Voices of Healing and Hope: Conversations on Grief after Suicide

By Iris Bolton

Reviewer: Michael F Myers, MD

Iris Bolton has done it again - but even better! Her best seller “My Son, My Son: A Guide to Healing after Death, Loss, or Suicide”, released in 1984, was one of the first, if not the first, testimonials written by a survivor of suicide loss. The book, artfully and tenderly penned by a grieving mother, has soothed, inspired and saved the lives of countless readers across the globe. And now, 33 years later, we have “Voices of Healing and Hope: Conversations on Grief after Suicide.” It is a tour de force. What a gift!

The volume itself is handsome and beautifully designed with a hummingbird motif (symbolizing renewal) that is eye catching and inviting. It comes with a rich companion DVD that enhances the printed word of the many narratives inside. The interviews are masterful, moving, crisply edited and technically superb.

Part One gives an overview of the mystery of suicide, including its trauma and growth. Part Two is unique. She describes eight primal cycles of grief: Why?, Guilt, Shame/Stigma, Anger, Pain, Fear, Depression and Faith Questions. The reader can digest and learn the content as well as listen to and watch all of these cycles being discussed by the survivors she interviewed. They are also summarized by a therapist-survivor Dr Doreen Marshall who not only describes losing her fiancé Christopher to suicide but also provides humanistic commentary that is very therapeutic to the reader. Part
Three returns to more information about suicide, wisdom acquired and a description of the Memorial Quilt and its history. Part Four covers suicide in the military and Iris’ own experience with the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995. She captures both the horror and the healing, including her own experiences with (and photographs of) the 112 year old elm tree nearby. At the end of the book, there are many passages of favorite readings and quotes, resources for survivors of suicide and pages of bibliography and suggested readings.

I am one of the fortunate people - and there are many of us - who knows Iris (and her prince of a husband Jack) personally through the AAS. This book “channels” Iris herself. It is radiating, bountiful and lovingly inclusive. Very few books of this size have 13 pages of Acknowledgements! But anyone who knows and loves Iris like I do would not be surprised. Grace.

I give the book five stars. Buy it and recommend it highly to your families, friends, patients, clients and students.