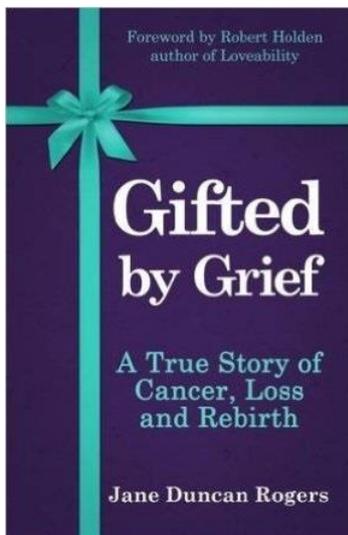


**MACMILLAN
CANCER SUPPORT**

BOOK REVIEWS

Read what people affected by cancer think about...



Gifted by grief. A true story of cancer, loss and rebirth (2015)

Duncan Rogers J.
Wild Wisdom Ltd, 2015.
348pp.
ISBN 9780953740314.
£9.99.

Average star rating 3.3 (out of 5)

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Parts of this book may be hard to read for recently bereaved people, but the open, raw descriptions of what that is like might be well worth that. The tone of the author brought me into her world, she includes excerpts from her journals and those of her husband before his death, which I found helpful.

How useful it will be will very much depend on the reader's experience and preferences. I found it an extraordinary book to read. My only recent bereavement at the time was the untimely death of a beloved pet cat; in terms of losing a family member it is perhaps 'lesser', but I have found that grief is grief whatever you are being forced to let go of, and this book certainly helped. And it helped me with other grief experiences that are now in the past, and it will in the future too I am sure. What I particularly like is that the author does not end her account with the death of her husband but continues sharing her experiences over the years afterwards. She has also set up an online group where people can support each other.

I have experienced several bereavements (56-65) (November 2016)



This book is useful whether you have lost someone or are caring for someone bereft. It is best read after bereavement. Everyone's journey is different, but similar questions and thoughts remain. I wouldn't advise reading it beforehand as everyone needs to find their own way; however, it is an honest and truthful account.

I found it very easy to understand. It is beautifully presented and easy to read. It's a good size, easy to carry around and read.

I like the blunt honesty of this book. It is truthfully written, and it was a relief to read that others thought and felt similar things. The honesty and openness will be a great comfort to others as it was for me.

Recently bereaved (36-45) (January 2019)



I like the fact that this book is based on actual events, feelings, and thoughts. It is probably best read some time after a bereavement, but it will depend on individual feeling. It will help with “moving on”.

It is sometimes difficult to follow the spiritual concepts discussed, e.g. who am I? what is I? There are far too many uses of a swear word (pp 38, 90, 110, 141, 148, 196, 212, 275) and quite a few errors in recording the dates of events. For example: p. 33 mentions going for scan on 10 Oct, but then on p. 39 the author states that people were told the results on 5 Oct - that should be 15 Oct; p 69 has the date Mon 21 Mar and p 71 has Sat 25 Mar – it should be Fri 25 or Sat 26. The timeline goes back and forth and is confusing forth (e.g. p. 220 covers up to 27 Jul, p. 226 then goes back to Jun, and p. 227 mid Aug/Oct). Some sections have a grey shaded background and are hard to read in poor light.

It doesn't give places for help or support, such as Macmillan or Cruise, but deals with the spiritual and philosophical aspects that some will not understand or be into. I would have given it four stars but for the swear words, five without the swearing and with less philosophical stuff.

Macmillan volunteer, bereaved 9.5 years ago (56-65) (April 2017)

I did not really like this book that much, too much new age mumbo jumbo for me, which of course would be great for anyone that way inclined! It does have some practical advice on preparing a detailed list so that any wishes are made clear.

Dental hygienist, and hospice volunteer (46-55) (April 2017)

This book may be useful for anyone facing bereavement. It could be read at any time, before or after bereavement, although the author does talk of the practicalities of life after bereavement and preparation. Her courage in facing inevitability is admirable. The book looks very professional, like a text book, but the whole tone is conversational and easy to understand.

