

There is a way out of grief. It will take time, but the pain will lessen, and your heart will heal. You will survive, and this book shows you how.

Surviving

Finding Your Way from Grief to Healing

by Gary Sturgis

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Chapter 5

This Sucks!

I remember standing in the receiving line at the funeral services as people walked through to offer me their condolences. In my overwhelming grief, I don't remember anything anyone said to me except the usual words they say at a funeral like, "I'm so sorry for your loss" and "Let me know if there is anything I can do for you." None of these well-intentioned offerings brought me any comfort.

In the line was a friend of mine who had lost her husband a few years back. When it was her turn to approach me, she hugged me and whispered in my ear, "This sucks." Six years later, that is the only meaningful thing I remember was said to me on that day. It was the only sentiment that fit the way I was feeling inside. Grief does suck, and she knew firsthand how I felt standing there because she had stood in the same place before me. After the funeral, she was the person I would seek out to talk to on some of my darkest days.

A major loss can hurt more than we ever imagined, and the hurt can last longer than we thought it ever would. We

also can't understand how our emotions become a tangled mess during the process. We struggle with the isolation we feel. We are surprised by our lack of patience for all the things going on around us. We have a lack of tolerance for insensitive things that are said to us. Some things just don't matter to us anymore.

Let me be perfectly honest, "grief definitely sucks"! It's hard. It's also a very natural response to loss. But you CAN work through your grief in a healthy and healing way. Perhaps not as quickly as you would like to, but you can work through your grief and lead a healthy, happy, and productive life again.

I'm pointing all this out, (not that I feel I need to), but more to assure anyone who's grieving that you are feeling "normal." You are certainly not alone. Being on a grief journey can make you feel like you're going crazy. You're not! What you are feeling is not only normal, it's "perfectly normal."

Set your mind on the truth that you will find a way through grief, and you will learn to live again. Not only live a life, but a happy life. A fulfilling life that includes joy, love, laughter, and of course occasional grief and tears.

Adjusting your heart and mind in a positive direction can be a powerful way to start healing your grief and pain. To help you do this it may be beneficial to speak to a trained grief counselor or even a supportive friend who has suffered a similar loss in their past.

I believe making this positive adjustment as early as possible can help you become more accepting of your loss. It will give you the courage and strength to carry on. Not only on the good days, but on the bad days when you need it the most. There are many other people who have gone on their own difficult grief journey before you, and they have discovered this guidance to be true. If you continually work on being positive, although hard at times, it can also be true for you.

Grief is hard. But it's not the end. It's the beginning of a change in your life and you alone can determine how that change will direct your life moving forward.

Now when I attend the funeral of a friend or relative, I always say to them, "I know this sucks!"

Chapter 36

Being Alone Doesn't Mean Being Lonely

Loneliness is always a topic that comes up in my grief support groups. Everyone struggles with being alone after a loved one dies.

Being alone is only negative if that is how you choose to see it. It can be an opportunity to grow, develop, and explore. It can be difficult and frightening but also exciting and satisfying. So, don't be afraid.

I had a woman in one of my Partner/Spouse Loss support groups who lost her husband. (I'll call her "Carol"). In one of the sessions, all the members were discussing how lonely they were without their significant others. They were talking about how empty the house was and how hard it was to live alone. To do anything.

Carol remained quiet throughout the discussion when suddenly she said, "I understand the loneliness, and I felt it

for a long time, but now I see my time alone as an adventure.”

Some of the other group members were aghast at this comment. But Carol went on to explain that she was tired of feeling lonely, so she decided to make this life she never wanted an adventure, an opportunity to grow as a person.

She told them how she always hated her bedroom with all its masculine touches so she decorated it with all the floral designs she loved and set up the guest room as an art studio for painting, a passion she never had the time to pursue.

When the holidays got too lonely for her, she volunteered wrapping presents at the local shopping mall and gave the proceeds to the local AIDS foundation that supported those that were sick and alone at the holidays. She continued to do this each year. She made many new friends through this volunteer position.

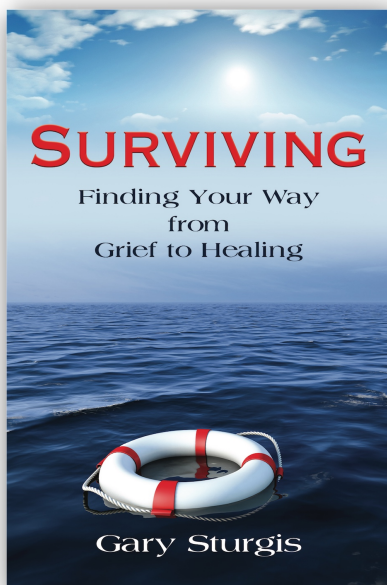
She joined a widow’s club travel group and began to explore all the places in the world she always dreamed of seeing but never got the chance because her husband was always working.

Carol explained it wasn’t easy to do all this, but it was also exciting, and she found joy in living again.

The loneliness after a loved one dies is very difficult, but as Carol discovered, we can turn those negative feelings into positive feelings. We can create a new life that is satisfying

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and joyful. We will never stop missing our loved one, but we can move forward as if every day is a new adventure.



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