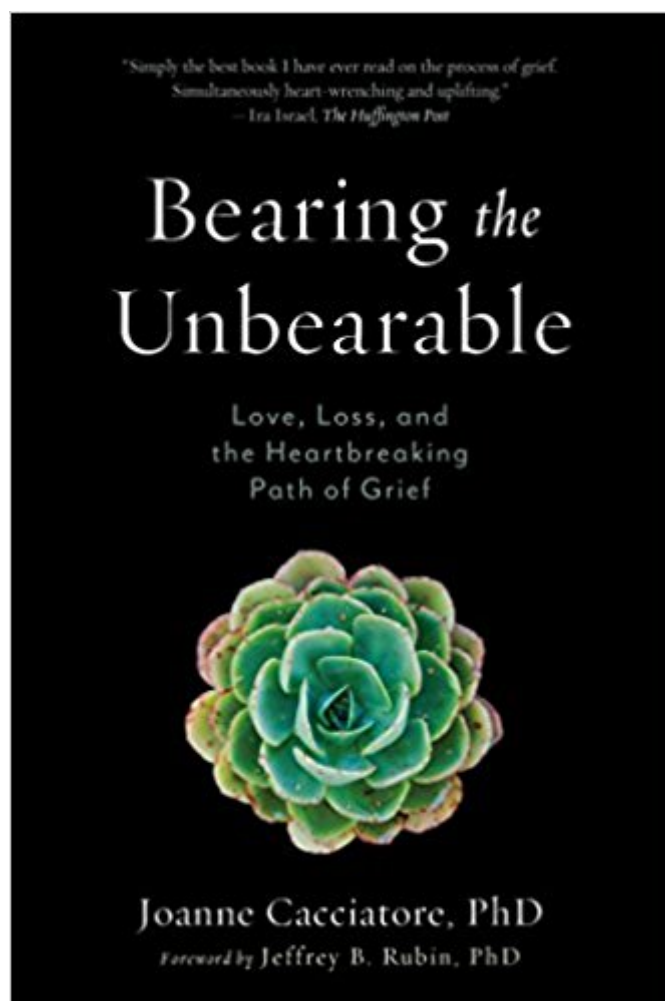


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# Bearing The Unbearable: Love, Loss, And The Heartbreaking Path Of Grief



## Synopsis

If you love, you will grieve—and nothing is more mysteriously central to becoming fully human. When a loved one dies, the pain of loss can feel unbearable—especially in the case of a traumatizing death that leaves us shouting, “NO!” with every fiber of our body. The process of grieving can feel wild and nonlinear—and often lasts for much longer than other people, the nonbereaved, tell us it should. Organized into fifty-two short chapters, *Bearing the Unbearable* is a companion for life’s most difficult times, revealing how grief can open our hearts to connection, compassion, and the very essence of our shared humanity. Dr. Joanne Cacciatore—bereavement educator, researcher, Zen priest, and leading counselor in the field—accompanies us along the heartbreaking path of love, loss, and grief. Through moving stories of her encounters with grief over decades of supporting individuals, families, and communities—as well as her own experience with loss—Cacciatore opens a space to process, integrate, and deeply honor our grief. Not just for the bereaved, *Bearing the Unbearable* will be required reading for grief counselors, therapists and social workers, clergy of all varieties, educators, academics, and medical professionals. Organized into fifty-two accessible and stand-alone chapters, this book is also perfect for being read aloud in support groups.

## Book Information

Paperback: 248 pages

Publisher: Wisdom Publications (June 27, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1614292965

ISBN-13: 978-1614292968

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.7 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 33 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #14,221 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #36 in Books > Self-Help >

Death & Grief > Grief & Bereavement #46 in Books > Self-Help > Relationships > Love & Loss

#790 in Books > Parenting & Relationships

## Customer Reviews

“An especially powerful book. It is not just for those who have suffered a loss. Anyone who’s trying to deal with a loss, or anyone who know someone dealing with a loss, (and in truth, isn’t that everyone?) will benefit from reading this amazing book.” (Foreword

Reviews) “Simultaneously heartwrenching and uplifting. Cacciatore offers a practical guidance on coping with profound and life-changing grief. This book is destined to be a classic, simply the best book I have ever read on the process of grief.” (Huffington Post)

“In this poignant, heartrending, and heart-lifting book, Joanne Cacciatore teaches how loss is transformed to peace, devastating grief to active and practical love. Beautifully, beautifully written, *Bearing the Unbearable* is for all those who have grieved, will grieve, or support others through bereavement.” (Gabor Maté MD, author of *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts*)

