

WHAT FEEDS YOUR SOUL? offers gentle reflections and compassionate guidance for those journeying through grief—helping you tend to your spirit, honor memories, and find comfort, strength, and light amid loss.

**What Feeds Your Soul?:
Finding Light in the Shadow of Grief
By Gary Sturgis**

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GARY STURGIS

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF
SURVIVING GRIEF – 365 DAYS A YEAR

WHAT FEEDS YOUR SOUL?

Finding Light in the Shadow of Grief

“A truly illuminating read.”

— Dr. Vivian Holloway, Grief Counselor

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Praise for

WHAT FEEDS YOUR SOUL?
Finding Light in the Shadow of Grief

Gary Sturgis offers us help as our souls cry out for comfort, perspective, and stability after the loss of a loved one. As Gary says, “we’re all just walking each other home, and our souls are hurting”. He again provides comfort and compassion for the grieving. In his books and in his Surviving Grief online community, Gary provides help for those suffering loss and tenderness for those of us who are broken.

Paul McNulty, Hospice Chaplain

Gary has done it again! WHAT FEEDS YOUR SOUL? – Finding Light in the Shadow of Grief hits on all the emotions I’ve heard people speak about during my time leading support groups. I believe that everyone who reads this book will be able to relate to the emotions and find comfort, affirmation, and hope. The way Gary writes is so heartfelt and honest that it’s refreshing. I will be using this book for future support groups; I know this is going to help people find light in the darkness.

Jessica D. Nason, Bereavement Facilitator

Refreshing! WHAT FEEDS YOUR SOUL? – Finding Light in the Shadow of Grief is a book on grief that touches all the places of the heart and mind. Having suffered many losses, including the deaths of two husbands, I wish I had had this book to read when I was going through the darkest parts of grief. Even now, it speaks to me of a continuing journey I’m on as I move forward

Gary Sturgis

in life. I commend Gary Sturgis for his ongoing work to help others and his vulnerability in sharing his own losses. I believe this book should be given to everyone who's suffered a loss.

Tanya L. Jacobs, PhD

With WHAT FEEDS YOUR SOUL? – Finding Light in the Shadow of Grief, Gary has again written a very relevant book that provides a heartfelt companion that helps the reader not only walk through the hardest periods of the grieving process but also offers practical ways to find a clear path to healing. As someone who's lost loved ones, I'm grateful for this resource!

Katie Louis-James, Writer & Grieving Mom

Also by Gary Sturgis

SURVIVING: Finding Your Way from Grief to Healing

GRIEF: Hope in the Aftermath

SURVIVING GRIEF: 365 DAYS A YEAR

The SURVIVING GRIEF Workbook

Disclaimer

This book is intended to provide general information and support for individuals experiencing loss and bereavement. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. The exercises and information contained within are meant to be used as self-help tools and should not be considered as therapy or counseling.

This book details the author's personal experiences with and opinions about grief and loss. The author is not a healthcare provider.

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This book provides content related to topics of physical and/or mental health issues. As such, use of this book implies your acceptance of this disclaimer.

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Chapter One:

Talking About Grief

In the immediate aftermath of losing someone you love, getting out of bed, taking a shower, and plodding on in the simplest of ways is an achievement, a sign that somehow, despite the pain and sometimes your own will, you're surviving.

Be proud of yourself! There's no *right* way to feel or act; no neat, linear path to recovery.

You know those *five stages of grief* you've heard of?

Swiss psychiatrist Dr Elizabeth Kübler-Ross first proposed them in her 1969 book, *On Death and Dying*, for people coming to terms with their own terminal illness, not the death of a loved one. They might reflect your personal experience of bereavement; they might not.

It's okay either way.

The one certainty in life is that we'll all die. Most of us will suffer major loss. It makes sense to be scared; our survival instinct is innate. But talking about death doesn't bring it about any sooner. It just makes us that little bit more prepared for something nobody can really prepare for.

It helps us better support those living our own biggest fears.

I sometimes feel like an alien in the company of those not yet in *The Club*. But never is the sense of isolation and otherness

more acute than when my grief goes unacknowledged. Contrary to what some people may believe, you do not say it best when you say nothing. We suffered an earthquake, and failing to mention what happened is akin to treating us as if all we felt was a tiny tremor.

It risks making us feel like you only want us around when we're jolly. When we can pretend everything is fine. When it's easy for you. In the throes of grief, it's hard to believe that you're staying silent for our sake.

Forget about platitudes.

"He's in a better place." No, he's not; he'd rather be here with us.

"You're so strong." Right now, I don't feel strong. Please let me just be vulnerable.

For those grieving and feeling alone, know that you aren't. Those of us in *The Club* know your pain, sorrow, and grief.

One of the ways I survived grief was to make it my friend.

Sounds strange, right? Wanting grief as a friend?

But hear me out, because it worked for me!

If I had a meeting at work or an event to go to, I would say to my grief, "You have to wait in the car. You can't be with me right now." When I get back I would need my friend again. I would say, "I'm back, and now I have time to cry with you."

