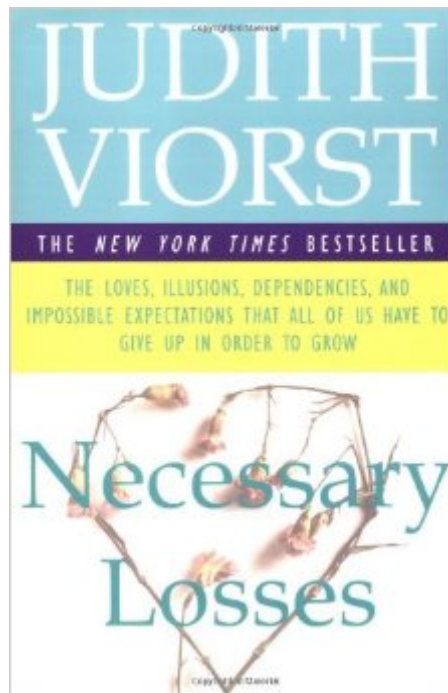


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# Necessary Losses: The Loves, Illusions, Dependencies, And Impossible Expectations That All Of Us Have To Give Up In Order To Grow



## Synopsis

From grief and mourning to aging and relationships, poet and Redbook contributor Judith Viorst presents a thoughtful and researched study in this examination of love, loss, and letting go. Drawing on psychoanalysis, literature, and personal experience, *Necessary Losses* is a philosophy for understanding and accepting life's inevitabilities. In *Necessary Losses*, Judith Viorst turns her considerable talents to a serious and far-reaching subject: how we grow and change through the losses that are a certain and necessary part of life. She argues persuasively that through the loss of our mothers' protection, the loss of the impossible expectations we bring to relationships, the loss of our younger selves, and the loss of our loved ones through separation and death, we gain deeper perspective, true maturity, and fuller wisdom about life. She has written a book that is both life affirming and life changing.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I spent a couple of years of my clinical training working at an agency that offers grief counseling and maintains a twenty-four hour suicide prevention hotline. I chose Ms. Viorst's wonderful book to write a report required for the agency's training class in grief counseling. We also were given an assignment to prepare a list of the losses we experienced over the course of our lives. What an enlightening exercise, especially as we listened to fellow students share what they'd written! Others' losses reminded many of us of events we'd forgotten, events that had affected us profoundly. It is so easy to forget what is most painful! Contrary to what some reviewers have said, the information that Ms. Viorst offers in her excellent book is not widely appreciated. I've worked with grief clients whose

therapist referred them to the agency when they experienced a significant loss. I've been on the hotline when therapists as well as regular folks called with their bewilderment at how to respond to the loss of a loved one, or equally baffling, how to be with a friend who has experienced such loss. Ms. Viorst normalizes the inevitability of loss and rightly observes how our growing capacity to hold ourselves open to these losses deepens our human experience. I've recommended the book many times to both clients and friends. I encourage those who pick up the book to slow down and digest what she has to say. Let the thoughts seep through your days and weeks, your meetings with friends and family. Buddhists meditate on the vase already broken. In truth everyone we love will be lost to us, whether through their passing or our own. It is not morbid to recognize that fact. Rather it can become the beginning of appreciation and gratitude. Ms. Viorst is not a Buddhist, so far as I know, but she clearly recognizes this ancient wisdom. Opening one's heart to loss is a sure way to open to love.

I haven't finished the book yet, but I find that after five years of intensive therapy I have finally found a self-help book that has helped me with a breakthrough which I have been unable to make. I have cried through it and found it very well written for the laymen. To think I used to love her children's books, especially, "Alexander and the terrible, horrible, no good awful day". She knows from whence she speaks and has helped me to realize that life is full of losses from the moment we are born. It is how we are taught to deal with them that enables us to become as well adjusted adults as we can be. It isn't just about people who have died, it is about living with losses through separation, from child to adult; losses of periods of our lives, losses of joy, or even emotions. I can't say much more. My therapist, who is excellent, told me I was ready to read the book, and I was and still am. And I love being able to cry and mourn the losses that I always thought were silly to feel anything about.

This book allows us to understand that letting go of some things is part of a maturation process in life. Though many people commonly feel like letting go is like giving up and being a loser, we also know that the most important lessons in life are learned from our losses. This author sheds some light on the important difference between these two things by providing us with interesting examples from her experiences. I think this book is excellent for people who are at the brink of letting go of something important to them. It gives them an extra bit of inspiration to let go and move on with their lives. For people who are not near this stage, this book may not make much sense simply because they are not yet emotionally ready for the next step. Another book that is excellent in explaining the

emotional process of letting go and how that relates to personal development is "The Ever-Transcending Spirit" by Toru Sato. It explains these seemingly complex things in such a simple way that it is absolutely stunning!

This book is nearly a masterpiece. While it is obviously influenced by the best parts of psychoanalysis, it is far from dogmatic and reveals how all human beings suffer a succession of separations and losses from which we (hopefully) grow. It is not a book about "Winning through adversity" or "The will always triumphs", but in times of profound life change; it always has something to offer and is ultimately quite reassuring. I have owned an earlier edition for over 12 years and still refer to it from time to time. A must read for anyone who seeks understanding of their life and the passages we go through, including how our earlier experiences influence our later ones.

I ultimately had to put this book down without finishing it. I wanted a book about coping with loss, about dealing with the things that we "have to give up in order to grow", to quote the title. Unfortunately, this book is NOT what the title makes it appear. In the first seven chapters -- which is as far as I managed to get -- Viorst doesn't talk about loss. Instead, she describes in great depth the most extreme psychoanalytic theories of human psychological development. Sorry, I didn't want to read about how I wanted to have sex with my parents as a child, or how infants have an active sexual life (which we somehow know despite the fact that no one remembers being an infant and infants cannot communicate!), or how my parents were sexually attracted to me when I was three (yes, she DOES say that). I didn't want to learn that homosexuality is apparently the result of a failure to correctly resolve the Oedipal stage (way to pathologize normal sexual variation, Ms. Viorst). I wanted to read about LOSS. Viorst attempts to pretend that she is actually talking about loss by occasionally making a remark like "we must give up our sexual attraction to our parents in order to grow" or whatnot, but really, all she's doing is presenting some of the craziest of Freud's theories as though they are actual fact. Though these theories do have kernels of validity (e.g., our early relationships with our parents probably do affect us for the rest of our lives), Viorst takes them to the extreme, which just makes this book absurd. If you want to learn about how your mother's failure to interact with you perfectly or your (in)ability to resolve your childish sexual attraction to one or both of your parents has supposedly messed you up for the rest of your life, go ahead and read this book. If you are really interested in learning about "necessary losses", or reading a psychology book that describes our psychological development in an actually plausible way, steer clear.

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