


# THE GRIEF GUIDEBOOK

Common Questions  
Compassionate Answers  
Practical Suggestions



# GARY ROE

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Practical Suggestions

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*The Grief Guidebook:*  
*Common Questions, Compassionate Answers, Practical Suggestions*  
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First Edition:

Print ISBN: 978-1-950382-44-6  
Print (KDP) ISBN: 978-1-950382-43-9  
eBook ISBN: 978-1-950382-45-3

Cover and Formatting: Streetlight Graphics

Published by: Healing Resources Publishing

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Thank you for purchasing  
*The Grief Guidebook: Common Questions,  
Compassionate Answers, Practical Suggestions.*

These pages are designed to be a companion  
for you in your grief journey.

Please don't read this book just once.

Pick it up again in six months or a year.

Come to it again and again.

Each time you will be at a different place.

You'll see your progress. You'll be encouraged.

And you'll find your hope has grown.

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# OTHER BOOKS BY GARY ROE

## **THE COMFORT SERIES**

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*Comfort for the Grieving Spouse's Heart: Hope  
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for Your Mind and Heart (Adult & Teen Editions)*



# WHAT THIS BOOK IS ALL ABOUT

Loss strikes. Our hearts are stunned. Our minds reel and spin. Our worlds are shaken.

Over the course of the days and weeks that follow, we begin to discover that life will never be the same. *We* will never be the same.

Someone special is missing.

Questions surface and begin to spill out. We try to make sense of it all. We wonder what this loss will mean for us and our families. We struggle with overwhelming emotions and troubling thoughts. We tussle with what to do and when.

Amid all this upheaval, we long for answers.

## WHERE I'M COMING FROM

My childhood was riddled with loss. By the time I was a teen, I was wondering if life was worth it. The number and depth of my losses continued to pile up throughout adulthood. My personal pain has spawned question after question along the way.

Over the past three-plus decades, I've had the honor of walking with thousands of grieving hearts through the dark valley of loss. All of them had heartbreaking, gut-wrenching stories of what and who they've lost over the years. The upheaval of such heavy losses can be traumatic and debilitating. I've trudged with them through the endless questions and wonderings.

Over time, I began to see that our questions about loss and grief have patterns to them. We all tend to ask most of the same questions,

just in different ways. Amid the coronavirus pandemic, I began hosting “Ask me anything about loss and grief” sessions on Zoom. The response was overwhelming. People came hungry to express what they were struggling with and hear some possible answers and suggestions. During and after these sessions, I received numerous comments and emails saying, “Thank you for doing this!”

After about a year of these sessions, my readers and subscribers convinced me to compile the most common questions I have been asked over the years along with some possible answers and suggestions about how to navigate the difficulties of the grief journey. The result is this book.

## HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

*The Grief Guidebook* is designed to meet you where you are in your grief and be a companion for you on your grief journey. Each chapter begins with a grieving heart speaking about the topic or question of that chapter. This is followed by some thoughts about that topic and some possible answers to that question. Each chapter ends with a grief affirmation followed by some possible tips and suggestions for handling that particular grief struggle.

There is no “right” way to read this book. You could move through the book from beginning to end, reading one chapter in each sitting. This allows you to tackle the content a bit at a time and let it soak in. Another approach would be to look at the table of contents and go to those topics you wonder about most. Tackle those first, and then go back through the rest of the book at your own pace.

I am confident you will know how to approach this book in the way that benefits you the most. Look to your heart. Do what makes the most sense to you.

Please take your time. Don’t get in a hurry. Grief will not be rushed. This is not a sprint. Pace yourself and let the content in the following pages sink in over time. Good, healthy grieving is about developing habits that bring recovery, healing, hope, and growth.

Once you finish the book, put it somewhere accessible. It can be your grief reference manual from here on. When questions pop up

again, as they most certainly will, you can grab this volume and refresh your mind about the possible answers and practical suggestions.

### **MY HOPE FOR YOU**

I wrote this book with the hope that it would bring you some comfort, hope, and healing. I pray that every page has something beneficial that resonates with your mind and heart. Most of all, I hope you hear this message loud and clear: “You are not alone.”

You might feel alone, but there are many, many people on the grief road right now. Though our losses are all different, we can still travel this winding path together. We need each other badly.

Breathe deeply. Be kind to yourself. Read on...

Note: You will notice some repetition of key ideas and grief skills throughout this book. This was intentional to emphasize these things and to allow you to read anywhere in the book at any time.



“For in grief nothing “stays put.” One keeps on emerging from a phase, but it always recurs. Round and round. Everything repeats. Am I going in circles, or dare I hope I am on a spiral?

But if a spiral, am I going up or down it?

How often -- will it be for always? -- how often will the vast emptiness astonish me like a complete novelty and make me say, “I never realized my loss till this moment”? The same leg is cut off time after time.”

—C.S. Lewis,  
*A Grief Observed*

# PART ONE:

## THE EMOTIONAL UPHEAVAL

“This loss has turned my world upside down.  
My emotions are intense.  
Sometimes, I can barely breathe.”

-Sarah



# 1

## HOW COULD THIS HAPPEN?

*This can't be real. It just can't.*

*I can't believe it. It doesn't make any sense.*

*This is all wrong somehow.*

*How could this happen?*



When we first hear the news of the death of someone we love, our hearts are stunned. Our minds freeze. Even our bodies can go into shock.