I like Jane's honesty about her less-than-perfect husband (he abandoned his children to go and find himself in India), his vasectomy and her feelings of resentment about not being able to have children as a result, her fears for a lonely future. She is an imperfect human and it helps to be able to relate to that. She loves him very much. However, it is quite a challenging book. I found some of it a bit 'out there' and difficult to take seriously at certain points; for example, her spirituality, her inner voice, and her decision to marry herself.

Jane writes from a highly emotional personal viewpoint. Much of what she speaks of will resonate with people (carers and families) about the devastation of long-term terminal illness and the toll on the partner. She copes in a very proactive way, which is her way, and has a support system that will be familiar to people with a spiritual,

inquisitive mind. Both she and her husband sought an understanding of their place in the universe and she speaks of having visions. These things helped her, as well as a practical approach in other matters. It feels, at times, frenzied and having experienced my husband's bouts of critical illness, I recognised those feelings. There are references to sources of help.

This may well be a Marmite read for some. It is quite useful in parts; the reader needs to cherry pick. I might recommend it, it will depend on their belief systems.

In anticipation and preparation for bereavement (56-65) (January 2017)



Jane's journey through death, grief, and renewal of self/healing is interesting as she begins to question her beliefs from her past self and profession. However, she remains firmly attached to those thoughts and understanding of trying to reconcile herself with who she is and finding out about 'I'.

I found it quite tricky to understand at times, especially when Jane was talking about her deeper side and discoveries. This made me skip much of the book and I am ashamed to say, nearly abandon it, as it goes against my way of understanding. I found her writing selfish at times, though very honest and frank in her thoughts as her husband was dying, for example regretting that she had no children. I found it hard to understand why she felt that she had to forgive her husband for dying; this was weird and incomprehensible to me.

This book held very little value for me, but it could help give hope to others who are grieving, and a new perspective on what has happened, what is happening, and what might happen. I like Jane's openness and frankness. She does not hold back on what she believes. However, I cannot subscribe to Jane's way of thinking; it does not sit happily with me.

As this book is written from a very different standpoint and belief system from the cancer books one usually reads, its usefulness will depend on how open the reader is to having their thoughts and feelings and belief systems challenged or at least expanded. I do not subscribe to Jane's different beliefs and management of thoughts and events, but who am I to question how people respond at times of such gravity.

Living with cancer (myelodysplastic syndrome) (46-55) (July 2017)

Further information

Why does Macmillan Cancer Support review books?

We use reviews to help us compile a list of suggested cancer books, the [Macmillan Core Book List](#). Cancer information centres and public libraries can use this list to select appropriate and relevant books for people affected by cancer.

We add reviews to the [Directory of information materials for people affected by cancer](#) so that people affected by cancer can see what others in a similar situation think about a book. You can also see details of all the books reviewed in the [Book reviews listing](#), which also has links to all the reviews.

We recruit most of our reviewers through the [Volunteering Village](#) and the [Cancer Voices Network](#), people affected by cancer who have signed up to help Macmillan Cancer Support in a number of ways. Volunteers are a vital part of our book review process; since 2007, over 1,500 Macmillan volunteers have written more than 6,000 reviews of over 500 different books.

If you are a health professional who would like to review books for us, please [email Sue Hawkins](#), Information Materials Researcher, Macmillan Cancer Support.

Information and support for people affected by cancer

If you are looking for support to help you live life with cancer, you may wish to contact one of [Macmillan's cancer information and support services](#). Or you can call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00** (Mon-Fri 9am–8pm). We have an interpreting service in over 200 languages. Just state, in English, the language you wish to use. If you are deaf or hard of hearing you can use textphone no 0808 808 0121 or Text Relay.

You can also email us using the [website enquiry form](#). Alternatively, [visit our website](#).

Feedback

If you have any comments, please [email Sue Hawkins](#), Information Materials Researcher, Macmillan Cancer Support.

Being told ‘you have cancer’ can affect so much more than your health – it can also affect your family, your job, even your ability to pay the bills. But you’re still you. We get that. And, after over 100 years of helping people through cancer, we get what’s most important: that you’re treated as a person, not just a patient.

It’s why we’ll take the time to understand you and all that matters to you, so we can help you get the support you need to take care of your health, protect your personal relationships and deal with money and work worries.

We’re here to help you find your best way through from the moment of diagnosis, so you’re able to live life as fully as you can. For information, support or just someone to talk to, call 0808 808 00 00 or visit macmillan.org.uk

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