

FIERCE Illumination

Grief As A Spiritual Teacher
By Martin Chesler

"There is a secret medicine given only to those who hurt so hard they can't hope. The hopers would feel slighted if they knew." -Rumi

Martin Chesler lost his 22 year-old son, Ofir, in a car accident - a horrific tragedy that threatened to effectively end both their lives. Grief stricken, his life in shambles, he hit rock bottom. It was only then, when he hurt so hard he could not hope anymore, that he was gifted with a secret medicine - a way to turn his inconsolable grief into a blessing.

This book is that story, Chesler felt compelled to share his raw but tender journey with anyone in the midst of suffering a great loss because his experience could inspire hope by revealing what is possible. He invites the reader to consider the unthinkable: that grief is not the beast we have been taught to fear, but rather a powerful, elemental force - like love. The force can destroy, but it is not malevolent. It can also be a great teacher.

A plethora of books have been written on grief, including many that have focused on the loss of a child, which is arguably the greatest and most traumatic loss an adult will ever face. But this book is unique. It is an experience of grief that is distinguished from other books *about* grief. It does not discuss grief in academic or distant, philosophical terms; it does not treat grief scientifically, as something to be studied or dissected; it does not set out to analyze grief as something to be overcome, resolved or even understood.

"Fierce Illumination portrays a compelling contemporary quest with grief as the catalyst for deep psychological and spiritual transformation. Martin Chesler takes us inside his vivid journey of loss and suffering with acute authenticity and self-revelation until we reach his final breakthroughs which are both luminous and profound."

-James O'Dea: former President of the Institute of Noetic Sciences, celebrated activist and author

Chesler treats grief for what it is: the other face of love - a powerful, but natural, human response to loss. In *Fierce Illumination*, grief is met head on - as a force that must be reckoned with. Grief is alive and dynamic in the book, a living character in the story. As such, it has the capacity to be constructive or destructive; a teacher or a destroyer.

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None of us is spared the pain of loss; it comes for all of us, in one form or another. Yet, as pervasive as loss is, we seem to view it not as a natural part of life, but as a terrifying stranger. Western culture, especially, denies death. All of us, and men in particular, have been taught to deny our grief, to be tough and not give into emotion, to “soldier on,” to get over it. Sadly, this philosophy has a devastating effect. To the extent that we refuse to grieve, we deny life. In time, we become like ghosts. Our lives are haunted by deep, unprocessed wounds.

"Fierce Illumination is the diary of a Phoenix. In its scrupulous attention to emotional detail, it will provide the deepest solace to those who have experienced the loss of a child.

But *Fierce Illumination* is much more, it provides a medicine for the many experiences of loss that are so prevalent at this hour. In this writing, Chesler describes, in a tender, human narrative, his process of dismantling, reorganizing, reframing, and reorienting to a new version of power, as a human, yes, but more particularly—and certainly more rarely—as a male of our kind. He gives us here a view that most have never witnessed before. This offering, in its particular voice, in its inquiry, in its emotional depth, in its vulnerability, is therefore more than just a truly moving story of triumph over indescribable loss, it is also a map of understanding and perhaps an invitation to the process of deep transformation that is calling to our kind, and, specifically, to Men's Nation."

- Pat McCabe, known as Women Stands Shining, is a Dine' (Navajo) mother, grandmother, activist, artist, writer, ceremonial leader and international speaker

Although grief nearly destroyed Chesler, that was only the first part of the story. Grief then becomes a catalyst for a deep and profound experience of self-discovery.

"Nobody is ready for loss, especially the loss of one's child. It is an aberration out of the natural order, and for many, breaks their spirit. For Chesler, however, it marks the beginning of a dramatic journey beyond boundaries, one that penetrates the veil between the worlds, making for a remarkable and inspiring book. *Fierce Illumination* is a compelling narrative spoken with a raw power that is simultaneously poignant and profound. Grief itself is a character in the book —a living beast, capable of transformation. Out of the depths of grief, life falls apart, but something new is born. At first, the newborn is mutant, uncomfortable, and out of place; but by the end, it is a man who has learned much about transforming separation and pain into abiding love and interconnection."

-Glenn Aparicio Parry, PhD, is the Nautilus-award winning author, Original Thinking: A Radical Revisioning of Time, Humanity, and Nature

Chesler's book is needed to help readers explore the following ideas:

- Loss/grief does not have to be devastating.
- Counter to all we have been taught, loss/grief is a gift. But we only learn this if we are willing to embrace, honor and respect it for what it truly is.

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- If one is willing to dive deep into the wound, to sit in “the fire” and remain there for as long as it takes, then, when the time is right, something new, special and beautiful can, and will emerge.
- Life/Death and Love/ Grief are different sides of the same coin. Honor and praise the whole, not only some of its faces.
- Control is an illusion. Surrender and acceptance are powerful philosophies to live by daily and in all facets of our lives.

Fierce Illumination is a must read for:

- Anyone who has suffered a major loss.
- Men who have experienced loss, but are finding it difficult to process grief, or feelings in general. The Feminine/Masculine plays a significant role in the book and reveals that it is possible for a man to engage one’s feminine side without compromising his masculinity - to the contrary it only enhances it. The goal is to bring the two into balance.
- Women who are friends and partners of men who have suffered loss, to help them better understand how some men react to loss and grief.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Born and raised in South Africa, Chesler moved to Israel after graduating high school, and shortly thereafter launched a large cotton growing venture. After immigrating to California in 1981, he started many successful business ventures, primarily in agriculture; married, and raised 3 boys. After the tragic death of his son, Ofir, a grief-stricken Chesler embarked upon a journey to find his son that was really a journey to find himself. This ten-year period was not only a recovery from grief but an exploration of all things metaphysical, leading to the writing of *Fierce Illumination*, his first book, which has already received critical acclaim. Chesler is now writing a second book, a novel titled *The Alchemy of Remembering* that alternates between two different time periods and places (New Mexico in the 1800's and present-day California) while exploring themes of Native wisdom and spirituality. An avid outdoorsman, Chesler now lives in northern New Mexico, where he devotes much of his free time to biking, hiking, or fly fishing.

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