Perhaps we start spouting questions. What? Where? When? How? How is this possible? How could this happen to them?

Maybe we're so stunned that nothing comes out of our mouths. We find ourselves wobbling and feeling for a place to sit down. Some of us might faint or become nauseated.

Even if death was expected, nothing could have prepared us for our friend or loved one's final breath. Life always departs in an instant. Even though we knew it was coming, a sense of shock descends upon us.

We are relational creatures. We are interdependent and belong to each other. We get deeply connected. We love and are loved in return. When death invades and suddenly separates us from someone we care about, our hearts writhe in disbelief. Something about this feels wrong somehow. Our hearts scream, "No! How could this happen?"

We don't want this to be real. We don't want to believe it. Our minds can even reason, "If I don't accept this, perhaps it won't be real after all."

Loss is shocking, even if we think we're prepared for it. The death of someone we love is stunning and momentarily paralyzing.

Your heart might be railing against the loss you're experiencing. This initial sense of shock can come and go over the months ahead. Let your heart ask the questions. Give yourself permission to be stunned.

---

### **Affirmation:**

*Loss is shocking. I may have a sense of shock and disbelief about this loss in the months ahead.*

### **Suggestions:**

When you're experiencing shock and disbelief, please consider the following:

- Know that this is natural and common. Most grieving hearts go in and out of a sense of shock repeatedly in their grief journey.
- Give yourself permission to be where you are. Accept yourself as you are, in the moment, as best you can. Your heart has been hit. You're stunned.
- Practice taking deep breaths when you can. This is more beneficial than you might think. We'll talk more about the skill of deep breathing later.

Moving in and out of shock is to be expected in the grief process.



## 2

### WHY DOES THIS HURT SO MUCH?

*My heart is in such pain. I feel like I'm in pieces.*

*I've never experienced anything like this.*

*Why does this hurt so much?*



Loss hits our hearts. The pain of losing someone we love can be deep and debilitating.

We are designed for relationship. We come out of the womb screaming for connection. We attach. We are loved, and we learn to love in return. At first, we are dependent. Over time, we become interdependent.

At some point, you attached to your loved one. A special bond was created.

Your loved one was unique in human history. There has never been another person exactly like them, and there never will be again (even if they were a twin). The same is true of you.

This means that your relationship was also one-of-a-kind. Unique. Special. Priceless.

No one can truthfully say, "I know how you feel." No, they don't. They are not you. It wasn't their loved one or their relationship.

Your grief is your own. It is an individual, solitary, and lonely journey.

You were designed for relationship and wired for connection. Separation is painful and can be devastating.

Your pain honors your loved one. When you hurt, you're saying, "I love you."



### **Affirmation:**

*Losing someone I love is painful. I give myself  
permission to hurt and to grieve.*

### **Suggestions:**

Grief feels lonely because our loss is one-of-a-kind. When you're hurting, here are some things to consider:

- Please know that the pain you're experiencing is natural and common for those enduring a close, personal loss. Nothing strange is happening. Your heart has been hit and you're feeling the weight of the blow.
- Do your best to accept yourself in the moment and give yourself permission to hurt. This is painful.
- Consider expressing your pain by talking out loud, writing it out in a journal, or sharing with someone you consider safe and trustworthy. Your pain is worthy of attention. You loved the one you lost - and you love them still.

Giving yourself permission to hurt will be important in your grief process.

# 3

## WHY CAN'T I STOP CRYING?

*They are always on my mind.*

*My emotions are leaking out everywhere. Tears flow all the time.*

*It's embarrassing.*

*Why can't I stop crying?*



The loss of someone we care about is sad. Our hearts are feeling their absence. Tears are a natural and healthy expression of what's happening inside.

Grief will not be easily boxed. We can't simply set it aside as something to engage in later. It's not that simple. When our hearts are involved, emotion begins to take up more space in our lives.

When someone we love dies or leaves, it feels like they take a part of us with them. When the separation occurs, a tearing takes place. Imagine two sheets of paper firmly glued together. Separating them again is difficult and messy. The sheet that remains is full of holes. It's still a sheet of paper, but it is significantly different than it was before.

A tearing has occurred. It feels like a part of your heart is now missing. Your world has been altered. You sense that you are no longer the same person. You now have holes that weren't there before.

On top of this, you long for the one you've lost. The pain of the longing can be intense. Sadness can run extremely deep.

Grief will be expressed, one way or another. Better to let it out



freely than attempt to stuff it and have it leak out in less than healthy ways.

Feelings are meant to be felt. The sadness is real and deserves expression. Your tears are expressing your affection for the one you've lost.

Let the tears flow.

---

### **Affirmation:**

*Tears are a natural and healthy expression of my sadness.*

*I will allow myself to cry when I want or need to.*

### **Suggestions:**

When it comes to tears as an expression of your sadness and grief, here are some things to consider:

- Accept yourself in the moment, as best you can.
- Give yourself permission to grieve, including intense sessions of weeping or sobbing. Your heart has been hit. The emotions are real. Feel the grief and let it out. Let your heart express itself.
- Give yourself the grace to feel intense grief in public places. Most likely, this will happen repeatedly. You are not in control of what you feel and when. Anything can trigger your grief, anytime, anywhere.
- Begin to develop the habit of breathing deeply. This can help calm your mind, heart, and body when powerful emotions are triggered in public places. See the end of chapter five for an explanation of this important grief skill.

Tears are therapeutic and healing. As much as possible, let them come.

