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On My Own

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Diane Rehm



Synopsis

In a deeply personal and moving book, the beloved NPR radio host speaks out about the long drawn-out death (from Parkinson's) of her husband of fifty-four years, and of her struggle to reconstruct her life without him. With John gone, Diane was indeed "on her own," coping with the inevitable practical issues and, more important, with the profoundly emotional ones. What to do, how to react, reaching out again into the world—struggling to create a new reality for herself while clinging to memories of the past. Her focus is on her own roller-coaster experiences, but she has also solicited the moving stories of such recently widowed friends as Roger Mudd and Susan Stamberg, which work to expose the reader to a remarkable range of reactions to the death of a spouse. John's unnecessarily extended death—he begged to be helped to die—culminated in his taking matters into his own hands, simply refusing to take water, food, and medication. His heroic actions spurred Diane into becoming a kind of poster person for the "right to die" movement that is all too slowly taking shape in our country. With the brave determination that has characterized her whole life, she is finding a meaningful new way to contribute to the world. Her book—as practical as it is inspiring—will be a help and a comfort to the recently bereaved, and a beacon of hope about the possibilities that remain to us as we deal with our own approaching mortality.

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Customer Reviews

Diane is a brilliant interviewer and I have never tired of listening to her, even when I don't agree with her. A friend raved about the book and I was intrigued. Frankly, I was quite confused at the contradictions. I especially didn't understand how she kept framing the challenges of her marriage, but seemed to only have wonderful things to say about her husband and how they related to each other in such special ways. At times when I thought she was going to bare her soul, the book became more "surfacy." I really thought it would get better and more interested, but it just didn't work for me.

Diane Rehm tells us "I don't believe in closure, some part of me will grieve forever." In the first year of grief, after her husband, John, died, Diane Rehm shares with us her personal loss. A lifetime of memories, the good and the bad, the times of her life. Down the path of grief, loss and finding oneself alone and moving on. Diane and John Rehm were married for 54 years, they had two children, a mostly loving marriage. He was a lawyer for the State Department, and Diane is the host of the NPR, 'Diane Rehm Show'. How often I have listened to this NPR program, with such brilliant discussions on every topic imaginable. I have learned a lot listening to this program, and I have learned from Diane Rehm as she tells us her story of her marriage and her husband's death. John Rehm had Parkinson's Disease, and at a point in the disease he could not care for himself and entered a facility for care. His disease progressed, and there came a time when he was unable to complete any personal task for himself and he had had enough and wanted to die. They lived in Washington, DC, and their doctor could not assist John with his death. What John could and would do was to stop eating, drinking and stopped all his medications. He was not in pain and was kept comfortable, but it took 10 days for him to die. Since that time Diane has become a strong advocate for 'The right to die debate.' In the first year we hear how Diane coped everyday. Several friends who were widowed and widowers give their input into how they have lived their lives after the death of their spouse. The holidays, the anniversaries, the parties, the social events that one must attend alone. The grieving that does not end, missing John becomes evident as each day passes. But Diane makes plans to move on, not to give up her grief, but to live her new life. This is an uplifting novel even through the sad and difficult times. Resilience and strength and a job to go to everyday

certainly helps. Diane has a new purpose as an advocate and spokesperson for Parkinson's Disease and for 'The Right To Die Debate.' This is an honest and emotional account of one woman's life before and after her husband's death. Highly Recommended. prisrob 02-03-16

Having lost my husband recently, I felt lost and alone..came across a review for this book and ordered it immediately.. I cried through the entire book, because it made me see and know there was someone else, and so many others, who shared what I was enduring. I came away feeling better about the process of loss and grieving. I understood that whatever walk in life as women we have chosen, the process of grief is the journey we travel together.. It gave me hope and peace of mind, and I will share this book by gifting to the women I know are struggling with the same questions. Thank you so much!!

Excellent book for grieving spouses. This was recommended by a friend who had lost his wife. I found it a very thought provoking and honest story about Diane Rehm's journey through the grief process. Not only the grief you feel when you lose someone you love, but the grieving process that is gone through when this person has a long term debilitating illness. You may shed a few tears while reading it, but I think it helps people understand the roller coaster of emotions that occur after you have lost someone you love. Many times we wonder if what we are going through is "normal", and this helps reinforce that there is no "normal". Everyone grieves in their own way and in their own time.

If you've experienced the great misfortune of losing your spouse following a long-term marriage, you will certainly relate to this book much as I did. Keeping a journal is frequently prescribed as a method of surviving the grieving process. I found Diane's book to be an excellent example. The book is a warm and personal expression of her struggles following the loss of her husband. I sincerely hope that she found some measure of relief through the process of writing the book. I highly recommend it to those who are also grieving following the loss of a loved one.

I've listened to Diane Rehm for years on NPR. Honestly, I have to say I expected a lot more from her latest book, "On My Own". For me, it was ultimately a very introspective examination of her marriage to a man I have to wonder if she ever really loved. She tries to convince the reader that what they had was a special relationship, but frankly, that's difficult to buy. There is a lot of guilt that comes through in what was for me a rather ill-organized book. There is actually very little about the

death process, I think. I was looking for something that provided some insight into something we all must face. Sadly, I didn't really see anything like that. The book seemed repetitive and a bit scattered in thought. I can tell that she and her husband experienced many things we would never want to experience. We all wish for that comfortable, relatively painless and quick death. She says she's working to give people that option, but I am left to wonder why the couple didn't recognize what was clearly coming for them and simply move to a state whose laws would have made his death so much easier. The book wasn't depressing as such. It just held no real meaning or substance for me. I was hoping for so much more than she was able to share. In the end it seemed Ms. Rehm was too concerned about her career and her future. With the resources they had at their disposal I think most of what her husband had to endure would never have had to happen.

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