

Books for Caring and Healing

It is said that one picture is worth a thousand words. Picture can be powerful images that can help with healing or grieving, be calming, rekindle fond memories and bring joy. Two books in the Caregivers Support Network lending library have these qualities.

Author James E. Miller has written several books in the The Willowgreen Series that contain “spiritual reflections, insights and guidance that bring understanding and renewal to life’s most challenging times.” Miller is a clergyman, grief counselor, photographer, writer and video producer who has incorporated his many talents in the creation of these books.

In both, *The Caregiver’s Book: Caring for Another, Caring for Yourself* and *Winter Grief, Summer Grace: Returning to Life After a Loved One Dies* he tackles the issues head on, combining healthy doses of understanding and compassion, with practical suggestions to help in common situations. In each book he blends the text with beautiful color images of nature and inspiring quotations.

In *The Caregiver’s Book: Caring for Another, Caring for Yourself*, Miller has broken the topic of caregiving into eight general sections; each with its own set of practical suggestions. He begins with one of the most important, “The healthiest way to care for another is to care for yourself.” He echoes the motivation of most caregivers to want to ease their loved one’s pain, to put their interests ahead of their own; but he cautions, “...without being aware of what you’re doing, and for the best of reasons, you can also endanger your caregiving.” Helpful suggestions for caring for yourself begin with becoming aware of your own personal needs, such a planning for breaks. Another section offers ideas for dealing with your feelings, such as finding someone to talk with, or writing about your thoughts in a journal. Other chapters deal with establishing boundaries, accepting care, and being flexible; equally inspiring yet practical.

The second book in the series, *Winter Grief, Summer Grace: Returning to Life After a Loved One Dies* is equally direct in dealing with grieving. “Someone who has been a part of your days on earth no longer walks the earth with you. Life is not the same. And it hurts.” The book follows the seasons of nature, just as grief has stages; summer fades into autumn, autumn slips into winter, winter awakens into spring and spring blossoms into summer again. Each season or chapters speaks honestly to the reader about grief before offering suggestions to help with that stage. In autumn, Miller suggests saving mementos of your loved one’s life and finding someone to share your thoughts and feelings with. The cold and dreariness of winter is also true of grief when it may take an extra effort on your part during this time; being part of a support group, volunteering and walking outside in nature are some ideas. “As you journey through all the seasons of your grieving, you will discover what countless others have discovered before you: that you have changed. You will never again be the person you once were. You will have lost, but in addition to the losing – because of the losing – you will have gained.”