

GREGORY L. JANTZ, PhD  
WITH KEITH WALL

# Healing *after* Loss

**Rebound from Hardship and Heartache**



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and Heartache

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*Rebound from Hardship and Heartache*  
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## FOREWORD

*Dear Reader:*

It's just like God to arrange for the book you have in your hand to be a gift to me as well. As a reminder to both of us here at the outset, I've included the Scripture verse cited on one of its last pages:

I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us. (Philippians 3:13–14 NLT)

You see, I, too, have experienced a loss. As this book prepares to go to press, my family and I are mourning the fresh loss of Dr. Jantz. He was my husband and my hiking buddy. He was father and mentor to my two sons. And his death is still very fresh in our minds.

While his homegoing is a marvelous truth, we who are left behind grieve. As I write this, it still seems surreal

that my husband—my life partner and best friend—has left this world for an eternity with Jesus, the One he loved and served. It is because of Jesus that Gregg wanted to understand and care for those affected by the abuse, trauma, and hurt of this fallen world.

The book you are reading now was written by Gregg with the desire to provide hope to those facing their darkest hour, when all hope seems lost. I can't imagine he had our family in mind when these pages were typed, and yet his entire work has been based around giving hope to those who are traumatized, to those facing addiction, and yes—even to those who have become widows and orphans.

When he started his work in the field of whole-person care, Gregg sought to bring hope to the hurting. *The Center: A Place of Hope*, located on the beautiful Puget Sound in Edmonds, Washington, continues to do this day in and day out, as individuals who arrive there are met with caring staff and a hope-filled plan.

My prayer for you is that this book will offer some comfort as it helps you move toward healing, providing a sweet and gentle reminder that God is always with you through his precious Son, Jesus. Hold on to the hope found in Philippians 3!

LAFON JANTZ  
EDMONDS, WA, JULY 2025



## INTRODUCTION

# When Loss Invades Your Life

*Chances are* that you picked up this book because you are struggling with the pain of loss and grief that has invaded your life. You are seeking comfort and healing at a time when your heart aches and you feel doubtful that you can become whole again. You might wonder if you can ever regain the joy and inner peace you experienced before your loss.

There's a good chance, too, that you are courageous and tenacious, because you are choosing to take the first steps—or further steps—on your path toward wholeness and well-being.

Every person on earth experiences loss at some time in their life. From some losses you may be able to recover relatively quickly, but others reshape your life and leave pain and grief in their wake for a long time to come. Since

I work as a psychologist, I frequently hear the details of my clients' struggles with grief. They tell me things like ...

- “Ever since I lost my spouse, I have felt so depressed that I can hardly get out of bed in the morning.”
- “My marriage of twenty years ended in divorce, and now I feel lost and aimless.”
- “After I broke my back in a car accident and lost mobility, I started taking painkillers, and now they've taken over my life.”
- “When my son died, I felt like I died too. In fact, a big part of me really did die.”

Statements like these are made by people who feel mired in the pain of their loss with little hope for brighter days ahead. But there is hope for healing—hope that is rooted in inner strength, abundant resilience, support from others, and our all-powerful Creator. My responses to my clients' pleas of desperation usually go like this:

- “It *is* possible get over this time of hurt and heartache. I believe you can and you will.”
- “Your pain is real and deep, but it doesn't have to hold you captive. It doesn't have to determine who you are.”

- “Life brings us plenty of challenges, but as you persevere and overcome, the future can still hold joyful adventures for you.”

I say these same things to you as you seek to work through the strong emotions that accompany your painful loss. You *can* be free from thoughts and feelings that pull you down rather than lift you up.

But I am not giving you a pep talk or offering snappy slogans to help you feel better momentarily. The last thing you need is advice that rings hollow or promises that deliver little. If you’ve been struggling with painful loss, you’ve likely heard all kinds of recommendations that haven’t brought much improvement. Worse, you’ve probably heard plenty of clichés from well-meaning (but unhelpful) people—sentiments such as “Just let it go,” or “This too shall pass,” or “Hold on to your faith.”

Rest assured, I know that working through loss is not easy. It takes patience, fierce determination, courage to confront painful issues, openness to new ideas, and a commitment to adapt to new life circumstances.