“A wise guide intimate, tender, and fierce reminding us what it means to fully love. This is a holy book, riddled with insight and compassion. It will bless all of us in our times of sorrow.” (Francis Weller, author of *The Wild Edge of Sorrow: Rituals of Renewal and the Sacred Work of Grief*)

“There are sentences in this luminous book that took my breath away. With penetrating insight and tender warmth, Dr. Jo meets the broken-hearted where we live: in an utterly transformed and transformational space. This is the secret potion I have been yearning for, offered from a brimming cup.” (Mirabai Starr, author of *Caravan of No Despair: A Memoir of Loss and Transformation*)

“A truly remarkable book.” (Robert D. Stolorow, author of *Trauma and Human Existence*)

“*Bearing the Unbearable* is an experience more than a book. In recounting many cases from her extraordinary therapy practice devoted to helping people who are undergoing severe and traumatic grief, the book offers the reader an experience that like grief itself is painful but for which one will be deeply grateful afterwards. Cacciatore’s amazing book shows us through its many emotionally gripping examples guaranteed to trigger readers’ own lurking tears much that is novel and illuminating about the ineffable depth and labyrinthine nature of intense grief.” (Dr. Jerome Wakefield, DSW, PhD, Professor, NYU School of Medicine and author of *The Loss of Sadness*)

“An approach to grief that moves beyond platitudes and cliché. It offers a way to truly grow through grief that is not a moving beyond but is more of an organic composting and recycling of the soul. It offers hope for those who feel like their loss has disconnected themselves forever from humanity and the circle of life. There is something for everyone in this garden that will restore and rejuvenate. I would highly recommend this book!” (Doug Bremner MD, Professor of Psychiatry, Emory University, and author of *The Goose That Laid the Golden Egg*)

“At a time when even the most normal of human experiences, such as grief and suffering, are being pathologized and medicated by a bio-psychiatric industry, *Bearing the Unbearable* is an honest and courageous examination of the most common of human experiences. Dr. Cacciatore’s powerful book doesn’t

stop with delineating the process of grief. [It] shows grieving human beings how to reclaim the process as normal and sacred, and how to insist on defining the process for themselves, which leads to powerful healing” (This book will become a staple in my practice, and as well as at Warfighter ADVANCE programs. (Mary Neal Vieten, PhD, ABPP, Executive Director, WARFIGHTER ADVANCE) “This masterpiece is the greatest gift I could give to someone entrenched in grief, or to the loved ones of the bereaved. (The Tattooed Buddha)

Dr. Joanne Cacciatore has a fourfold relationship with bereavement. She is herself a bereaved mother: her newborn daughter died on July 27, 1994, and that single tragic moment catapulted her unwillingly onto the reluctant path of traumatic grief. For more than two decades, she’s devoted herself to direct practice with grief, helping traumatically bereaved people on six continents. She’s also been researching and writing about grief for more than a decade in her role as associate professor at Arizona State University and director of the Graduate Certificate in Trauma and Bereavement program there. And, in addition, she’s the founder of an international nongovernmental organization, the MISS Foundation dedicated to providing multiple forms of support to families experiencing the death of a child at any age and from any cause, and since 1996 has directed the foundation’s family services and clinical education programs. Cacciatore is an ordained Zen priest, affiliated with Zen Garland and its child bereavement center outside of New York City. She is in the process of building the a “care-farm” and respite center for the traumatically bereaved, just outside Sedona, Arizona. The care-farm will offer a therapeutic community that focuses on reconnecting with self, others, and nature in the aftermath of loss through gardening, meditation, yoga, group work, animals, and other nonmedicalized approaches. All the animals at the care-farm will have been rescued from abuse and neglect. She is an acclaimed public speaker and provides expert consulting and witness services in the area of traumatic loss. Her research has been published in peer-reviewed journals such as The Lancet, Social Work and Healthcare, and Death Studies, among others. She received her PhD from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and her master’s and bachelor’s degrees in psychology from Arizona State University. Her work has been featured in major media sources such as People and Newsweek magazines, the New York Times, the Boston Globe, CNN, National Public Radio, and the Los Angeles Times. She has been the recipient of many regional and national awards for her empathic work and service to people suffering

traumatic grief. She travels quite often but spends most of her time in Sedona, Arizona, with her family and three rescue dogs. She also has three horses that are part of her Rescue Horses Rescue People equine therapy program. Dr. Jeffrey Rubin is among the leading authorities on the integration of meditation and psychotherapy. He is the author of Practicing Meditative Psychotherapy and The Art of Flourishing. He lives in New York.

