



It's Ok That You're Not Ok: Meeting Grief and Loss in a Culture That Doesn't Understand

Megan Devine

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When a painful loss or life-shattering event upends your world, here is the first thing to know: there is nothing wrong with grief. “Grief is simply love in its most wild and painful form,” says Megan Devine. “It is a natural and sane response to loss.” So why does our culture treat grief like a disease to be cured as quickly as possible?

In *It's OK That You're Not OK*, Devine offers a profound new approach to both the experience of grief and the way we try to help others who have endured tragedy. Having experienced grief from both sides—as both a therapist and as a woman who witnessed the accidental drowning of her beloved partner—Devine writes with deep insight about the unspoken truths of loss, love, and healing. She debunks the culturally prescribed goal of returning to a normal, “happy” life, replacing it with a far healthier middle path, one that invites us to build a life alongside grief rather than seeking to overcome it. In this compelling and heartfelt book, you’ll learn

- Why well-meaning advice, therapy, and spiritual wisdom so often end up making it harder for people in grief
- How challenging the myths of grief—doing away with stages, timetables, and unrealistic ideals about how grief should unfold—allows us to accept grief as a mystery to be honored instead of a problem to solve
- Practical guidance for managing stress, improving sleep, and decreasing anxiety without trying to “fix” your pain
- How to help the people you love—with essays to teach us the best skills, checklists, and suggestions for supporting and comforting others through the grieving process

Many people who have suffered a loss feel judged, dismissed, and misunderstood by a culture that wants to “solve” grief. Devine writes, “Grief no more needs a solution than love needs a solution.” Through stories, research, life tips, and creative and mindfulness-based practices, she offers a unique guide through an experience we all must face—in our personal lives, in the lives of those we love, and in the wider world.

It's OK That You're Not OK is a book for grieving people, those who love them, and all those seeking to love themselves—and each other—better.

It's Ok That You're Not Ok: Meeting Grief and Loss in a Culture That Doesn't Understand Details

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From Reader Review It's Ok That You're Not Ok: Meeting Grief and Loss in a Culture That Doesn't Understand for online ebook

Jahana Tomo says

This book. This book. And I'm not done yet – each section, so true, so rich, so recognizable to the heart that knows the kind of grief that our society doesn't see nor hear nor comfort, in its own inability to face pain – I must read a little at a time. What real comfort to be mirrored in words of acknowledgement. Her voice resonates in the soul, and Megan Devine pulls no punches. But then deep grief doesn't either. And deep love, in all of its terrible loss, and beauty.

Robin Gorder says

“For those who are the stuff of other people's nightmares” - Wow! This quote sure hits home for me. My 21 year old son killed in a tragic car accident. What do you say to a mother who's lost her son? Fear takes over in the people around you because they know it could happen to them, and they don't want to think about that, it's too painful. So the platitudes and “fixing” begins - or - they slowly disappear.

Megan Devine's book is powerful, honest, and necessary in this culture that doesn't understand or know how to tend to grief. “Our culture sees grief as a kind of malady; a terrifying, messy emotion that needs to be cleaned up and put behind us as soon as possible”(intro xvii)

We will all experience grief at some point in our lives. This book is essential for those who are experiencing deep grief and the way we help and support others who have endured loss. If you want to love better, read this book.

Thank you, Megan Devine...for giving me the permission to feel what I feel, unapologetically.

Ashley says

Best for: Those who are grieving, or those who want to be better prepared to support those who are grieving.

In a nutshell: People who are grieving deserve better than what society offers them. This book attempts to provide some direction towards that.

Line that sticks with me: “We have to be able to see what's true without fear of being seen as weak, damaged, or somehow failing the cultural storyline.” (p 54).

Why I chose it: Ms. Devine spoke at an event I attended this past weekend, and was kind enough to also sell her book to attendees prior to it's release next month.