EVERY PERSON ON  
EARTH EXPERIENCES  
LOSS AT SOME TIME  
IN THEIR LIFE.



The American Psychological Association (APA) describes *resilience* as “the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress.”<sup>1</sup> One could also say that resilience is the ability to get back up when you’ve been knocked down by the roughness of life.

The APA also says that “while certain factors might make some individuals more resilient than others, resilience isn’t necessarily a personality trait that only some people possess. On the contrary, resilience involves behaviors, thoughts, and actions that anyone can learn and develop.”

As a devout person of faith, I firmly believe that God wants the very best for all who follow him. Over and over, Scripture confirms that God desires for us to live with joy, fulfillment, and peace. Naturally, and sadly, we will not experience the fullness life has to offer when we struggle through unaddressed grief. But we can choose a much more hopeful and healing path forward by asking God for the insight, courage, and resilience we need to prevail over our circumstances.

Are you ready to start the journey of healing after loss—of rebounding from hardship and heartache? Let’s begin by looking at how loss affects four important areas of your life.



## CHAPTER 1

# *The Legacy of Loss*

*Anyone who* has not yet experienced a traumatic loss might presume that its chief consequence is emotional distress, since loss can cause shock, disbelief, hurt, anguish, sadness, and anger. Truly, emotional turmoil is an oppressive, unwanted visitor following loss. But it doesn't take long to realize that loss brings hardship to *every* aspect of a person's life.

Finding your way back from heartache requires that you care for your whole self. As you begin to rebound from the distress and disorientation you're feeling, it will be helpful to understand how loss affects you not only emotionally but also in other key areas of your life, including your spirituality, relationships, and physical health.

## | How Loss Can Affect You



### 1. Emotional Distress

There's no way around it: Loss hurts, and it can even reshape your life. Losing a loved one to death, divorce, or a breakup is emotionally devastating. Even after losing a job or a business—or your home to fire, flood, or storm—the heartbreak can be overwhelming. It would take an extremely calloused person to *not* experience emotional turmoil. Amid your painful and surreal loss, are you feeling ...

- *Shocked?* Normal.
- *Sad?* Who wouldn't be?
- *Hurt, angry?* Perfectly understandable.



Yes, significant loss is tumultuous, so please understand this: It's okay to cry. It's okay to grieve. It's okay to not be okay for a while. As a caring human being, you're processing your loss with the emotional capacity your Creator gave you. Let your emotions do their work.



## 2. Relationship Strain

Veronica and Mateo's daughter had reached the age that their son, Manuel, had been when he died in a horrible accident. The situation they described is one I have witnessed many times in the aftermath of loss.

Veronica observed, "I've noticed that Mateo and I relate to our daughter differently. I've become more remote from Isabella and less involved, because I'm guarding my emotions and holding my fear at bay. I can't stand the thought that we could lose another child."

Mateo nodded his head in agreement while Veronica continued.

"As for Mateo, he's become overprotective—a helicopter parent. He hardly lets Isabella out of his sight and is always talking to her about safety, to the point where she sees the world as a dangerous and threatening place. It's understandable why he views life that way, but I think it's unhealthy to fill a little girl's head with dread and worry."

In the wake of significant loss, our supportive relationships often undergo a shift in dynamics, including conflict and codependency. Withdrawal from friends, a spouse, or other family members can also occur—because it’s just too difficult to share painful thoughts and feelings with another person.

If your loss is recent and raw, some isolation and withdrawal might be helpful as you work through your feelings before trying to express them. But if isolation and withdrawal become the norm, your relationships may grow more distant and superficial.



### 3. Physical Symptoms

Your body has an intricate connection with your soul and emotions. When one dimension suffers, the others do as well. Many people are surprised to discover that after experiencing significant loss, their grief can actually trigger debilitating physical illness or pain.

In the turbulence of your loss, a variety of hormones and neurochemicals can flood your brain. Cortisol (sometimes called the “stress hormone”) is often released more frequently and in higher quantities during grief. These elevated cortisol levels can impact your overall health, potentially resulting in high blood pressure or increased risk of heart disease.

