggestions for dealing with the widow's new station in life.

*Healing After the Suicide of a Loved One* by Ann Smolin and John Guinan. (Fireside, 1993). Written especially for the surviving family members and friends of people who complete suicide, the book's individual chapters are titled with some of the key emotional experiences of the journey to healing—denial, guilt, shame and ostracism, ambivalence, and depression. The authors also devote a chapter to what they call "Pitfalls of the Healing Process" in which they discuss the survivor's contemplation of suicide, dealing with anniversaries, dangers in substance abuse, and the importance of maintaining physical well-being. One of the book's more helpful contributions is the individual chapters devoted to specific kinds of suicide: parents, children, spouses, and siblings. Great referral sources round out this volume.

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