

A Space in the Heart: A Survival Guide for Grieving Parents

Larry Carlat

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Larry Carlat's *A Space in the Heart* is a sensitive guidebook for grieving parents.

Holding space for unspeakable grief, Carlat, who lost a son to suicide, draws on lived experience in this guide for fellow grieving parents, proffering “a road map for a road no one would ever choose to travel.” Indicting society for its treatment of grief, it honors the fact that grief lasts as long as it is needed before arguing that it’s possible to hold grief and never-ending love in tandem, cherishing one’s memories of shared laughter, good times, and hugs that “felt like your hearts were touching.”

Intimate, warm, and conversational in tone yet searing in its honesty, the book moves from the devastating phone call that every parent dreads through the descent into grief and desolation and into gradual healing. Carlat’s realization, about a year after his son’s death, that he could let go of his pain without letting go of his son is a luminous, hopeful moment.

A companion for a difficult, transformative life passage, the book addresses the mind traps to which grieving parents often fall prey: self-blame, ceaseless rumination on what they “could have done” to prevent their child’s death, and the belief that holding on to grief is evidence of the depth of their love for their child. It suggests ways to foster healing, including reframing painful thoughts, treating oneself with kindness and compassion, creative expression, and building resilience by facing one’s fears. The book’s suggestions for comforting the grieving are both uncomplicated and kind: attentive listening and a warm hug.

The self-help companion *A Space in the Heart* shows that while there is no “getting over” the loss of a child, it is still possible, with time, to fill the heart’s emptiness with love and light.

KRISTINE MORRIS (November / December 2024)

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