

## Transformative Grief: An Ancient Ritual of Healing for Modern Times

**Tracee Dunblazier**

Red Feather Mind Body Spirit (May 28, 2023)

Hardcover \$16.95 (271pp)

978-0-7643-6631-4

*Transformative Grief is a spiritual self-help book that models compassion for all who are grieving.*

Grief counselor Tracee Dunblazier's spiritual, metaphysical self-help book *Transformative Grief* bases its recommendations on personal empathy and insights, as well as on New Age teachings.

Arguing that human beings are in a constant state of physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual change, this book calls such ever-changing, inevitable existence a process of transformative grief. It also asserts that while such grief can be difficult, it can also be life-affirming if embraced. Thus, each chapter focuses on a specific form of grief (as with the loss of a partner, a family member, or a child), using personal anecdotes, academic research, writing prompts, meditations, and healing rituals to guide bereaved people through the grief process, helping them to embrace the "magic" that grief brings.

Exemplified by compassion, the book includes many helpful tips, as with alternatives to impulses toward overeating, overdrinking, or abusing drugs while grieving. It also includes instructions for friends and family members who are looking for effective ways to support bereaved people. Its personal anecdotes and patient stories are succinct and thoughtful; many reflect keen spiritual leanings.

However, while the book's structure is straightforward, its advice does not always feel comprehensive or interconnected. Several chapters contain subsections that also apply to discussions elsewhere in the book; a discussion of anger, for example, is tucked away in a chapter about losing a partner, while the useful section "Everyone Grieves Differently" is exclusive to a chapter on losing a family member. Further, tips for navigating grief responses in public can only be found in the "Loss of a Child" section, though such advice is applicable to all of the covered circumstances of grief.

While its recommendations are based on New Age philosophies, the book strives to embrace those from others religions and belief systems too. However, such reaching out often falls short, including with some off-putting claims, such as that in a past life, Dunblazier was a freed slave who was lynched by white supremacists on an apple plantation. Reincarnation nonbelievers stand to find such claims outrageous and in bad taste. Other assertions, such as those regarding the existence of "spirit guides" and the validity of psychic abilities, will be uneasy fits outside of New Age belief systems too; thus, in the end, the book's teachings are less universal than they hope to be.

In addition, an abundance of questionable or unsupported claims leaves the book on shaky ground. While it makes use of occasional footnotes and ends with a list of references, it takes many facts as evidence for its claims without deeper interrogation, such as the idea that the violent colonization of the Americas was inevitable and necessary to "achieve forward movement." Explanations like "If there had been another way, then that would have happened" have limited persuasive power.

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HANNAH PEARSON (November 8, 2023)

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