

R. GLENN KELLY'S

THE
GRIEFCASE



A MAN'S GUIDE
TO HEALING AND
MOVING FORWARD IN GRIEF

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ISBN-10: 1522856242

ISBN-13: 978-1522856245

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THE GRIEFCASE

CONTENTS

Dedication	iv
Introduction.....	v
Chapter One ~ The Big Question of Why	1
Chapter Two ~ Receiving Your Griefcase.....	
Chapter Three ~ The “False-You” in the Griefcase.....	
Chapter Four ~ The “Man” in the Griefcase	
Chapter Five ~ Griefcase User’s Manual	
Chapter Six ~ A Griefcase of Common Senses	
Chapter Seven ~ Three Perils in the Griefcase.....	
Chapter Eight ~ Your Invisible Griefcase	
Chapter Nine ~ The Griefcase of Others.....	
Chapter Ten ~ Taking Your Griefcase to Work	
Closing Words	
Definitions in the Griefcase.....	
A Place for Your Notes	
Resources – Grief and Bereavement.....	
About the Author	9

DEDICATION

The incredible gift of being so close to another is experiencing the beauty of *unconditional love*. With their unfortunate passing, the majesty of that love remains in our hearts and will eventually urge each of us to seek happiness within the new normal.

It is hard to imagine any level of happiness following the loss of someone loved so deeply. However, without happiness, life would have no meaning, and love knows that. For the majority of those who have lost someone so dear, happiness can only be achieved by unselfishly helping others.

This book is dedicated to those men and women who have founded, work for, or volunteer in the many grief and bereavement support organizations across the United States, as well as around the globe.

These non-profit organizations are staffed with incredible people who have experienced traumatic loss themselves. As they move forward in their grief journey, they now find their own level of happiness in reaching out a hand and welcoming any bereaved soul who would have need for it.

INTRODUCTION

If reading this, like me you are probably now in a fellowship you certainly did not want to join. Yet, here we are, brother. Just please know from the start, **you are not alone**. My intent is to assist other men who have experienced the tragic loss of someone near and dear by offering direction down the path towards the **New Normal**.

What is the new normal? First, know I would never lie or tell half-truths to any soul who has suffered the passing of a loved one just to make him feel better. Your loved one is gone and there simply, undeniably is no way to bring them back. For many of us, we enjoyed a wonderful and normal life before the loss. That life cannot be brought back now, so together we *must* work towards a new normal where memories no longer debilitate us but instead bring a smile.

My own initiation into this fellowship began in the year 2003 when my mother passed. One evening while watching television, she complained of a chill, and before my father could return with a blanket, she was gone. Then came the slow and agonizing death

of cancer when it took my father just a few short years later.

I certainly mourned them both but shoved much of my grief deep inside after each loss. Although they loved me dearly, on top of my manly instincts to appear strong, I held to some deep regret issues that included not visiting often in their later years. With each of my parents, when the pain of grief came, it was always accompanied by that sharp sting of regret, which I eased by tucking all the agonizing emotions back inside.

Tragically, two years after my father passed, I would lose my teenage son and only child to heart failure. I refused to grieve his loss for some time afterward, not only because of my male programming but because pushing it back inside had worked so well with the grief of my parents. Without acknowledging the pain, I was able to return to my life and function at the same levels I had before. To me, it seemed the natural way for a man to respond to loss.

This was my son, however, and his spirit and love within me was too strong. The anguishing need to grieve my son's loss would come, and with it also the

unresolved grief I carried for my parents. I was emotionally in trouble and knew I needed help. Admittedly, I had overcome some of my male programmings and began to grieve, but there was still that ego-controlled part of me that knew I would not seek professional help.

I would turn to books, though. I sought out ones that focused specifically on grieving men, yet found almost nothing. So, I struck out on my own to research emotions, which I knew were the very foundation of grief. I would begin with emotions in general, and then turn to clinical research and published papers on men, then women, followed by why each sex process emotions so differently.

I was feverish in my pursuits and grateful for my discoveries, as it certainly put me on my path towards moving forward. My findings revealed so much which should have seemed obvious before, but I admit to standing so close to the trees that I could not see the forest.

I would consume numerous articles that discussed how as young sons we were programmed to be men, and how our very DNA is actually prewired with many of our male behavioral traits. Those revelations,

however, would not be my biggest takeaway. Instead, **emotion** itself would become one of my most valued discoveries.

Through my studies, it would become obvious that emotion is actually one of the human senses, along with sight, touch, taste, hearing, and smell. While we pay little to no attention to it, all the data taken in by those five senses is processed and resolved in some way. Yet, as men, we take in data from emotional stimulation and hold it inside against its will. My findings led me to understand just how incredibly destructive that can actually be.

As part of my own journey towards the new normal, I would eventually write and publish the book, “Sometimes I Cry in the Shower: A Grieving Father’s Journey to Wholeness and Healing.” After the release, I would leave corporate America and dedicate my life to the advocacy of male grief support, and I could not have chosen a more rewarding path in my life.