Bearing the Unbearable by Dr. Joanne Cacciatore is a heart stopping account of people who have gone through life changing trauma due to a significant loss. Each account is heart stopping and raw and left me in tears. This is a book of lessons. It is teaching me the lesson of compassion. It is a teacher of understanding different cultures. It teaches me that I do not have to grieve in silence but that I can openly share my story and somehow begin to heal as I embrace my loss. It is a book that gives us permission to grieve openly and without the pressure of a time limit.

I wrote the following review of this sensitive and informative book when I had just started to read. I finished it a while ago and have since purchased additional copies to give to those who, I know, will benefit from its message. There are dozens and dozens of books on grief out there....but rarely does one find a book like this...i.e. one that reaches to the soul, resonates with it and leaves the reader feeling heard and less alone as well as giving permission to grieve in their own unique way. I cannot recommend this book enough. Original review: I have waited for this book for months. I "accidentally" ordered and received 3 copies today and decided to give two of them to friends rather than return them. The book is "Bearing the Unbearable: Love, Loss, and the Heartbreaking Path of Grief". I have lost track of the number of books and articles I have read (and written) on loss, trauma and grief, and of that long list there are just a few that reach deep into my soul, resonate with all I am, and allow me to feel heard/felt, understood, accepted, not judged and less alone with grief. I am about two hours into Dr. Joanne Cacciatore's treasure trove of insight, wisdom, compassion, empathy, vulnerability, and oh, so much more. This is a book for everyone.... when I finish it, I know I will be changed by all it has given me. I have been in touch with Joanne since Bill died. She is an incredible person dedicated to educating and assisting the bereaved drawing on her own experience, self, education and more. She has reached out to me and thousands of others in so many ways. How grateful I am for her presence on this planet and this book...which I know I will read and refer to many times. I cannot recommend "Bearing the Unbearable" enough. Thank you, Joanne for all you are and all you inspire in me and all you do for so many. I will add to this, once I

finish it.

Dr. Cacciatore has written on paper what a grieving heart feels. She explains the why's and what's of this unbelievable and unbearable pain we have that will not go away. This book is powerful and healing. I want to give a copy of her book to every person I know who has had a traumatic loss. Thank you Dr. Cacciatore for sharing your life story and helping us understand we are not alone and we are not crazy or wrong for missing our loved ones.

An absolutely beautiful tribute to love and loss. A must read for the lay person, the clinician, the researcher.... for everyone! If you have ever grieved deeply... please treasure this text.

This book has been a great help with my mourning our son. I've struggled over the last 9 months and its helped me with dealing with my feelings and day to day life.

What makes this book so powerful, and so instructive, is that it simultaneously addresses grief both from the perspective of those who are grieving and from the perspective of those who are in contact with those who are grieving. It is not a hand-book, but instead, is a shining beacon: (i) for the person grieving, what grieving is not and cannot be, namely, something to be overcome or get past or move on from; and (ii) for the person in contact with the person grieving, what is helpful and not helpful viz the grieving person, because their grief is not something you can or should help them to overcome or get past or move on from. As the author (who speaks from her own personal tragedy of losing a child, and from her life's work of studying grief, counseling those who are grieving, and teaching about grief at the university level), how grief might be embraced truly is an individual journey. For some, the journey might be enriching. For others, the journey might be a descent into inescapable despair. But what this book makes painfully clear: There is no elixir; there are no good works to accomplish as compensation; there is no 12-step program; there is no way around grief--only through it; there is no conquering grief--rather, mustering the courage to surrender to it; and there are no answers to the question "why" and perhaps no reason even to ask "why." As this book drills home: Only by avoiding love might one avoid grief--if one loves, one is destined to grieve.

This book is a testament of how grief moves into our lives in the most unimaginable way and how we can transform that grief into something more tangible and constructive through contemplative process, love, and empathy. Dr. Joanne Cacciatore brings to the forefront not only her own

experience with traumatic loss of her beautiful daughter, Cheyenne, along with many personal losses, but her professional experience working with others in traumatic grief. She holds all in a sacred space. No more looking at grief as an illness or pathologizing those that are suffering. What she teaches is that the suffering is a direct link to our love, to those that are gone, and in that love and loss is a tangible beauty and thanksgiving that can break through the chasm of false belief that we need to "get over" it and move on and manifest our grief into something tangible and beautiful. Having lost a grandchild traumatically, this book gives me the loving perch to rest and "be" with my grief. To "allow" it space in my life and mold it into compassionate manifestation. I will forever be grateful for Dr. Jo and her loving work and for this beautiful piece of loving, compelling words. Thank you.

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