



COPING WITH LOSS:

*From Heartache to Healing*

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## Introduction

The experience of a loss connects you to all people—spanning every continent and every epoch. Yet, it is also a singular, solitary experience. No one else will respond to this loss exactly as you do; no one will be able to define, exactly, your response.

But, most likely, your feelings today will change several months from now, and change yet again a year from now, and then change even further as time continues to pass.

And however your emotions shift, it can be comforting to know how other people—laborers, scientists, fathers, mothers—have responded to *their* losses.

In this collection, you'll find emotions running the gamut from anger to acceptance, from

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wrenching sorrow to faith in an afterlife. Some of these passages may affirm your perspective, others may be antithetical to your beliefs. But somewhere in these pages someone has expressed thoughts and feelings similar to your own.

Here, then, are the observations and wisdom from people who have survived the death of someone dear to them.

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I will always love you . . . and my last breath will be made easier by the hope of joining you. It's all the breaths I must draw between now and then that worry me.

—Gordon Livingston, in *Only Spring*



You cannot prevent the birds of sorrow from flying over your head, but you can prevent them from building nests in your hair.

—Chinese proverb



We are not primarily put on this earth to see through one another, but to see one another through.

—Peter De Vries, writer



This life is only a prelude to eternity. For that which we call death is but a pause, in truth a progress into life.

—Lucius Annaeus Seneca,  
statesman and dramatist



*Great joys make us love the world.  
Great sadnesses make us  
understand the world.*

—Kent Nerburn, artist and theologian



The fact that we cannot see our friends or communicate with them after the transformation which we call death is no proof that they cease to exist.

—Walter Dudley Cavert



There is a sacredness in tears. They are not the mark of weakness, but of power. They speak more eloquently than 10,000 tongues. They are the messengers of overwhelming grief, of deep contrition, and of unspeakable love.

—Washington Irving, novelist and historian



And we ourselves shall be loved for a while and forgotten. But the love will have been enough; all those impulses of love return to the love that made them. Even memory is not necessary for love. There is a land of the living and a land of the dead, and the bridge is love, the only survival, the only meaning.

—Thornton Wilder,  
in *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*



### *The Precious Dividend*

It occurs to me that grief is neither a gift nor a curse although it may, at times, seem like both. Perhaps instead it is the dividend of our investment in, or commitment to, an individual or a group. Without investment there is no loss. Without loss there is no grief. We earn our grief with our investment in others. It is therefore a precious dividend not to be avoided or shunned, but embraced.

—Brian W. Flynn, in *Reflections on the Bombing in Oklahoma City*



While grief is fresh, every attempt to divert only irritates. You must wait till it be digested, and then amusement will dissipate the remains of it.

—Samuel Johnson, lexicographer



*To Remember Me*

If you must bury something,  
let it be my faults, my weaknesses, and all  
prejudices against my fellow man. . . .  
If, by chance, you wish to remember me,  
do it with a kind deed or word to someone  
who needs you.  
If you do all I have asked,  
I will live forever.

—Robert N. Test, poet



A long life may not be good enough,  
but a good life is long enough.

—Benjamin Franklin, statesman