

COPING WITH LOSS:

*From  
Heartache  
to  
Healing*



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to Healing*



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# *Table of Contents*

Introduction • I

Grieving • 3

Coping • 7

Lessons in Loss • II

Facing Mortality • 15

Healing • 19

Remembering • 23

## *Introduction*

Grief. It's a universal emotion that ties us to every generation and every culture that have ever peopled this planet. Its duration and intensity may vary among individuals, but it is one of the unifying elements of the human experience.

Grief has been the subject of numerous self-help books, the specialty of counselors and psychologists, and the topic of analytical research. It can be explained as a process—one in which the individual moves through “stages” of recovery. But it's rarely as orderly as some would have you believe.

It's messy, and painful, and personal.

And it changes over time. Which is why this collection of observations and insights is divided into six chapters: Grieving, Coping, Lessons in Loss, Facing Mortality, Healing, and Remembering. It's a book you can read a little at a time, in no particular sequence. You may want to skip sections, or start at the back instead of the front—whatever you wish.

On these pages are expressions of anguish and renewal spanning centuries and countries. Some will mirror your own perspective; others may challenge your beliefs. But somewhere you'll find a special passage that illuminates your particular experience of loss and, in that moment, will provide some solace for your sorrow.

When you are sorrowful look again in your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight.

—Kahlil Gibran, poet and philosopher



In the face of adversity we are not permitted to ask, “Why me?” You can ask but you won’t get an answer. Maybe you are the instrument who is left behind to perpetuate the life that was lost and appreciate the time you had with it.

—Erma Bombeck, humorist

*Along the Road*

I walked a mile with Pleasure  
She chattered all the way  
But left me none the wiser  
For all she had to say.

I walked a mile with Sorrow  
And ne'er a word said she  
But oh the things I learned from her  
When Sorrow walked with me.

—Robert Browning Hamilton, poet



We are defined by whom we have lost.

—Anna Quindlen, columnist and author

You can clutch the past so tightly to your chest that it leaves your arms too full to embrace the present.

—Jan Glidewell, columnist



I know for certain that we never lose the people we love, even to death. They continue to participate in every act, thought, and decision we make. Their love leaves an indelible imprint in our memories. We find comfort in knowing that our lives have been enriched by having shared their love.

—Leo Buscaglia, educator



[W]here there is spiritual union with other people, the love one feels for them keeps the circle unbroken and the bond between us and them strong, whether they are dead or alive. Perhaps that is one of the manifestations of heaven on earth.

—Alice Walker, in *Living by the Word*



Set me as a seal upon your heart,  
for love is stronger than death.

—Song of Songs



I found him nearest when I missed him most;  
I found him in my heart . . .  
A light I knew not till my soul was dark.

—George MacDonald, in “Lost and Found”