



Opening to Grief:
finding your way from loss to peace
Claire B. Willis
Marnie Crawford Samuelson

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Foreword by Megan Devine

"A succinct, comforting reference for those dealing with the loss of a loved one. Anyone suffering loss will find wisdom and helpful practices here."
—*Publishers Weekly*

"Excellent and simple and as clear as a needed glass of water in the desert. I cannot think of a better companion for our current time." —*Katy Butler, NY Times* bestselling author of *The Art of Dying Well*"

Inside *Opening to Grief*: "You could think of grief as a sacred passage. You are torn from the life you knew before. You are not who you were, and you are not yet who you will become. Like everything else, you are changing. You are, in a very real way, between identities. This experience—profoundly different for each of us—is confusing, agonizing, and potentially life-transforming."

Opening to Grief: Finding Your Way from Loss to Peace (Dharma Spring, October 12, 2020) is an invitation to be with your grief in all its depths and to find your unique way to peace, balance, and acceptance. This slim volume encourages you to begin wherever you are and to offer yourself kindness at a time of losses and suffering. Open to any page and you'll find comfort and inspiration, as well as profound practices anchored in mindfulness and meditation. Chapters describe how art and writing and spending time in nature offer paths to healing, and how we help each other when we act generously and create beloved communities. The essential message of *Opening to Grief* is that grief and love are intertwined.

Drawing upon her experiences as a clinical social worker and bereavement counselor, author Claire Willis helps us deepen and expand our understanding of grief. When COVID-19 arrived in early 2020, we learned that the unimaginable can happen and that grief not only engulfs us when we experience a personal loss, such as the death of a pet or partner. In the pandemic, we have lost hundreds of thousands of lives around the world. Many have lost their livelihoods. And most all of us have lost our familiar daily routines

and textures of work, family, and community. "Now we see that there are aspects and qualities of grief and grieving that are universal. We are recognizing that some of the feelings we are experiencing in these uncertain times—such as anxiety, despair, anger, and confusion—are grief. This is how we humans respond to loss," Willis says.

What Others Are Saying About *Opening to Grief*

"*Opening to Grief* invites readers to approach and be with their grief, rather than turn away and try to avoid it. It's easy-to-read, and a wonderful addition to the grief literature."

—Sue Morris, PsyD., Director of Bereavement Services, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Boston

"Grief can hit us as quickly as a bolt of lightning or silently creep up on us before we even know we're in its grip. *Opening to Grief* is a comforting and elegant collection of healing wisdom that offers differing paths to healing.... The perfect book for our times!"

— Sharon Salzberg, author of *Lovingkindness* and *Real Happiness*

"A wise and sensitive book, this guide to working with grief is a treasure."

— Joan Halifax, Upaya Zen Center, author of *Standing at the Edge* and *Being with Dying*

"This concise, approachable guide offers those experiencing grief ways to understand and process their feelings using mindfulness as a foundation. Willis sees grief as an opportunity to grow and rebuild one's life, and she offers gentle guidance on how to experience that transformation."

—*Library Journal*

About the Authors

Claire B. Willis is a clinical social worker who has worked in the fields of oncology and bereavement for more than 20 years. A cofounder of the Boston nonprofit Facing Cancer Together, Willis has led bereavement, end-of-life, support, and therapeutic writing groups. She has co-taught Spiritual Resources for Healing the Mind, Body, and Soul at Andover Newton Theological School. She maintains a private practice in Brookline, Massachusetts. As a lay Buddhist chaplain ordained by Joan Halifax at Upaya Zen Center in Santa Fe, she focuses on contemplative practices for end-of-life care. For the past five years, she has been a student of Koshin Paley Ellison, a founding teacher at the New York Zen Center for Contemplative Care. Besides *Opening to Grief*, Willis is the author of *Lasting Words: A Guide to Finding Meaning Toward the Close of Life*. OpeningtoGrief.com

Marnie Crawford Samuelson is a documentary photographer, filmmaker, and storyteller. The principal photographer of two books—*The Wild Braid*, a collaboration with poet laureate Stanley Kunitz and poet Genine Lentine, and *Lasting Words* with Claire Willis. Her photos have appeared in national and international magazines including *Newsweek*, *People*, *U.S. News & World Report*, and *Smithsonian*. She has shot and codirected several award-winning short films, including *Fire Station 88.1*, *Keeper*, *Inside Motherwell's Dumpster*, and *By the Waters*. Crawford Samuelson has a BA in political theory from Stanford and an MSc in business from the Sloan School at MIT. She lives in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, and Berkeley, California. BostonPictureGroup.com



Opening to Grief: Finding Your Way from Loss to Peace • Claire B. Willis and Marnie Crawford Samuelson
Dharma Spring • October 12, 2020 • ISBN- 978-1590035122 • Hardcover • 144 pages • \$18.95

Distributed by Red Wheel Weiser



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