

*SURVIVING GRIEF: 365 Days a Year is a follow-up to Gary's bestselling book *Surviving - Finding Your Way from Grief to Healing*.*

**SURVIVING GRIEF: 365 Days a Year**  
By Gary Sturgis

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*A Daily Companion*

# **SURVIVING**

# *Grief*

**365 DAYS A YEAR**



**Gary Sturgis**

AUTHOR OF

**SURVIVING — Finding Your Way from Grief to Healing**

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## **JULY 12**

### **It's Not Permanent**

After my spouse died, I was a year out and still crying all the time. I thought to myself, "Will I ever feel not sad again?" I knew the answer was yes, I would.

Not only because I've been through loss multiple times, but because nothing in this life is forever. It's hard to look up from the darkness of grief in search of the light you can't see yet.

But I promise it's there, and while your life will never be the same, you'll experience joy again, and eventually, when you think of the person you lost, the memory will bring more smiles than tears. If you can't find the light, don't be afraid to ask for help. Speak to a friend or family member, find a grief counselor or support group.

Facing our own mortality is never comfortable. My spouse's death was another brutal reminder to me how short this life is and what legacy I want to leave.

Take advantage of every day that you have in this lifetime. Grief provides you with a selfish opportunity to be introspective about the life you want to live.

What do you want to do more of in your life? Do more of those things. What makes you unhappily wish away days? Get rid of those things.

Think about who you want to be remembered by, and how they will remember you, and focus on being that person and living that life. Remember that the horrible way you feel now isn't permanent; grief is teaching you what's important and what's not.

When our mind is wrapped up in work, bills, responsibilities, and so much more, it's easy to go through the motions of life. Sometimes the days become

routine, and one rolls into another. We've got things to do and little time to get it all done.

It can be challenging to quiet the chatter in our head, to look at the person in front of us, and to speak, listen, and interact with them like they matter. Often with strangers and even more so with the people we love.

They're the ones we take for granted. Sometimes our grief blinds us to their presence. They forgive us time and time again. But is that what we want?

If you died today, what do you want those closest to you to know? Do they know how you feel about them? How much they mean to you? Do they understand how important they are to you?

Tell them! Leave nothing unsaid.

Love like today could be your last because you never know if it is.

## **JULY 13**

### **Finding Peace**

I was walking on the beach and wishing that my dad was still here. As I looked out over the ocean, I realized that he's not really gone, he's just changed. He was there on the sand, in the air, in the wind, on the water, and most of all in my heart.

I realized that what I was trying to cope with was not a loss but a change.

I've never really liked change. I tend to resist it. I'm always trying to stay in my current state of comfort and security because change is hard! Life is a constant change, like the loss of someone you love. When someone you love dies, they change, then life changes and you have to change.

My dad might not be a person in the sense of a human being anymore, but he is a part of the world somehow. I don't know how, but I know he is.

I believe that the people we think we lose transform into something else and move on to the next stage of life. They're still here but not in the same way as before. I think my dad is in everything I've learned from him, and he's also in my heart and memories.

In my mind my dad isn't gone, he's just changed into something I can't understand and that somehow brings me comfort and peace. Everything has changed since my dad died. Nothing feels the same. After such a traumatic change, the only way I can really cope with it is to change myself.

I knew when my dad died nothing could bring him back. I just have to keep moving forward. I know I can't go back.

I have to accept the change because if I don't, I won't ever find peace. My life feels broken, but it isn't, it's just different.

My dad isn't gone, he's just different. Instead of wishing my dad could come back, I'm accepting the change, and that's helping me find peace.

## **JULY 14**

### **Fake It Until You Make It**

You've heard the phrase 'fake it until you make it.' It's a phrase used to inspire you to accomplish a seemingly insurmountable goal.

After my spouse died, many people offered me advice about how to cope with grief. Some argued the importance of taking care of myself along the journey. On the other hand, most suggested that the only way to 'get over' death was to 'fake it until I made it.' Like somehow if I just pretended that everything was okay, after a while things would be okay.

Now when I look back on that advice, I can see its absurdity. At the time, however, I applied the method for a while in hopes that I'd quickly bounce back from my devastating loss. But what happens when you 'fake it until you make it' until you can't anymore? Despite my best effort, grief worked its way into every aspect of my life. Concentrating became increasingly difficult. Memories flooded my mind at every turn. Sleep evaded me, I felt like I couldn't breathe, and my chest felt as if a brick sat firmly on it with no relief in sight.

I tried to fake it; I really did! Fake smiles. Fake focus. Fake listening. Fake laughter. This is what so many told me would help. It's what I thought I needed. It's not true! All my faking did was land me in the doctor's office, with him saying, "Everything looks just fine." But things were far from fine. "What's the problem?" I continued to ask myself. Little did I know that the answer to my question would be found in a hospice chaplain's office.

Months after my spouse died, I sat across the room from a hospice chaplain who listened to depths of pain I'd never shared with anyone else. Session after session I resisted grief. It wasn't me. I hated it. So, I faked my way through week after week.

After a dozen or so sessions, I continued to feel exhausted. I finally admitted to her how terrible I felt. I shared, and she listened. Then one day she leaned towards me in her chair and gently asked, "What would it look like if you



relaxed into the pain of your loss?" In other words, "You won't be able to fake it 'til you make it with this one."

I'd love to say that in an instant, I dropped the veil I'd worked so hard to hide behind and surrendered. What really happened is I became angry. I mean, how dare she ask me to do something so impossible! But, it became clearer as my stress continued to mount, I could no longer fake my way through grief.

This compassionate and caring hospice chaplain taught me, over the course of several sessions, how to FACE IT until I made it.

How to relax into the pain of my grief. Sit with it. Express my feelings in the midst of it. She taught me that faking it, was keeping me from 'making it.'

Visit my *Surviving Grief* website at  
**www.sgrief.com**

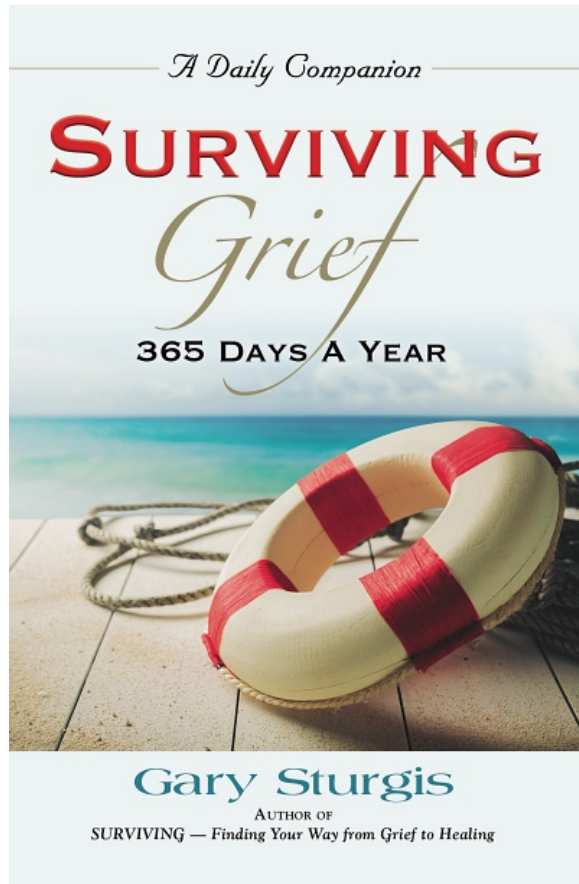
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If you have any comments, questions, or  
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directly at: **gary@sgrief.com**

I look forward to hearing from you!

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