Suicide Tsunami: Living in the Aftermath
By Sheralyn Rose
Reviewed by William Feigelman, PhD

Although Sheralyn Rose’s title *Suicide Tsunami* (Bloomington, IN: Balboa Press, 2015) may puzzle some readers, her slim volume of 130 pages adds heft to the literature on suicide bereavement. This heartfelt, deeply probing self-examination details the author’s struggle to accept her husband’s sudden and unexpected disappearance and suicide after a more than 30-year union of living and raising a family together. Her husband, Peter, took his life in a nearby woodland and was not found until 22 days afterwards, presenting the family with its own unique agony of not knowing whether he actually died or simply was lost in the woods. It later appeared that his suicide was at least partly attributable to PTSD that left its imprint on Peter’s psyche, sustained 30 years earlier as an Australian combat veteran in the Vietnam War. Like most bereaved by suicide family members Rose relentlessly recounts going over the “why did he die” question unceasingly and unspARINGLY examining her own possible contributions to the death.

Only several years later is she able to absolve herself fully of any blameworthiness. At least three things make Rose’s suicide bereavement memoir stand out as especially worthy of our attention. For one, the author holds an advanced degree in sociology and is a very skillful writer. She does a creditworthy job of absorbing the suicide bereavement literature and reflecting her experience against this broader perspective. For another, most compellingly, she is able to articulate her shocked recognition of the artifice that had held her and her husband together over their long history, as she began to fully absorb the depths of her husband’s psychological frailties that his suicide revealed. For another, Rose is able to position her own individual bereavement journey within a framework with about 18 other suicide bereaved individuals, mostly survivors of spouse loss. As Rose charts her own bereavement course within this social context she is able to show the commonalities experienced by the suicide bereaved. It would have been helpful if Rose had told readers more about how she managed to find these other survivors (and her associations with other survivors in support groups if they occurred) in her quest for healing. Survivor’s healing journeys are often advanced as the bereaved make contact with bereaved others and realize they are no longer alone and isolated. New contacts and friendships with bereaved others helps them to advance to a “new normal.” Without charting this important part of her journey, seemingly suddenly, and almost miraculously, in year five after the death the author’s self-flagellation ceases and she enters into a more accepting stage of her loss and bereavement. This important transition was aided by her associations in the bereavement community.

At the end of her book Rose offers a five page section of helpful suggestions for the suicide bereaved to alleviate their self-torment, isolation and anguish that most suicide bereaved inevitably experience. This book is most helpful and enlightening, especially for survivors of spousal loss.