Review:

The book is written almost as a love letter to a friend. Ms. Devine carries such kindness in her writing, stemming from her own experience witnessing the sudden death of her partner Matt. She was a writer,

therapist, and artist prior to his death, and was able to take her experience, along with what she has learned from others, to create a community (Refuge in Grief) to help others experiencing grief, and write a book that both validates feelings and provides practical tips for navigating an experience that is utterly horrible.

The through-line of the book is that grief is not a problem to be fixed. It is a new reality that the grieving person must honor and tend. People will not “get over” profound losses, and it is cruel to demand that they do. Friends and family members of those who are grieving want their old loved one back, and don’t listen or pick up on the overt and subtle clues that they are not helping. We want to help, but we want that help to lead to things being fixed, and that’s not a thing that will happen.

In my work, we have that list of things to never say to someone who has lost someone, and I see some of those phrases included here as well. Things like “they’re in a better place” or, worse, “everything happens for a reason.” Ms. Devine goes into why these phrases are so very hurtful, regardless of the fact that they usually come from a good intent. Like in so many areas of life, the harm caused doesn’t care what the intent was.

There are a million things I could say about this book. I should caveat my review by pointing out that I am not the primary target audience — I have so far been lucky enough to not have experienced real loss in my life — but I have seen enough friends living in their grief to want to know how I can better support them. While there is a section of the book that is directed at folks like me that I found immensely helpful, there is also such value in reading words directed at those who are experiencing loss. I cannot understand what they are feeling, but I can at least get a sense of the challenges they are facing and the ways our culture and society can make a horrible experience so much worse.

The event I attended where I purchased this book was Death Salon Seattle. I chose to attend in part because I think our society has a very strange and unhealthy relationship with death in myriad ways [from how some refuse to talk about it, to how others are forced to talk about it at way too young an age, to how we expect those who lose someone to ‘get over it’ ever (and usually in a few months, maybe a year tops)] and partly because my job, as some of you know, involves planning for the response to a mass fatality incident. Most days I’m doing something death-related; the Salon gave me an opportunity to look at death outside of the plans and procedures and meetings that fill up my workday.

Seeing Ms. Devine speak is a gift. She was able to tailor her talk to this group in a way that recognized that a bunch of individuals who spend a lot of time thinking and talking about death may have some very specific ways we can support those who are actually experiencing loss. This book is another gift, and one I strongly recommend anyone who is thinking this might possibly be something they need pick up.

Beth says

"Some things cannot be fixed. They can only be carried."

This is a great resource for those grieving and those who want to learn how to support them. Life after loss can be incredibly difficult and this book acknowledges that without offering platitudes or offers of transformation. It's hard to navigate a new reality while existing in a culture wrapped up in minimizing and/or ignoring pain and suffering, so it's refreshing to see a work discuss it at length. The author is intimately acquainted with the process of grieving after losing her partner unexpectedly, and uses her own experience with loss to help guide others. Devine reflects on her tenure as a therapist and how she was forced

to reevaluate the ways she (and many current physicians) see loss, with emphasis on how her understanding and methods for working through grief have changed after suffering traumatic loss herself. There are chapters specifically written for those deep in grief, and others with handy checklists of dos/donts for those wanting to provide needed support to acquaintances/friends/relations who find themselves there. It's very insightful and validating. Highly, highly recommend.

"We have to start telling the truth about this kind of pain. About grief, about love, about loss. Because the truth is, in one way or another, loving each other means losing each other. Being alive in such a fleeting, tenuous world is hard. Our hearts get broken in ways that can't be fixed. There is pain that becomes an immovable part of our lives. We need to know how to endure that, how to care for ourselves inside that, how to care for one another. We need to know how to live here, where life as we know it can change, forever, at any time. We need to start talking about that reality of life, which is also the reality of love."

