

Swallowed by a Snake

The gift of the masculine side of healing
Second Edition



Thomas R. Golden

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2nd Edition

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Swallowed By A Snake

The Gift of the
Masculine Side of Healing

Second Edition

Thomas R. Golden, LCSW

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Preface to the Second Edition

The response to *Swallowed by a Snake: The Gift of the Masculine Side of Healing* has been amazing and gratifying. Both men and women have used this book in their healing process, and many have shared their grief experiences with me. In this light, the second edition of *Swallowed by a Snake* includes an Epilogue describing my own grief process.

The essays comprising the Epilogue were written following the death of my father. They trace my own healing through individual, communal, and family rituals and actions that helped me to express and heal my grief. They follow the path of my healing, from delivering the funeral eulogy through planting a tree in his honor and designing a family commemoration on the anniversary of his death to finally watching the tide of my grief begin to recede.

I offer these essays as a window into one man's experience of grief, and an example of how the concepts and suggestions of this book can be translated into concrete actions of healing. I hope you will find my experience beneficial in your own journey toward healing.

Tom Golden
July 2000

Introduction

Swallowed by a Snake is a book that both men and women will find helpful. A man reading these pages will find a book that honors the uniqueness of a man's path toward healing. A woman reading this book will benefit not only from gaining a deeper understanding of the men in her life, she will find herself in these pages. Although the majority of examples are about men it is an indisputable fact that women find this masculine gift a powerful ally in their own path toward healing. Both genders have access to the gift of the masculine side of healing. Each of us has both masculine and feminine qualities—it is our unique blend of these that determines our best path to healing.

The masculine side of healing is not as accepted a mode of healing as the more traditional verbal and emotional expressions. It tends to be quieter and less visible, less connected with the past and more connected with the future; less connected with passivity and more aligned with action. As a consequence, I have noticed repeatedly that people who use a predominance of this masculine side of healing are suspected even by mental health professionals of “not really healing.”

As a beginning grief therapist in the late 1970's I can remember the difference I felt when a new client I would receive was a man or a woman. Somehow a woman seemed easier to work with, requiring

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What Is Grief?

Grief is the garden of the heart.

Rumi

Grief is a part of life. We are familiar with our responses to gain and celebration, and grief is the other side of that coin. Grief, simply put, is the physical, emotional, and mental responses we have to a loss of any kind. We expect grief to flow from a major loss such as the death of a friend or family member, but it can also flow in smaller amounts from ordinary, everyday losses. Such losses might be the conclusion of your favorite time of year, a holiday, or being in a traffic jam and late for an important meeting. These smaller losses are examples of what is termed micro-grief. Grief can be related to losses of childhood, such as the loss of seeing the world as a safe place, or all of the unmet expectations, thwarted intentions, or unspoken communications we might have stored inside us. When looked at in this way, we begin to see that grief is an integral part of being alive, a part of our daily living. It is woven into the fabric of life.