Seasons of Healing: A Suicide Survivor’s Notebook
By Emily Marshall Stuparyk
Reviewed by Ginny Sparrow

A combination and collection of poems (mostly by the author), anecdotes, notes, journal entries and stories from the author’s life in the year following her close friend’s suicide, *Seasons of Healing: A Suicide Survivor’s Notebook* by Emily Marshall Stuparyk is like a gentle hand holding yours during the grieving process. Divided into sections broken down by solstices and equinoxes, the book is filled with the journal entries, questions and feelings you might have written yourself right after the death of your own friend or family member. It’s a glimpse into another person’s experience after the sudden loss of a loved one, and helps normalize others’ experiences by asking the same questions and sharing the same thoughts most of us have after a similar loss.

After losing her close friend to suicide, Stuparyk spent time reflecting, journaling, going through old cards, memories and emails, and shares many of them graciously with readers. The book, rather than being a how-to guide for moving through grief or understanding suicide, is more of Stuparyk’s first-hand experience of how she started to process her friend’s death and began her own journey of healing—mostly through her own poetry and journal entries. The readers are along for the ride, so to speak. It’s a personal peek into the vulnerable workings of a mind after such a trauma, which is a helpful tool when you’re going through something similar.

Being a long-time journal keeper, Stuparyk’s entries are meaningful and moving. And her poetry is powerful in its simplicity. At one point, she finds entries from the last week of her friend’s life, chronicling what she was doing that week. She finds herself compelled to go through the details of the days and weeks leading up to the death, turning things over in her mind and struggling to understand why...why she did it and what to do now. Anyone who has survived a suicide loss can relate to these intense feelings and unanswered questions.

I found myself thinking yes, and practically shaking my head with understanding during many sections of the book. After reading many other books about suicide...stories, more scientific explanations, stories recounted, this was something altogether new and refreshing. A collection of short tidbits you can dig into for moments and come back to at a later time. You can read it all at once, or read a little bit here and there.

The way she discusses and addresses anniversaries, memories, time, reality, friendship and more, is emotional and also represents so many shared experiences for suicide loss survivors.

This book is a gift that helps you process your own loss by sharing in the author’s. I would recommend it as a part of your grief library, to come back to over and over.