Grief replaced my loved one, and so I needed a friend, and since grief was always with me, it became my best friend.

Grief will always be by my side. I'm sure other people I love will die. That's just life. But going forward, I'll be stronger because I already have a close and personal relationship with grief. It's now something I know and understand.

I never wanted to be a grief specialist. What little kid grows up saying, "Someday I want to spend all my time talking about grief." But what I've learned about grief is that the more knowledgeable we are about it, the easier it is to live with it.

Understanding grief helps us to have the courage to survive it.

There are not many people in the world who are able to say they've never experienced some form of grief. Loss touches everyone. What we decide to do with our grief and how we choose to live with it is a very personal journey.

The important thing to remember is that if we can embrace our grief, we can learn to honor what we lost. By honoring what we lost, we can learn to live again.

“Grief is like a language, we all speak it, some whisper, some shout, and some just hum along quietly, but in the end we’re all just trying to say the same thing in our own special way.”

Chapter Two:

We're All Just Walking Each Other Home

Everyone has an idea of what they expect grief to look or feel like. It's important to know that everyone grieves in unique ways, and it's okay if your grief is different than those around you. At times, you may even be unaware that you're grieving or that you've experienced a loss that deserves to be grieved.

Grief is based on the unique relationship you had with the person who died, as well as where you are in the grieving process.

There's no cure for grief. Trust me, if there were, I would be the first one to shout it out to the world.

I offer no guaranteed wisdom on how to survive your loss or grief, other than my own experiences and what I've learned along the way.

If you're reading this book looking for advice, you won't find it. I don't have all the answers. All I can do is share with you what I've learned on my own grief journey. And I've been on this road a long time. I'm sure I made a lot of mistakes, but I did learn from them.

You might find some things I tell you are helpful and other things I tell you aren't helpful at all.

This is probably because you're at a different place on your journey. That's why it's so hard to fit grief into any *one-size-fits-all* category.

If you follow my *Surviving Grief* Facebook page, you probably know that I always say, "we're all just walking each other home," and I truly believe that. Otherwise, I wouldn't say it. But we're not often walking side by side. Some of us are ahead of or behind the others. It's a busy road! With a lot of people walking it. But at least we know we're not alone.

The problem is, for some of us, grief becomes a competition. There's this need to let the world know that our grief is the worst grief. I guess in a sense it is because nobody can know or truly understand the depth of our loss and pain.

I hear things like, "the loss of a child is the worst loss," and "you can't compare the loss of a parent to the loss of a spouse." But loss is loss, and pain is pain. Sure, I lost my spouse, but does that make my pain any worse than the sweet little old lady who lives alone and lost her cat? I don't know her journey. Maybe she's never been married, has no children, family, or friends.

Maybe the only thing she ever truly loved was her cat.

I believe that when we make grief a contest and try to prove that our loss is any worse than anyone else's loss, we minimize their experience and grief.

And that's just wrong.

It's important to remember that we're all in this together, to support each other and show compassion and empathy. We can understand the pain of losing someone or something we love but we can't understand the level of the pain without knowing the nature of the relationship.

Grief is a really tough topic to talk about because although we're all suffering, we're doing it in very different ways and for very different reasons.

So, when you're reading anything about grief, if something brings you comfort, read it. If something upsets you, don't read it. You may not be at a place where you're ready to hear what's being said.

Be kind.

Be mindful of comments you make regarding someone's feelings about something they've read or said about their grief. What works for you may not work for someone else. Some comments can hurt, depending on someone's individual loss and grief experience.

The best way for anyone to help someone else is to just be present and meet them where they're at. We can never really know what someone else is going through unless we've walked in their shoes or lived their life. It's nobody's job to *fix* anyone else, and that includes me. All I want to do is be there for you as you're walking along, and if you stumble, I'll get down and help you up.

None of us knows another's journey; everyone is in a different place, and everyone's loss and grief is the worst loss, because it

belongs to them. I can say, “My grief is the worst!”, and so can you. We can all say that, because all grief is valid, but at the end of the day, when the rubber meets the road, we’re still all just walking each other home.

“Grief myths are like rumors at a high school reunion, everyone’s heard a different story, and somehow, they all claim to be the ‘official version’ of how you should feel.”