While trying to process disbelief and sadness, it's also not uncommon to lack energy and sleep poorly. If this describes your experience, the result is that you're not just tired—you're weary. You are probably not eating well, either opting for unhealthy comfort foods or losing your appetite altogether. And exercise? Forget it. In the surreal state you're in, it's the last thing you want to do.

IN THE WAKE OF LOSS, OUR RELATIONSHIPS OFTEN UNDERGO A SHIFT IN DYNAMICS.



#### 4. Spiritual Confusion

Does your loss leave you feeling abandoned or betrayed by God? This is a common aftereffect for those who have endured heartache of any kind. I can't tell you how many times people have expressed their spiritual confusion in the wake of loss. Here are a few examples:

- “My daughter lost her battle with cancer sixteen years ago, and I still feel the pain all these years later. We were a devout family that served God. Where was he?”

- “My parents split after twenty years of marriage. I prayed and prayed that their relationship would be restored, but it didn’t happen.”

Without a doubt, the significant losses of life can profoundly affect our spiritual beliefs in different ways. Some draw closer to God’s comforting presence, while others don’t want anything to do with him. Some shake their fists at God, accusing him of not caring and failing to protect.

**WHILE PROCESSING  
LOSS, IT’S NOT  
UNCOMMON TO  
LACK ENERGY AND  
SLEEP POORLY.**

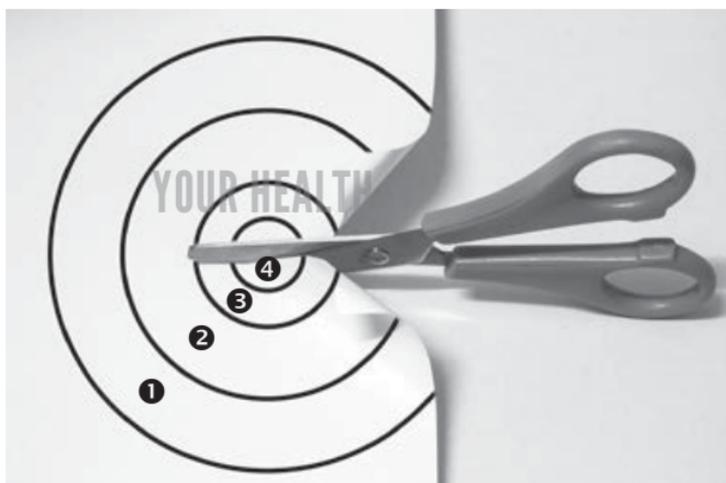


Be assured that God can handle your full range of emotions. He has compassion for you as you grieve, question, complain, and even rage at him. If you no longer feel God’s presence or believe that he has abandoned you, it does not change the fact that he is grieving with you and loves you deeply. God has promised his children, “Never will I leave you; never

will I forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). We must choose whether to make our relationship with him deeper with trust or more distant with doubt.

## | How Will You Respond?

The whole-person treatment approach recognizes that every human being is a unique constellation of emotional, relational, physical, and spiritual dimensions. Your loss has cut so deeply into each of these areas because you loved and cared so deeply.



① Emotional   ② Relational   ③ Physical   ④ Spiritual

Recovery will take time. It will also take prayer, faith, self-discipline, and the courage to engage in the fullness of life again. As you embark on your journey, consider the following suggestions.

# 1

## Be Willing to Hope

I have counseled thousands of people who needed help coping with pain and fear of every kind: grief, anxiety, depression, anger, addiction, and the emotional scars of physical and psychological abuse. Early in my career, I often felt dismayed by the epic scope of battles people waged within themselves and their elusive struggle to achieve true healing. It seemed that lasting wellness was a treasure many sought but few ever found.

Then I realized something vitally important: Many of the hurting people I counseled were eager to overcome their troubles, but they lacked the key ingredient of *hope*. Distress and despair, caused by significant loss, were compounded by a fundamental lack of hopefulness and confidence that anything would ever change. Hurting people often do not feel enthused about the future, if they can envision one at all.

This led me to make *hope* a cornerstone of my counseling practice, speaking engagements, and writing projects. My team and I also adopted Jeremiah 29:11–12 as our clinic’s guiding Scripture passage:

“I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will

call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,” declares the LORD, “and will bring you back from captivity.”