Samantha says

I read Megan's book with my dad's death in mind. What she had to offer was so helpful, and made me feel better about the fact that the typical approaches to dealing with my grief felt not just inadequate, but they actually made me feel worse. The amazing thing is that not only did thinking about things differently take an immense load off of me around my father's death, but also around some other relationships that I've lost in the last few years. Her work is equally applicable to the grief of the loss of a loved one and the loss of a friendship. I suspect I'll find there are even more places in my life that her work applies. Highly recommend.

Sve says

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Eilonwy says

This is hands-down the best book on grief I've found, and I've been looking for a good many years now.

Megan Devine introduces the topic by telling readers that she had been a therapist/grief counselor, giving her clients the standard advice about "getting past" grief, "moving on," "finding closure," etc. Then her fiance died, and she discovered that none of that was helpful.

This book contains the wisdom she's gained after ten years of living with grief; trying to figure out *why* so much of our cultural reaction to death and grief is not only not helpful but actually hurtful and harmful to mourners; and starting her own website to let people share their stories of loss and find validation, and really listening to what people say there.

This book treats everyone, both mourners and the often clueless and lost friends who'd like to help but don't know how, with great kindness and empathy. It helps the grief-stricken cope with well-meaning attempts to "fix" them, and points out that death isn't fixable. You don't "move on" after the death of someone important and irreplaceable. You just keep moving.

It also has some really helpful advice about coping with the cognitive issues posed by grief, when a person's brain is occupied with trying to reorganize a world that no longer makes sense, and dealing with the often crippling anxiety that follows a loss.

I strongly recommend this to anyone who is currently or has ever been in mourning. It's not an easy read -- it acknowledges and touches all the sore spots, very gently, but they're still *sensitive*, and I found myself crying a lot -- but that acknowledgement and understanding flow off every page like a soft, warm blanket.

I also recommend this to everyone, because at some point you or someone you love will be bereaved, and the information in this book is worth knowing ahead of time. It won't help with the pain, but it will help with caring for yourself or that other person.

Thank you, Megan Devine, for being so thoughtful, and for sharing your pain and your ongoing journey on this road which no one wants to walk, but which is nevertheless crowded with people who need the comforting you offer.

Marietta says

Every page has something helpful, relatable, and/or supportive. The author somehow put into words things that I didn't even know I was thinking or feeling and it was incredibly refreshing and comforting. If you, or anyone you know, have experienced loss and are grieving this is a must read.

Sarah says

Acknowledgment and recognition, served straight up — beginning with the dedication: "For those who are the stuff of other people's nightmares". Filled with insights on the full realities of deep grief and our culture's aversion to pain, this book is a must-read for those who've suffered a deep loss, including an out-of-order death, and those who want most to support them. This is the book I wish I'd had when my younger brother died. 14 years after his death, I know these words hold the wisdom of what it takes to survive a death you will never "get over". As the author states: "Some things cannot be fixed. They can only be carried." Her compassionate words have the power to carry you.

kellie says

I found this book hard to review, as the author states every person's grief is different. I thought it was very well written.

My father passed away not that long ago so I wanted to read something that could help me process what I was feeling. The author hits the nail on the head when she said the way we deal with grief is broken; this rang so true for me.

I loved how the book was set out in a way you can read all at once or dip in and out when there is a particular subject you're struggling with. The author is straight talking and describes some of the feeling I had around my father's death perfectly.

This book is different from your normal self-help guides; it touches on the side of grief we don't always want to face.

I have to add a quote from this book to sum up my feelings on grief and how I felt I connected with this book.

“Our culture sees grief as a kind of malady: a terrifying, messy emotion that needs to be cleaned up and put behind us as soon as possible”.

This is very true and this book shows it doesn't have to be this way.

Thank you to Netgalley for my ARC, I will be recommending this book to other family members who are also struggling to make sense of their own grief.

Michelle says

I've been gifted, loaned and purchased many grief books in the two years since my son died. I can honestly say that none of those texts resonated with me and the truth of my grief experience more than Megan Devine's new book. She is a credible source of useful information, bringing not only her educational and occupational background to bear but more importantly her own life experience with deep loss and a broken culture. Above all, she is a truth teller and an advocate you'll want in your grief space.

