



# After the Death of a Child: Living with the Loss Through the Years

*Ann K. Finkbeiner*

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For a parent, losing a child is the most devastating event that can occur. Most books on the subject focus on grieving and recovery, but as most parents agree, there is no recovery from such a loss. This book examines the continued love parents feel for their child and the many poignant and ingenious ways they devise to preserve the bond. Through detailed profiles of parents, Ann Finkbeiner shows how new activities and changed relationships with their spouse, friends, and other children can all help parents preserve a bond with the lost child.

Based on extensive interviews and grief research, Finkbeiner explains how parents have changed five to twenty-five years after the deaths of their children. The first half of the book discusses the short- and long-term effects of the child's death on the parent's relationships with the outside world, that is, with their spouses, other children, friends, and relatives.

The second half of the book details the effect on the parents' internal world: their continuing sense of guilt; their need to place the death in some larger context and their inability sometimes to consistently do so; their new set of priorities; the nature of their bond with the lost child and the subtle and creative ways they have of continuing that bond. Finkbeiner's central point is not so much how parents grieve for their children, but how they love them.

Refusing to fall back on pop jargon about "recovery" or to offer easy solutions or standardized timelines, Finkbeiner's is a genuine and moving search to come to terms with loss. Her complex profiles of parents resonate with the honesty and authenticity of uncomfortable emotions expressed and, most importantly, shared with others experiencing a similar loss. Finally, each profile exemplifies the many heroic ways parents learn to live with their pain, and by so doing, honor the lives their children should have lived.

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