A Practical book for working through the death of a spouse (for widows or widowers)

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The 226 page book “Widow to Widow: Thoughtful, Practical Ideas for Rebuilding Your Life, by Genevieve Ginsburg was published in 1995 with revisions in 1997. Ginsburg is an author and marriage councilor, and a widow, who founded the Widowed to Widowed Services, a support group in Tucson, Arizona. The seeds of the book began when the author was widowed and began a support group for widows. She refers to this book as “a support group between covers”, and it is the result of working with hundreds of widows and widowers.

The book is in five parts:
1. A Ton of Bricks (being hit with shock of a death).
2. Rebuilding Your Life (operating as an individual rather than as a couple).
3. From Widowhood to Selfhood (accommodating widowhood, regardless of how long it takes).
4. Besides Which (focused on young widows dealing with parents, children and other things).
5. Resources (further reading).

This book is addressed to both to widowers and widows but because there are a greater number of widows there is an emphasis on them. The book is useful not only for people that became widows unexpectedly or in anticipation of a prolonged illness, it is also useful for people that have to deal with recent widows. As we approach retirement age and beyond, sooner or later everyone will be in this situation. Early in the book the author highlights what friends and relatives should know, as well as what widows should know, and emphasizes that everyone is different -- there is no one approach that works for everyone.

After the initial shock of becoming a widow, a grieving process comes next, followed by an anger process (for example, what if the doctor had just tried a different approach). This grieving process has different forms and could last a few months or a few years; specific stages of grieving are identified in the book. The author also points out that grieving is a process and not a series of specific events. But you need to get on with your life, even though the grieving process may linger, other activities are necessary. Activities vary by person, but the author lists a variety of activities, and how to find time for them and how to get used to them. Some activities, when the time is right, is to empty the closets, clean the house, exercise, potentially move to a new location, or other appropriate changes in your life.

If things go well, after some period of time has passed, decisions will have to be made and the widow is the one that has to make them. Some choices can be in the context of what the husband (or wife) might have done in a similar situation, or talking issues over with a friend or reading a book (like this one) may help. In the end, however, a decision has to be made and the author's advice is "just do it."

Another audience for this book is the immediate family of the widow. This includes in-laws, children, siblings, parents, and close friends. It is particularly important to be aware of these audiences during special events. Such as birthday celebrations or holidays. The author acknowledges the difficulty of this situation by the simple statement of "who takes care of whom?" Of course money will surface as an issue sooner or later. Simply inventorying assets or debts may turn out to be a difficult job depending on how much was done before the death. Keeping records monitoring credit cards and insurance policies now becomes important steps.
There comes a time when the widow can move on with her (his) life, and this includes developing your own identity, finding appropriate amounts of work, volunteering, traveling, or playing. The book has suggestions for finding, participating in, and organizing support groups. It organizes available resources by type of need, and it provides a “widow’s survival checklist”.

Finally, the author recommends keeping a journal and describes various purposes and methods of doing this as part of the overall grieving and adjustment process.

[Link to Amazon.com reviews for this book]
[Link to a preview on Google Books (including a table of contents and sample chapters)].

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