The beauty of this book is the universal insights it offers for EVERYONE who has experienced deep grief or desires to genuinely support another in their loss. The author outlines a refreshing take on grief for the reader's consideration, one where acknowledgment and a desire to love better are critical components in supporting ourselves and each other following a significant loss (ie. death, accident, illness, etc.) She adeptly explains the model's concepts in lay terms, provides numerous examples for better understanding, and recommends practical exercises that one can use to help identify and manage the impact of grief. The quotes from her writing students are especially relevant and poignant.

I found Megan's work validating and thought-provoking, especially concepts such as her broader definition of "early grief", common platitudes (and why I feel their adverse affect), the critical distinction between pain and suffering (and how to minimize latter), grief as an experiment rather than a problem to be solved, and the vital role of acknowledgment and companionship in creating a way forward. One of my favorite sections is the appendix, an essay on helping a grieving friend, which offers carefully-crafted and readily shareable ground rules for supporting a loved one.

I'd recommend reading this book if you or a loved one are in the midst of deep grief and looking for validation, guidance, and honesty in a post-loss world. This book, and especially the associated resources available at refugeingrief.com, are powerful tools for navigating your grief landscape with love and understanding. It's permission to grieve in your way and in your time ... and this has made all the difference in my own post-loss landscape.

Monica J. says

This is THE book to read whether you are in the throes of early grief or whether long-term grief has settled in your bones. Ms. Devine is masterful at articulating the varied and harsh realities griever (and those who support them) face on a daily basis and then provides real tools to identify your own path forward by validating your story of devastation, of hopelessness, and of love.

Through "It's OK That You're Not OK," I learned concepts for living with the death of my daughter and how to build "a life around the edges of what will always be a vacancy." This was especially helpful for an out-of-order death experience. As Ms. Devine says, "You do not need to leave your grief behind in order to live a newly beautiful life. It's part of you. Our aim is integration, not obliteration."

If you purchase or give only one book on grief, let it be this one.

Roselyn Tomasulo says

I am a Megan Devine grief groupie, one of her tribe of after. Found her and this loving group 2 years ago as I desperately searched the web for people like me. Who lost their only child, who knew grief and how to live another second with it. This book is remarkable...it's genuine words...(and I know how hard it is to find the words are) her words embrace your grief, how to live along side it, not overcome it. Love is always. Love is why we grieve. Yet there is a way to do that...learn to wade your way through this muck without losing...yourself, your friends, family...your mind!

Megan lives it and has birthed a community of wounded. We carry each other as she writes...not trying to fix each other but carry. It is often a heavy load and her book talks about how to care for each other and ourselves.

And the reason for the book as Megan writes is to learn to love better, at those times when it is almost impossible...death and loss and grief are those times. Impossible times. She helps you know how, the skills, because we don't know and there is not only one way.

It is an excellent resource for all. I believe we can be better at this. In this time of so much death, we must evolve from the past and do grief in a way that allows us to live. Megan knows, sharing her wisdom, love, and tragic experience with us so we can love better.

I had nowhere to go that late night I found Refuge in Grief. Our tribe cherishes each other through whatever we may share in our words. We share our pain and love. I am not a writer but I write... but from the moment I read her words I knew this is where I could find my way.

A blessing, yes. As we say there are no coincidences.

Lori says

Finally, a resource emerged that allowed me to accept my grief without shame, excuses or timetables. The author, Megan Devine, is a pioneer; paving a new path for those who have suffered debilitating loss by allowing them to see grief in a new way. She calmly and lovingly explains what well-meaning people in our culture do with grief and she does it without blame or shame. A lifesaving book and a must read. I have finally given my grief permission to be felt, experienced and carried in love because of this book. If you don't have a copy yet, get one.
