



The Other Side of Sadness: What the New Science of Bereavement Tells Us About Life After Loss

By George A. Bonanno

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We tend to understand grief as a predictable five-stage process of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. But in *The Other Side of Sadness*, George Bonanno shows that our conventional model discounts our capacity for resilience. In fact, he reveals that we are already hardwired to deal with our losses efficiently—not by graduating through static phases. Weaving in explorations of mourning rituals and the universal experiences of the death of a parent or child, Bonanno examines how our inborn emotions—anger and denial, but also relief and joy—help us deal effectively with loss. And grieving goes beyond mere sadness: it can deepen interpersonal connections and often involves positive experiences. In the end, mourning is not predictable, but incredibly sophisticated. Combining personal anecdotes and original research, *The Other Side of Sadness* is a must-read for those going through the death of a loved one, mental health professionals, and readers interested in neuroscience and positive psychology.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

He once helped debunk the theory of repressed memory; now this Columbia clinical psychology professor takes on the conventional wisdom about grieving. There's little evidence to support the existence of stages of mourning or the corollary that if the stages aren't followed completely, there's cause for alarm. What Bonanno does find is a natural resilience that guides us through the sadness of loss, and grief, rather than distracting us, actually causes the mind to focus; it also elicits the compassion and concern that humans are hard-wired to offer in response to another's suffering. Bonanno acknowledges that grief is sometimes extreme and requires treatment, much like post-traumatic stress disorder. But with this work, science and common sense come together in a thoughtful, kindhearted way; stories of loss go far beyond striking a familiar chord—they give us hope. As one mother who lost her daughter tells Bonanno, even years later she felt her daughter was like a little ember, and if I need to, if I want to have Claire next to me, I blow on it, ever so gently, and it glows bright again. (Oct.)

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Review

Library Journal

“Illuminating...while the popular and the professional literature on death and dying continue to surge, Bonanno's work manages to offer a clearly professed alternative way to understand grief that will be a refreshing new resource for professionals, as well as for the grieving.”

Publishers Weekly

“Bonanno acknowledges that grief is sometimes extreme and requires treatment, much like post-traumatic stress disorder. But with this work, science and common sense come together in a thoughtful, kindhearted way; stories of loss go far beyond striking a familiar chord—they give us hope.”

Camille Wortman, Professor of Psychology, Stony Brook University

“Bonanno, the most productive and influential bereavement researcher in America today, has changed the scientific landscape in the field of grief and bereavement.”

Dacher Keltner, Professor of Psychology, University of California Berkeley and author of *Born To Be Good*

“*The Other Side of Sadness* is brilliant and moving. Bonanno turns our thinking about loss on its head. He reveals the subtle and myriad ways we are resilient, how we find new layers of meaning, why we laugh, and gain insight when loved ones pass. This inspiring book will fill you with wisdom about the other side of loss, and make life immeasurably richer.”

Barbara L. Fredrickson, Ph.D., Kenan Distinguished Professor, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and author of *Positivity*

“*The Other Side of Sadness* paints a refreshingly new and scientifically-grounded portrait of the grieving process, one infused with positivity, laughter, and enduring bonds. Anyone interested in the emotional nuances of the human condition will value this warm, engaging, and accessible book.”

Jim Whitaker, Founder and Director Project Rebirth

“George Bonanno’s ground-breaking research on grief illuminates mankind’s profound capacity for resilience, and shows us how to find meaning in life after death.”

Daniel Gilbert, Professor of Psychology, Harvard University; author of *Stumbling on Happiness*

“There are a lot of books on bereavement and now you can throw them all away. Bonanno carefully assembles scientific evidence to show that most of what we thought we knew is just plain wrong. *The Other Side of Sadness* is a game changer. There’s nothing else like it. If you want to know the truth about the human experience of loss, there’s only one book on the shelf.”

About the Author

George A. Bonanno is professor of clinical psychology at Columbia University. His work has been featured in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, and he has appeared on CNN and 20/20. He lives in New York City with his wife and two children.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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