

# Book review

## Resilient Grieving

How to find your way through devastating loss.  
A practical guide to recovery

**Category:** Book Reviews / Self-help

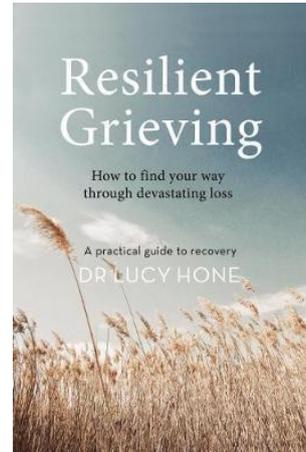
**Author:** Dr Lucy Hone

**Year:** 2017

**Publisher:** Allen & Unwin, NZ

**ISBN:** 9781760296995

**Audience:** Supporting Myself



**Summary:** A compassionate book on grief that offers thoughtful personal observations with well-researched perspectives

This book is a guide to living with intense grief and finding your way through, without letting grief take over. Grief, big grief, can do that – take you and fling you to some faraway place you never thought you'd visit, deeply changing the way you experience the world every day.

What this book offers is a road map of sorts, 'a practical guide to recovery'. As the author herself acknowledges, 'recovery' may not be quite the right word. Grief is not a form of illness and with loss, 'it's not a question of getting it over it'. Rather, it's about accepting what has happened and actively adapting and finding new ways to be in the world.

### Lived experience

Dr Lucy Hone PhD has a master's degree in applied positive psychology and researches resilience and wellbeing. Hence the book's strong focus on evidence-based research. Her motivation for writing on grief however comes from her lived experience – in one terrible car crash, she lost her 11 year old daughter Abi, along with Abi's best friend Ella and Sally, Ella's mother. Grieving these losses, Lucy explains, "I don't want to get over Abi – successful adaptation does not include pushing her out of our lives."

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Is this book useful? Yes, I think it is. I live with grief myself, having lost my son and sister (to suicide) in recent years. This makes it a bit hard to visit Lucy's book at times – the reading experience is personal and I fight at times with Lucy's perspective, while respecting where she is coming from. My resistance focuses mostly around thinking – yeah well, the research is all very well (ha! Science!) but sometimes it's not so easy to just 'shift focus', change your thinking and apply structure to an inner felt experience of pain, loss and (in the case of suicide) guilt (whether justified or not, it's often part of the landscape). And there is value in feeling the pain, even as we heal. Guess what, grief fucking hurts, it just does. It is what it is. No getting around it. You grieve because you loved. And while logically you get it (they have died), emotionally it's hard to comprehend you will never be in their presence again.

But I agree with Lucy – while unavoidable, grief is not something you want to leave in control of your life. Grief can cause damage and dammit, grief is sneaky. It permeates everything and causes havoc in subtle and not so subtle ways. It wears disguises and loves to shout 'Boo!' when you least expect it (as you can see, I've been around grief too long). Strategies for dealing with it are very useful and this is what this book offers.

### **Practical steps and advice**

You can read this book chapter by chapter or dip in and out as you please. Or ask someone you trust to read it to you and help you with the exercises it suggests. You definitely don't have to do the exercises (stick the 'get out of gym, no PE today' pass back in your pocket), you may just want to hear the perspective of someone else in deep grief and know that you are not alone. That struggling to understand and make sense of grief and loss is a very human thing; that it's hard and painful to move forward.

The other thing I've kept in mind is that the author penned this book at a particular time, at a particular point in her experience of loss. As time goes on, the way we look back and understand our grief and the way it works can change. Likewise, scientific perspectives can shift. It's not uncommon for authors of both non-fiction and fiction to look back and argue with their own books later. I can't speak for Dr Lucy Hone, but I would love to know how she would speak back to this book as time goes on. I think it would be a fascinating conversation.

Read this book? Yes, it is compassionate and offers thoughtful personal observations with well-researched perspectives. Do or believe everything it says? No, not necessarily. As Lucy notes, everyone grieves differently and no two bereavement experiences are the same.

**Reviewed by Virginia Brooks, Community Engagement & Health Promotion Officer at the Mental Health Foundation**

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