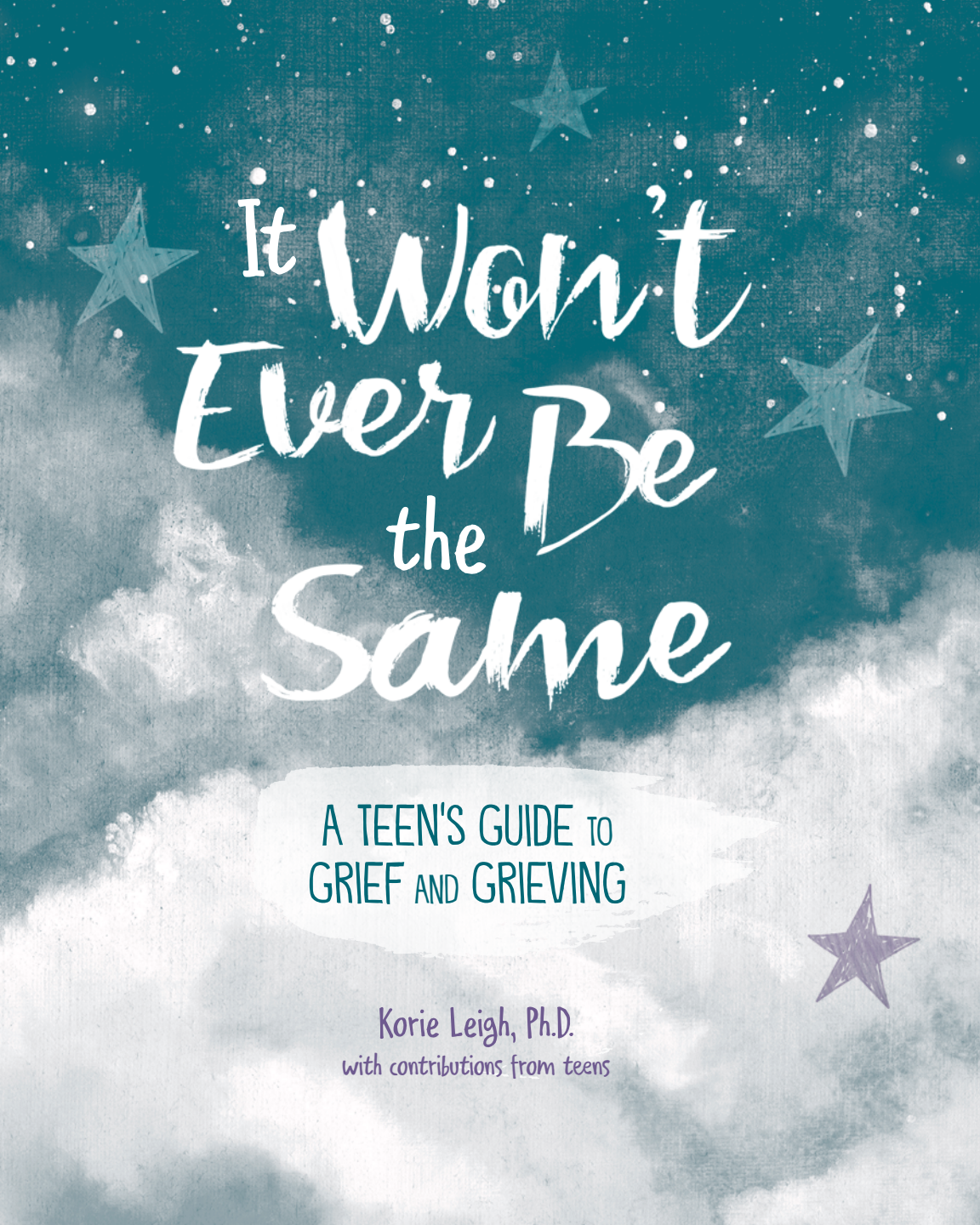


It Won't Ever Be the Same

A TEEN'S GUIDE TO
GRIEF AND GRIEVING

Korie Leigh, Ph.D.

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Korie Leigh, Ph.D.
with contributions from teens



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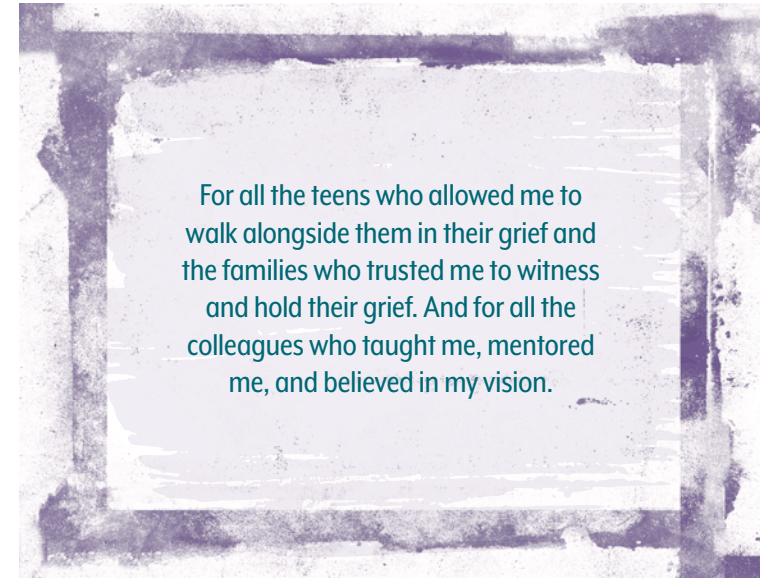
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Grief is a universal human experience—every person will grieve at some point in their life. You're reading this book because you're grieving right now, and that can be really hard.