I encourage you to reflect on these life-changing words and embrace them as your touchstone as you pursue your own emotional, relational, physical, and spiritual wellness. After all, dealing with loss can often make you feel that you are in a “captivity” of sorts—trapped and immobilized by a force bigger than yourself. But if you hold on to the smallest seed of hope, it will, over time, blossom into comfort and strength.

God can help you rebound from hardship and heartache as well as renew your dreams and refresh your energy to achieve them. His Word promises that “those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint” (Isaiah 40:31).

## 2

### Be Willing to Listen

As the adage goes, the first step to fixing a problem is admitting you have one. But many times we have blind spots, especially when we’re grieving a loss. Is it possible that someone you trust—a family member, friend,

counselor, or colleague—has noticed you've developed harmful behaviors or habits in the wake of your loss? If so, do you tend to get angry or defensive when they mention their observation?

“THOSE WHO HOPE IN THE  
LORD WILL RENEW THEIR  
STRENGTH.”

—Isaiah 40:31

Often, we are already aware of the negative habits or behaviors that we're struggling with, but we feel overwhelmed or exhausted at the thought of addressing them. Or perhaps

we succumb to denial and refuse to look squarely at the harmful actions and attitudes we've adopted after our painful experiences. But in order to move in a positive life direction, it's essential that we acknowledge our own observations and those of others.

### 3

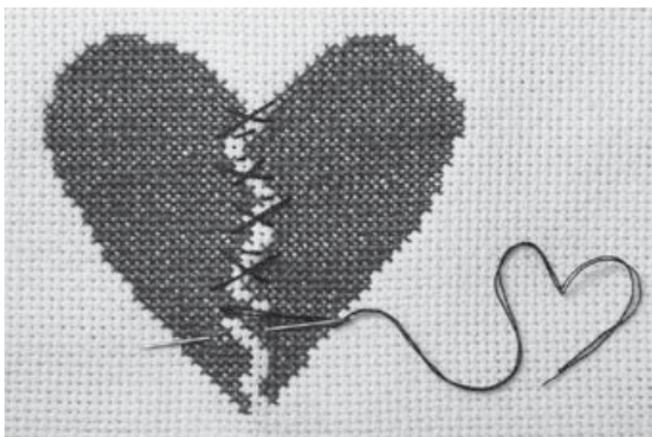
### Be Willing to Heal

It's okay if you don't know where to begin or even exactly what issues are causing problems. I often hear my clients say something like, “I don't really know why I'm here. I just know that something is not right, and I want to figure out what's going on.” Another common remark I hear is, “My spouse says that I need therapy, but I think I'm doing just fine.”

The person who is willing to seek help—even if they're not sure what exactly is wrong—is a lot closer to finding healing than the person who is not. To face loss is to take a courageous, giant step toward healing. Here are a few reasons why:

- Addressing your loss is the only way through it.
- You will have greater peace and joy.
- You will regain a sense of power and control in your life.
- You will be equipped to help others deal with their own grief.

In the next chapter, we'll take a look at how the grieving process is a vital first step as you progress toward healing.



# STEPPING STONES TO HEALING

- 1. Pay attention to your emotional health.** Engage with a helpful book or podcast that addresses your emotional needs in the wake of loss, or make the bold move to seek professional counseling.

**Takeaways:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- 2. Transform a difficult relationship.** Perhaps your loss has changed the dynamics of your relationships. Identify one action you can take to build bridges, such as expressing your desire for reconciliation or planning a shared activity that you both enjoy.

**My action:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- 3. Bolster your physical health.** Choose one of the following options; then slowly build from there:
  - Start (or restart) an exercise routine for twenty minutes, three times a week. This can be as simple as taking a walk in your neighborhood.

- Include more nutritious foods in your diet while reducing sugary and processed comfort foods.
- Start a nightly sleep routine to ensure proper rest.

**My option:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**4. Nurture your spiritual life.** Set aside time to seek God and rest in his presence:

- Read a psalm from the Bible or a passage from a devotional book, or search online for free devotional resources.
- Spend a few minutes seeking God in prayer.
- Listen to inspiring worship music or encouraging teachings from a trusted minister.

**Takeaways:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_