

Books on Grief and Loss

In times of loss, it is difficult to dig through and find the resources that will help you. Here is a hand-picked list of books from our congregation that helped ease the journey of loss.

Angel Catcher: A Journal of Loss and Remembrance by Kathy and Amy Eldon

This is a journal to write in. Sometimes in grief it is too hard to figure out what to do, but there's a feeling that I want to record my memories of the person I've lost. This journal gives the beginnings of sentences that you can complete - with space to write a whole paragraph if you want. It probes your memory for those precious moments that you want to capture now.

Don't Sing Songs to a Heavy Heart by Dr. Kenneth C. Haugk

Dr. Haugk's book is a guide for relating to those who are suffering and showed me my solace in times of grief. "Hope does not negate pain" in grief. I am most comforted by feeling God's presence in the depths of my sorrow and being with kindred souls in silence.

Gmorning, Gnight!: Little Pep Talks for Me & You by Lin-Manuel Miranda and Jonny Sun

Three years into losing my parents and I wanted something to start reading now that will serve as a companion through the holidays. My friend, who recently lost her mom and is anti-affirmation and anti-sappy, recommended this book. Oddly, the short affirmations feel like a friend talking to me. It doesn't feel contrived, and it feels like it is from the heart.

Healing After Loss by Martha W. Hickman

These daily meditations include quotes from everyone & some Biblical quotes as well. Then, a short paragraph about a specific topic related to grief. It was my meditation each morning, followed by some journal writing, either on the topic or just whatever I was thinking about or feeling at the time.

I will not be broken by Jerry White

This is a self-help book I normally wouldn't look at. Perhaps because it was on the sale table, I did pick it up. The author lost his leg to a landmine at the age of 20. His theme is to make up your mind to be well & choose life, even when you've been given lemons! He goes through his own story & a 5 step process: Face facts, choose life, reach out, get moving, give back. My pastor said grief feels like slow motion & moving through jello. That was true for me for a very lengthy time. So, as I recall, get moving was the most important aspect for me at the time.

In the Midst of Winter: Selections from the Literature of Mourning, edited by Mary Jane Moffat

I like this book because the sections are short, and eloquently capture the quickly shifting emotions of grief, written by some of the best writers: from Shakespeare to Virginia Wolf, from Edna St Vincent Millay to José Luis Hidalgo. Arranged by "Seasons" the Winter, Spring, Fall and Summer of grief, this book is a good companion to help you find words when no words seem possible.

Opening Our Hearts, Transforming Our Losses by Al-Anon Family Groups

Reading this book gave me perspective on the deaths of my mother and stepfather. I read it a few years after my mother's passing, and it offered insight into the complex nature of those parental relationships. The book also addresses the broader nature of loss and its many manifestations in various life stages and events. It offered me comfort and hope, and I still re-read it occasionally.

Proof of Heaven by Eban Alexander

This book was published the year my husband passed away. The neurosurgeon author was on all the talk shows. His near-death experiences are vivid and transcending. This wasn't written by a quack, but by a well-respected surgeon, who understood all aspects of his experience from the medical standpoint, but was unprepared for the startling discoveries on a spiritual level. Some interesting events happened for me shortly after my husband's passing, which made me a "true" believer in some form of after-life. Dr. Alexander's experiences reinforced my own and those of others I talked with.

Soulwork by Bettyclare Moffatt

This book has been in my library long before my husband's passing. It covers many subjects: Forgiveness, resentment, health challenges, grief & death, replenishing the spirit. This book has been my friend for years. Its short stories fill my heart and soul.

The Year of Magical Thinking by Joan Didion

Joan Didion chronicles the emotions and thoughts of the year after she suddenly lost her husband. This book feels like a companion, like someone walking by my side. I like this book because of her excellent writing and her honesty in facing the huge difficulties of this time.

Suggested Book Series

The "Healing the Grieving Heart" series of books from Alan Wolfelt are good when your brain can't focus on reading. He has lists of simple, practical things you can do to help you through this time of grief. These are the types of things you might think of yourself if your brain weren't consumed with grief. Some of the titles are:

Healing the Adult Child's Grieving Heart: 100 Practical Ideas After Your Parent Dies

Healing a Child's Grieving Heart: 100 Practical Ideas for Families, Friends and Caregivers

When Your Soulmate Dies: A Guide to Healing Through Heroic Mourning

Healing a Spouse's Grieving Heart: 100 Practical Ideas After Your Husband or Wife Dies

Healing a Parent's Grieving Heart: 100 Practical Ideas After Your Child Dies

Healing the Adult Sibling's Grieving Heart: 100 Practical Ideas After Your Brother or Sister Dies

Understanding Your Suicide Grief: Ten Essential Touchstones for Finding Hope and Healing Your Heart