As I stated earlier, you are never alone in your loss. After my book went public, I would become involved in numerous national grief and bereavement

support organizations that, of course, I did not know even existed before my tragedy

Within these groups, I would meet some of the most compassionate and kind souls, all of whom instantly became lifelong friends. When I walked into my very first grief support conference, I honestly expected a solemn event. Instead, I walked into a room holding hundreds of smiling, laughing, and joyous souls. These groups are truly something anyone going through a loss should seek out.

A large part of my male grief advocacy is to be a conduit to those support groups. Please use the links provided at the end of this book to research valuable information for those in your area. They truly want only to reach out a hand and healing heart to you. Having experienced heartrending loss themselves, they recognize the pathway to moving forward involves helping others.

I also wrote earlier that I knew I would not seek professional help in my grief. That was me. I knew myself well enough to realize my ego was not going to allow that. Just as we all grieve differently, though, no two of us are exactly alike. I understand I paint with a broad brush when stating that most men will avoid

mental health professionals, but you must agree that is generally true.

While I tend to focus my grief support and advocacy on men, I am also aware that not every man is going to fit into the stereotypical precept. There will always be those that express their emotions in customary “feminine” ways, just as there will be women who express theirs in the more traditional “male” pattern. Yet, overall generalities still comfortably prevail for each sex.

If you are, in fact, comfortable and desirable of professional help, I unequivocally implore you to seek it out. However, please do not just open a directory and pick one out blindly. Maybe you would feel more at ease with someone who has experienced deep loss themselves. If so, they are out there. Seek them out.

Look into the study courses and certifications held specifically by each professional on the subject of grief and bereavement. You would be surprised to find out how many seek supplemental studies in grief, as the topic is often only a brief pass over or not covered at all during formal education.

Please know that I am not going to pull any punches in this book. That is not why you are here. You are reading this book because you have lost someone you love deeply and are not looking to read how life will just be okay. Only you can make yourself okay, and to do that you will need to move forward through the grief. Moving forward is living a full life again, but does not mean living without the love and memories of the one who is now gone.

No one ever fully recovers from the death of someone so deeply loved. However, together we can discover the pathway that winds along our journey to the new normal and a life filled with hope, peace, and purpose. May we each find just that.

CHAPTER ONE ~ THE BIG QUESTION OF WHY

Love and death are the two great hinges on which all human sympathies turn.

~ B. R. Hayden

Before we get to the Griefcase, I have to bring up a proverbial elephant in the room. **Why did our loved one have to die?** What an incredibly difficult and sensitive question for those of us who have lost someone. Their death seems to be so unfair and has no reason.

Somewhere in your soul, you know there just has to be something to explain it, right? Yet, it is so very hard to get your hands around it because there really can be no explanation or conventional understanding. It should be no surprise that as a man you have an *intrinsic need* to find reason and understanding when bad things happen. It is in your very genetic coding.

The next few words are ones I want to put out there so there are no misconceptions: **I believe in God.**

This is not a religious book, per se, but I hope you will tolerate a little bit of Bible thumping early on. I am not overly concerned, however. According to a Pew Research Center poll conducted of 230 countries around the world, 5.8 of the world's almost 7.0 billion global inhabitants believe in God too. So, although my ego would be somewhat crushed, I will understand if approximately 2.0 billion people simply stop reading right now. At least, eight out of ten will keep going.

Regardless, in God is where you can always find some comfort in your loss. Whether He is referred to as Yahweh, Elohim, Shàngdì, or one of so many other names, they all come back to the same; **The Creator**. You and I are each a child of that Creator and have our own separate and individual plan for the time spent here on earth.

Some of our more "enlightened" friends believe they have found their calling and are at peace, but many more are still unsure exactly what their divine plan truly is. One day, and I hope long from now, I will find out whether I was correct about my own purpose but feel as if I might be headed down the right path.

Tragically, I lost my son and only child. Believe me, I miss him with a searing heat that could melt the sun. However, I realize now that he and God had a very intimate and personal plan for his life here on earth. Each of our lost loved ones did too. They are gone now, however, and we are left without someone who made our daily life so wonderful to live.

How can you even begin to make sense of that? You cannot, really, since again the plans of others were laid out specifically for them. Nevertheless, you certainly *can* take great comfort in knowing that when God was designing His divine plan specifically for that someone you love so much, He pointed down from Heaven and said, **“There! Right there is someone worthy of you spending time with on earth.”** That alone attests to the love that God has for you.

Therefore, yes, recognize that your lost loved one had an individual relationship with God and let that fill your heart with great comfort. You were specifically chosen to be a part of your loved one’s life. Further, recognize and hold to the fact that you also have a purpose and divine plan as well. It was designed

intimately and lovingly only *for you* by the Creator. You are still here, too. That little fact testifies that you are not done with life and are still living out your plan.

