Finding Comfort During Hard Times by Earl Johnson

Reviews

There have been both natural and man-made disasters throughout history, but fires, floods, and mass shootings seem to be daily events in the twenty-first century. On the scenes of catastrophes are men and women willing to hand out coffee and blankets, provide medical attention, put out fires, and listen to the survivors. Johnson, an openly gay hospital chaplain and one of the founders of the Spiritual Care function in the American Red Cross, has himself comforted survivors at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, counseled AIDS patients, and provided spiritual help to 9/11’s first responders. In this thoughtful book, he uses his experiences to lay out guidelines for offering solace and support to victims and caregivers alike the first day, first week, even the first year following a disaster. . . . Opportunities to help are all around, and Johnson suggests ways to reach out to others who are suffering loss, illness, and loneliness. Disasters will
continue, and Johnson’s informative and moving book will help readers offer succor.
(Booklist, Starred Review)

Earl Johnson learned the hard way how to minister comfort in the worst of circumstances. He did it. In *Finding Comfort during Hard Times*, Johnson uses his experiences in the aftermath of catastrophe and unbearable loss to share the art of comfort, for those who need it and those who want to offer it. A timely read in a world where comfort is in short supply. (Candy Crowley, Journalist)

We live in very troubling times, unfortunately. So many people are in serious need of help and real healing. Earl Johnson has written a book for them and for our times. *Finding Comfort*, written with great empathy and clarity, will be an invaluable resource for victims of trauma and disasters. (James Reginato, Writer-at-Large, Vanity Fair)

Earl Johnson has written a thoughtful and helpful book for anyone who serves as a chaplain. (Harry Baker Adams, Dean, The Divinity School, Yale University)

The world around us has changed so much in recent years with greater frequency of events tied to terrorism, weather calamities and conflict. All of us need to be better prepared for the real world. That’s exactly the course that Earl Johnson masterfully charts in *Finding Comfort*. (Scott Widmeyer, Founding Managing Partner and Chief Strategy Officer, Finn Partners)

Based on his deep and varied experience at the front line of many of our Nation’s high-profile emergencies and disasters, Earl Johnson gives us an easy-to-use field-guide for our roles as caregivers to be catalysts of healing. *Finding Comfort during Hard Times* should be required reading for medical, social, psychological, and spiritual caregivers who are engaged in preparation, response and recovery from emergencies or disasters as well as for all of us who interact with individuals who have experienced those events. (Lawrence R. Deyton, MPSH, MD, Murdock Head Professor of Medicine and Health Policy, Senior Associate Dean for Clinical Public Health, The George Washington University)

Earl’s contribution brings sufferers and their comforters together at the corner of *Painful Realities* and *Caring Practicalities*. The reader makes a pedagogical journey with Earl through his decades of ministry, both as provider and administrative leader, into the most devastating, violent, and horrific national events into which spiritual care professionals have been called to care. You will come away feeling the tears, wounded by the shards of broken lives, and appreciating the long-term systematic changes imposed by these crises. And, you will come away better prepared to help. It’s a textbook with heart. (Ronald C. Oliver, PhD, MBA, BCC, System Vice President, Mission & Outreach, Norton Healthcare, KY, President, Association of Professional Chaplains)

Clearly and masterfully written. *Finding Comfort during Hard Times* provides an enormously practical and comforting spiritual road map to help us all manage disasters—natural and otherwise—at a time we need it most. (Michael Giordano, MD, Former Clinician and Research HIV Physician)

When disaster strikes, there are immediate needs for safety, shelter and nutrition. But along with these are the emotional and spiritual wounds that can damage and destroy hope and happiness in individuals and their communities. Chaplain Johnson has woven his considerable experience with treating such devastating injuries into a dynamic and practical guide to the care and nurture of everyday people walking though catastrophic days. This is a vital book for anyone who seeks to help those who are hurting move towards hope and redemption in the wake of horrific experience. (Sidney Symington, former Hospital and State Prison Chaplain; Rector, St. Peter’s by the Sea Episcopal Church, Morro Bay, California.)
Earl Johnson’s “Finding Comfort During Hard Times” is an encyclopedic handbook on how to give care and offer comfort. It is an incredibly wise, gentle and thoughtful road map on how to survive the trauma, both anticipated and unexpected, of the deep emotional challenges of loss we face as individuals, a family or community so that we, in turn, can provide assistance, solace and hope either as a professional or volunteer. “We comfort because we care. We comfort because we love,” writes Johnson. This book offers a clear “how to” in ways that are appropriate, practical and richly informed so that both the care-giver and the comforted are well-protected and embraced. Johnson’s book is a revelatory examination of how to do what he calls “sacred work.” Oscar Wilde wrote, “The smallest act of kindness is worth more than the grandest intention.” With “Finding Comfort in Hard Times,” Earl Johnson successfully and gracefully provides us with both.

Tom Viola,
Executive Director, Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS.

Earl Johnson was one of the founders of the Spiritual Care function in the American Red Cross. He helped develop the organization’s Psychological First Aid curriculum and Coping with Deployment. Johnson worked on “Light Our Way” for the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster

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Available for pre-order at your local independent bookstore or Amazon.com.

Publication date moved up to March 24, 2020.