

NEWTON AUTHOR

Book helps youngsters understand grieving

By Laura Lovett

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How do you talk to kids about death? It is a difficult question that even the most experienced parents struggle with.

After the deaths of his father and grandmother, Dan Widrich began to write a children's book about grief in 1989 when he was just 7. It was a long time coming, but Widrich finally released his book, "Love Overcomes Grief," in 2014.

On March 16, Widrich will speak about the book at the New England Mobile Book Fair on Needham Street.

"I went looking for a book I could not find," said Widrich about his inspiration to write "Love Overcomes Grief."

He put the book down for years but came back to it after the attacks on 9/11 when he realized there was a need for it.

"I started the first draft and it was really very vague," said Widrich. "I had to put it down for many years because it was too painful."

Widrich worked with his step-grandmother, Ruth Greenstein, who illustrated the book. He explained children are visual learners so pictures



Dan Widrich will speak about his book 'Love Overcomes Grief' at the New England Mobile Book Fair March 16. COURTESY PHOTO

are important. Unlike many authors, Widrich was able to see every illustration and give feedback before the book went to print.

Some of the pictures feature parts of the funeral process. This is something Widrich believes will help prepare children to attend a funeral. There are also photos of his family members who have passed, personalizing the text.

Sadly, Greenstein did not live to see the

publication of the book.

The book takes readers through the grief process from losing the loved one to the funeral and burial rituals to dealing with the feelings after.

"Life isn't fair but we need to go on," said Widrich. "From my experience if there is a loved one that is dying or sick, tell them you love them. I tell people it does get easier but it will never be the same. It will always be in your heart."

The book is not just for

children: At the beginning of the book there is a note to parents, which includes the five stages of grief.

One of the key components to the book is a list of activities that families can do when grieving.

Many of the activities come from the period of time after Widrich's father died. Widrich's mother, Lynn Widrich recalled telling her son to draw a picture of what he remembered about his father right after his death. Eventually he created a flipbook, an activity suggested in the book.

The activities range from creating cards for the loved one who passed to playing with friends.

Widrich says that readers at different ages will use the book differently. Children may be more inclined to do the activities where teens and adults may be more interested in some of the factual information.

"Everyone deals with grief differently," he said.

The book is circulating around the Newton Free Library, funeral homes and psychologist's offices, according to Lynn Widrich. She also hopes to share the book with police and fire departments.