

“Dorothy Holinger’s exploration of the contours of grief is wise, moving, thought-provoking, and, best of all, extraordinarily helpful. Beautifully written and humane, it is a balm for the bereaved.”—Barry Bearak, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting

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The Anatomy of Grief

New Book Offers Information, Solace, and Hope In the Face of Devastating Loss

Grief happens to everyone. Universal and enveloping, grief cannot be ignored or denied. In *The Anatomy of Grief*, to be published September 1 by Yale University Press, psychologist Dorothy P. Holinger draws on brain science, literature, music, poetry, history, memoirs, and personal and clinical experience to describe what happens in the brain, the heart, and the body of the bereaved.

Holinger captures and examines what grief feels like—how language and clarity of thought become elusive, why life seems empty, why grief surges and ebbs, and why the bereaved cry. She looks at the deep suffering that can happen when a loss is denied or ignored, or when grief is concealed or suppressed. Using examples from across time and cultures, she considers the essential role of funerary rituals in helping the bereaved recover from life-changing loss, and what happens when such rituals are not possible. Paying special attention to specific kinds of profound losses—the death of a child, a sibling, a spouse, a parent—Holinger considers the impact of grief on both children and adults, and the damaging effects of secrecy on those left behind.

Shedding light on the specific ways our brains, heart muscles, and other parts of the body can be literally reshaped by grief, and how grief can express itself through the physical body, *The Anatomy of Grief* makes sense of the mysterious and distressing ways a death can make us feel. Looking to evolutionary biology and to observations of the natural world, Holinger considers the ways nonhuman animals seem to grieve, and what that might tell us about our own experiences.

Resting on a scientific foundation, this deeply compassionate and literary book shows the bereaved how to move through the grieving process to a place where memories can be cherished. Understanding grief in deeper, more multidimensional ways can help us live life again with joy. The *Anatomy of Grief* is a book for everyone—those who have experienced the loss of a loved one, those who have been unable to mourn in traditional ways, those who must prepare for loss, and anyone who wants to better understand and help someone who is grieving.

Dorothy P. Holinger, Ph.D., was an academic psychologist on the faculty of Harvard Medical School for over twenty-three years. She is a Fellow of the Association for Psychological Science and has her own psychotherapy practice.

The Anatomy of Grief
Dorothy P. Holinger, Ph.D.
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Visit the author's companion website for *The Anatomy of Grief*: dorothyholinger.com.

Praise for *The Anatomy of Grief*

“*Anatomy of Grief* is a gem. Dorothy Holinger approaches grief as a scientist and clinician, combined with personal experience, exploring the evolutionary history, anatomy, and physiology of grief. A real masterpiece.”—**Donald L. Schomer, MD, Professor of Neurology, Harvard Medical School**

“This is a unique and truly important book to anyone who wishes to understand, and learn how to cope with, grief. Combining research, clinical and personal experience, it presents a practical, relatable, and deeply human guide to the most difficult of times.”
— **Chris Reid, Director of Product Development and Publishing, *Science Magazine***

“*The Anatomy of Grief* brings together Dorothy Holinger's expertise in brain research and her clinical work with grieving patients. She speaks compellingly to the grief-stricken, urging them to resist society's pressure to ‘get over it’ on some imposed timetable.”
—**Barbara J. King, author of *How Animals Grieve***

“*The Anatomy of Grief* is a great read. All of us have been affected by grief and will find satisfaction in the new knowledge gained as well as enjoyment from Dorothy Holinger's talent as a writer.”—**Michael K. Rees, MD, MPH, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center**

Q and A with Dorothy P. Holinger

Q: Why is grief important in our lives?

A: Grief is as important as love. When a person we love dies, our grief is equivalent to the love we felt for them. Grief is the price we pay for love. And when allowed to be fully experienced by the bereaved, grief builds a path to memories. As we grieve, those reminiscences, fragmented and sorrowful at first, slowly change to loving, comic, and wonderful ones as memories of the loved one surface.

Q: How does The Anatomy of Grief differ from other books on this subject?

A: Not many books in the grief literature address the human self of the bereaved—what happens to the brain, the heart, and the body. This literary book has a humanistic and physiological perspective that gives the reader an understanding of what happens to the human self of a grieving person: why they have trouble thinking clearly, why they cry, and why their body aches for the lost loved one. Resting on a foundation of science, and illuminated by the arts, this book introduces a new direction in the literature of grief.

Q: What will readers learn from encountering your book?

A: Not to fear grief. To allow oneself to experience a sorrow that is as great as the love they felt for their lost loved one. My hope is that by recognizing the multidimensional nature of human grief, readers can move through the grieving process, and be able to live life again, with joy.