

FINDING YOUR WAY

after

Your Parent Dies



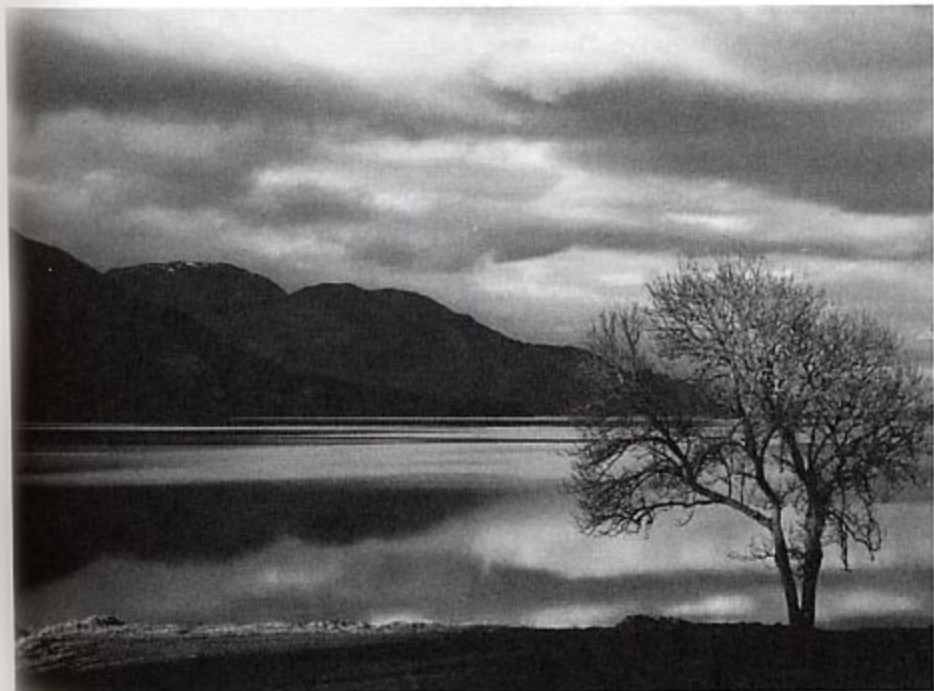
Hope for Grieving Adults

Richard Gilbert

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with a foreword by Darcie Sims

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Chapter 1

What's wrong with me?

Nothing!—You are bereaved

Do you remember Dick Loudon? My guess is that it's a name forgotten. That was the character played by Bob Newhart on the "Newhart Show." What particularly struck me as funny about the character was his profession: he billed himself as the author of "how-to" books. He really believed that one could write a how-to book on any subject, and that, in every case, he was the perfect author to do it.

"How-to": in this age of instant-everything, we believe that time is money, and we will grab anything that will help us get through life with ease and haste. We have how-to books on

everything from building a healthy marriage to using the Internet to making household repairs.

When it comes to grieving, though, things are different. There are no how-to books on grief. Some people may believe they can write one, and I know many bereaved who search for them, but the truth is that there is no book for *your* grief, *your* feelings, *your* readjustments to this new world without your parent(s), the many tasks that require *your* attention when your energy is at its lowest. No one knows your sorrow. No one can give meaning to your feelings, and no one dare direct or control your feelings, tell you that “you should be over this by now,” or suggest (as I heard countless times), “Your Dad lived to eighty-four, and he was sick for a long time; he’s better off now.” Maybe he was better off, but *I wasn’t!*

Wading through the advice we are given, we often grieve in silence, puzzled and occasionally fearful of our feelings. We wonder what might be “eating away at us”; we look for some ray of hope that will lead us through sorrow to life and hope. In the end, though, there is only one pathway: *your* pathway. It is the pathway of your feelings.

Even within one family, various individuals can have very different experiences of grief. Each person’s journey is different, and his or her feelings give expression and meaning to those journeys. Each person—including you—must be free to move along his or her own pathway. Thomas Merton once remarked, “How do you expect to arrive at the end of your journey if you take the road to another one’s city?” (James Miller, *One You Loved Has Died*, p. 8). Giving each person in your family the freedom that he or she needs will prevent these differences in grieving from becoming a source of conflict.



The experience of losing a parent in death is almost universal—and yet many who feel this loss for the first time are surprised at how painful it can be. Even those well into adulthood are often taken aback by the deep sense of loneliness, the sense of being “orphaned,” that the death of a mother or father can bring.

In *Finding Your Way After Your Parent Dies*, Rev. Richard Gilbert has created a compassionate guide for those struggling with the loss of a parent. Bringing many years of experience in bereavement counseling, Gilbert sketches out some of the issues that arise in the wake of a parent's death and offers practical suggestions for navigating these difficulties. From the disorientation that can come immediately after death to relating to the surviving parent to healing old emotional wounds, the topics dealt with here will be of tremendous help to many.

Combining a warm, empathetic approach with an expertise in grief, Gilbert's *Finding Your Way After Your Parent Dies* is a resource that will be deeply appreciated by those who have lost a parent and by those ministering to them.

Richard B. Gilbert is ordained by the Evangelical Anglican Church in America and is a well-known author and speaker in the field of bereavement care. His previous books include *HeartPeace: Healing Help for Grieving Folks* (Abbey Press).

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