Grief often feels isolating and confusing. The people in your life might not know what to say or do, or they may say and do the wrong things. They may treat you differently than before. Or they might be grieving so much themselves that they don't recognize your grief at all.

Maybe you picked up this book because you want some support in your grief. Or maybe you want to hear about what other teens have experienced in their own grieving processes. Whatever the reason, this book is written for you—to help you feel less alone and more connected, to teach you new ways of understanding yourself and your grief, and to help you make sense of the difficult experience you're going through.

About This Book

Whether you are in the midst of your first grief experience, have been grieving a while, or have experienced grief many times before, this book is designed to support you. No matter how long you've been grieving, it can be helpful to express your grief in new ways. The activities, reflections, and analogies within these pages guide you in working through your personal and complex grief experience.

Throughout the book, you will also meet other teens who have experienced big losses. These young people have shared their words and artwork with me, and they have given me permission to share them with you. Some wanted to give their names and more details about their grief, while others wanted to remain anonymous and keep the details of their grief more private. A few, including Ray, Sofia, Jonah, Jaida, and Amelie, share their voices and stories multiple times.

These words and art pieces help you understand other teens' experiences with grief, what grief has felt like for them, and how they've coped with it. Most of all, I hope that reading about these teens' experiences helps you find the words and images to express your grief and know that you are never alone.

Here are a few more things to know as you read.

Each section starts with an analogy about grief, followed by artwork or words from grieving teens. The analogies come from a poem I wrote about grief when I first started creating this book. You can find the full poem on pages 124–128.

Here are other recurring features you'll find.



Reflect: When you see this symbol, stop reading and take a few moments to reflect on the question asked there. You may find it helpful to write your answer in a journal, save it as a voice memo on your phone, or talk it over with someone you trust.



Give It a Try: When you see this symbol, put down the book and try out the process, idea, or activity described there. You might do these activities with someone you trust, or you can do them on your own.



Intention: These moments invite you to consider or try out a new way of being in the world. They require you to be intentional in what you are thinking, doing, or saying in your day-to-day life.



Feel: When you see this symbol, take a moment to tune into your emotions and explore how you feel.

How to Use This Book

I suggest starting at the beginning of the book and making your way through it. It will take a while to work through all the activities—it's okay to put the book down and come back to it after some time, whether that break is a few days or weeks. You can also jump to the section that sounds most like where you are, right now, in your grief. The sections are divided into parts that touch upon big milestones in the grief journey, starting with new grief and continuing through the days, weeks, months, and years after.

However you choose to make your way through the book, use the text as a guide to explore your grief. The prompts and activities can help you to put into words the wordless, visualize the shapeless, and describe this utterly complex experience. Do all of them as you read, or read them first and then choose the ones that feel right for you. You can also come back to these words and activities and do them multiple times.

Some teens like to talk through the prompts or do the activities with a counselor, some like to do them with other young people who are grieving, and some like to do them

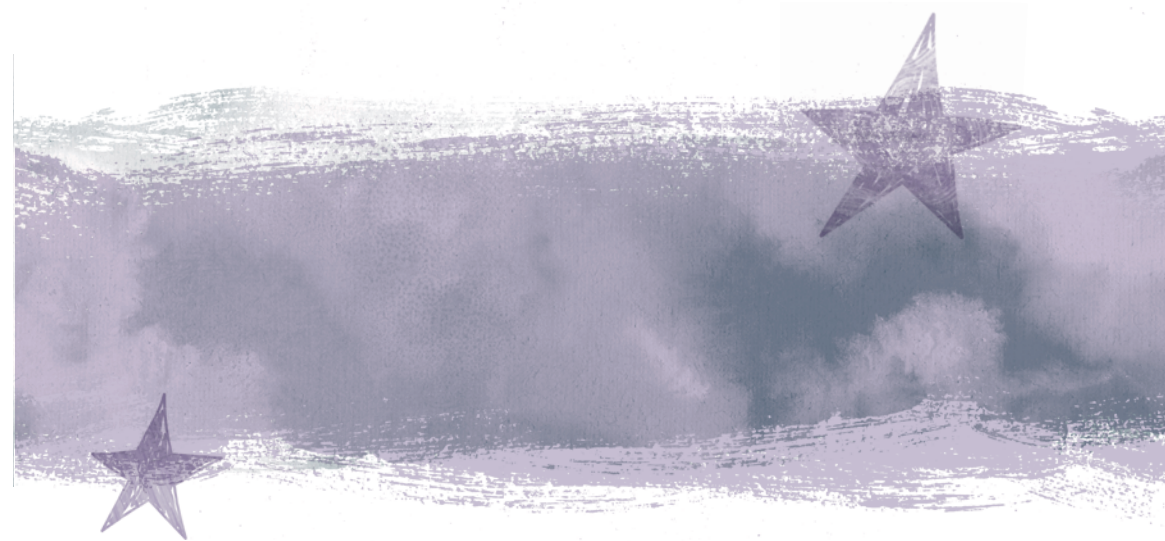
GIVE IT A TRY

Feeling the Connection

A good way to continue a bond with your loved one is to try to infuse their memory and spirit into your everyday life.

Instructions

1. Think of what you loved most about the person who died. Maybe it's a part of their personality or the way they treated other people. Allow those images to fill your memory. What did it feel like to be with your loved one when they were at their best?
2. Now, imagine your loved one as a symbol. This can be a color, something found in nature, a song, anything.
3. What symbol is it? How do you see that symbol in your daily life? How can you add more of it? For example, maybe when you think of the person you see a dragonfly. You could try to find dragonfly stickers or images and place them around to remind you of the connection.



Conclusion

“At first my grief was heavy, painful, exhausting, unbearable, and I felt angry. But now it’s minimal, consistent, transformative, enlightening, empowering, and sometimes recurring.”

—Sofia, age 16