

Living Forward after Loss: Rebuilding Your Life after Losing Your Life Partner

Kathleen Ho

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Living Forward After Loss is a compassionate, practical book about surviving grief that's designed to help others, too.

Kathleen Ho's memoir *Living Forward After Loss* is about processing grief after the death of a spouse.

This short book is sparse on details beyond its repeating backstory, but it's also direct, energetic, and encouraging. It contains practical pointers for surviving loss and real talk about depression and suicidal thoughts and actions. It's most focused on getting through the first months and years of losing a spouse; Ho's story suggests light at the end of a difficult tunnel.

The book's advice is direct and includes tactics that helped Ho to cope and heal. These include planning to be with others for holidays and joining clubs and volunteering to keep busy. Writing itself is named as therapeutic—not just to reflect on one's own experiences, but to share with others.

Other people's stories are shared as well and help to support the book's points. An emotional and sensitive list of helpful and upsetting things that people say to people who are grieving is included, as is a passage encouraging dating when one is ready, even in cultures where widows traditionally remain alone forever.

Every chapter reiterates details such as that Ho and her husband were married for ten years and that he loved her wholeheartedly, if with few supporting examples to flesh them out as individuals. Their relationship is summed up in an idealized way, and interesting allusions, including to a rough childhood and emigration from Vietnam to California, aren't followed through. Other mentions, as of living near Disneyland, are incidental.

The book's timeline is confusing, especially since some details shift: the length of time since Ho became a widow changes from chapter to chapter. Chapters begin with lead quotes, seemingly from a quote aggregator, but they are not adequately contextualized; some are wise sayings that only share a key word with the chapter's theme. All sources are cited, including Pinterest and Brainy Quotes; the book's more substantial sources include public speakers, self-help books, and credible articles.

This personal story about processing a husband's sudden stroke and subsequent death becomes a compassionate, practical book about surviving grief that's designed to help others, too. *Living Forward After Loss* is an encouraging book about what happens after you've lost a spouse; it acknowledges that pain is a part of the healing process.

MEREDITH GRAHL COUNTS (June 2, 2020)

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