KEEP IN TOUCH WITH GARY

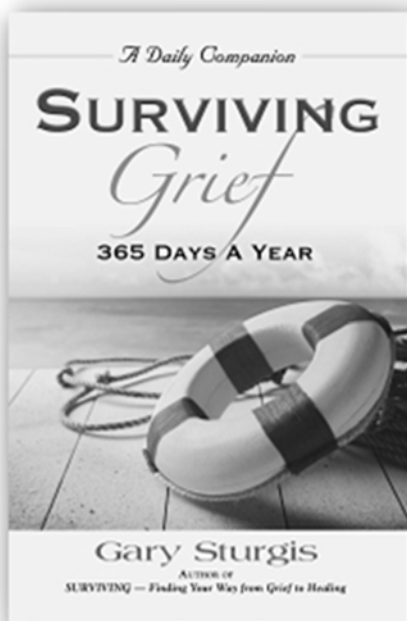
Visit the SURVIVING Grief website at www.sgrief.com

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Follow Gary Sturgis on Facebook at ***SURVIVING GRIEF***:
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If you have any comments, questions, or would like to share your own experiences with grief and healing, email Gary directly at: gary@sgrief.com

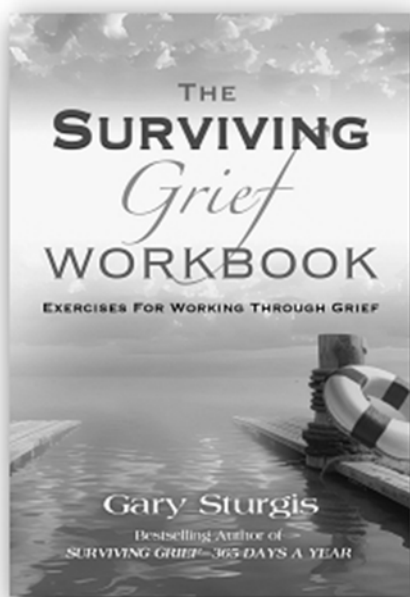
SURVIVING GRIEF: 365 Days a Year



In this bestselling book, Gary offers you reassuring guidance and comforting advice as you travel through your own personal grief journey. These easy-to-read daily reflections will help you find the courage and support you need.

The SURVIVING GRIEF Workbook

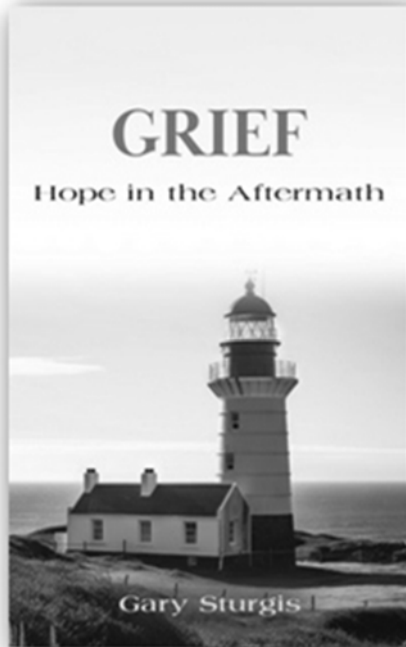
Exercises For Working Through Grief



In this companion workbook to Gary's bestselling book SURVIVING GRIEF - 365 DAYS A YEAR you'll come to understand through your own unique and personal experience with grief that you can work through the hurt and learn to live your life with more love than pain.

GRIEF

Hope in the Aftermath



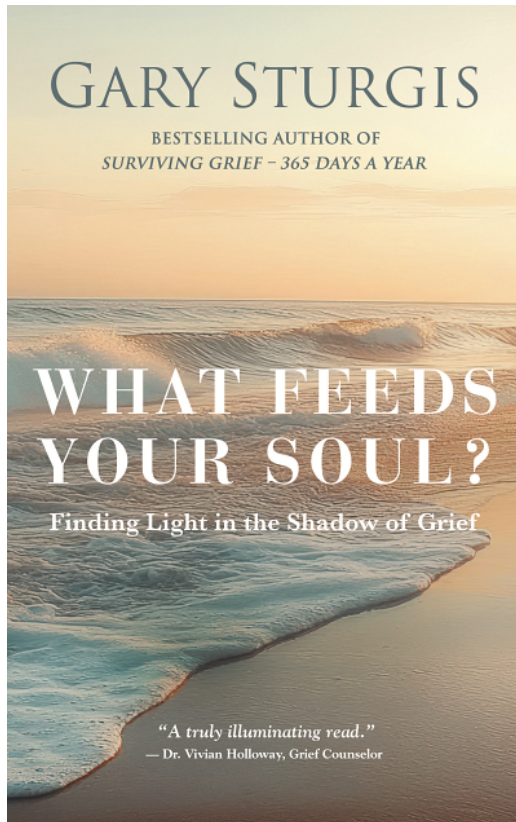
By sharing his own reflections and those of people he has encountered along the way, Gary puts the issues of life and death in perspective and ultimately gives us courage to move forward. Although we may never totally accept our loss or recover from our grief, Gary helps us find hope in the aftermath.

SURVIVING

Finding Your Way from Grief to Healing



Throughout this book, Gary offers you reassuring guidance and comforting advice as you travel through your personal grief journey. He uses his own path to healing as a reference together with lessons learned as a health care professional and volunteer grief counselor helping others.



WHAT FEEDS YOUR SOUL? offers gentle reflections and compassionate guidance for those journeying through grief—helping you tend to your spirit, honor memories, and find comfort, strength, and light amid loss.

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