Even when you eventually come to terms with that, you will still ask *why* from time to time. You have a strong desire deep inside to have some understanding of why you lost someone loved so dearly. Realize you will never know the answer while here on earth, but that will not stop the question from coming. Knowing that your lost loved one had an intimate plan with God, however, certainly goes a long way to keeping that question from consuming your every thought, as it may be doing right now.

Before I could come to some level of peace with not knowing *why* my son had to go, I actually had to overcome another elephant, but this one in my own mind: *Why can I not grieve his death?* Discovering that answer would not be simple either.

If you were to consider life questions that are frequently avoided, one of them certainly has to do with male grief. Why do we have such a difficult time dealing with painful emotions, even when related to

the loss of someone very dear to us? If grief itself seems to be a sensitive topic in society, male grief is even more so.

Men do feel the same pain as any woman in loss, and that pain certainly affects men just as deeply. Nonetheless, we men have a tendency to consciously and subconsciously convince ourselves that emotions will get in the way of responsibilities. We also feel that displaying a softer side will allow others to see us as unmanly and weak.

If you are concerned that this book advocates breaking down and crying in front of others, do not be. Like most men, you may have an innate and programmed tendency not to. If so, that is going to be what you have to work with, then. If you can already express your emotions in front of others, then I absolutely applaud you. I, on the other hand, grew up as part of the majority.

While growing from boyhood to a young adult, there were strong influences which conditioned me to keep a constant handle on my masculinity. As with most males, the compulsion to keep a check on the

weaker emotions was handed down to me in a legacy-like manner by my elders. Because of that, there was no way I would ever grieve in front of others.

Unfortunately, I would not grieve in front of myself, either. I simply refused to acknowledge the pain, and, therefore, ignored the emotions. After the traumatic loss of my son, however, I would eventually move to a positive point in my journey where I could thankfully grieve, and grieving became a welcome part of my healing.

That does not mean I fundamentally changed who I was and began to weep and sob openly in front of others. I had to do something, though. I recognized that those pent up emotions were becoming corrosive to my self-esteem, and were going to come out one way or another.

It was up to me how that was going to take place. I could either control that flow of painful emotions, or I could let them explode. If they did explode, I somehow knew not only would they harm me further, but also damage relationships with family, friends, and others in my life.

I would get a little help with that control when suddenly one morning the spirit of my late son came to me while I showered for work. Through unspoken words, he lovingly scolded me for not honoring his memory and for keeping my love for him hidden inside. He let me know that his love was the legacy left for me, and he could continue to live, but only if I would honor his memory.

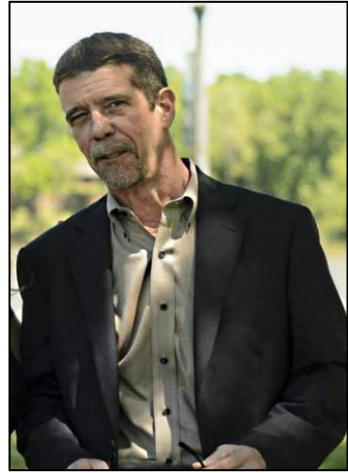
The dam of emotions burst that morning in the shower and the grief exploded. I cried loudly and in uncontrollable ways for the first time since he left me. I begged for his forgiveness for not being the protector I had always promised, and I yelled at God angrily for taking my child.

There in the shower, my journey towards wholeness and healing began. As I continued to use my daily *cleansing* escape for release, I became aware I was actually moving forward. Now, years down the road, I still occasionally cry in the shower as I share love and memories with the spirit of my son. I leave the shower still longing for him, of course, but not allowing the pain to overwhelm a productive future.

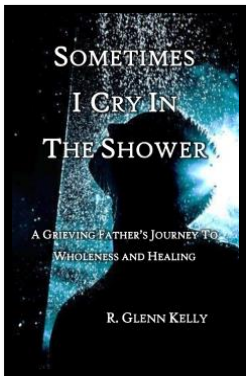
So take heart. In the pages to follow you will become aware that physically expressing your emotions *is* of the utmost importance. Yet, doing so in front of an audience is not a necessity. Find your shower if needed, grieve your loss openly and move forward to your new normal.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

R. Glenn Kelly is a writer, public speaker, Grief Support Advocate, and grieving father. After the tragic loss of his teenage son, he left behind the corporate world to work exclusively with bereaved men, and the women who want to understand them.



R. Glenn is the author of the self-help book, “Sometimes I Cry in the Shower: A Grieving Father’s Journey to Wholeness and Healing,” and has appeared on television, support workshops and even college universities to discuss moving forward towards the new normal in recovering from traumatic loss.



Look for Sometimes I Cry in the Shower in paperback and eBook on-line at R. Glenn’s website, grievingmen.com, Amazon, Barnes and Noble and bookstores everywhere.

If you would like to enlist R, Glenn Kelly for speaking engagements, interviews, articles or support, please go to www.rglennkelly.com or contact him by email at rglennkelly@rglennkelly.com or [@rglennkelly](https://twitter.com/rglennkelly) on Twitter.