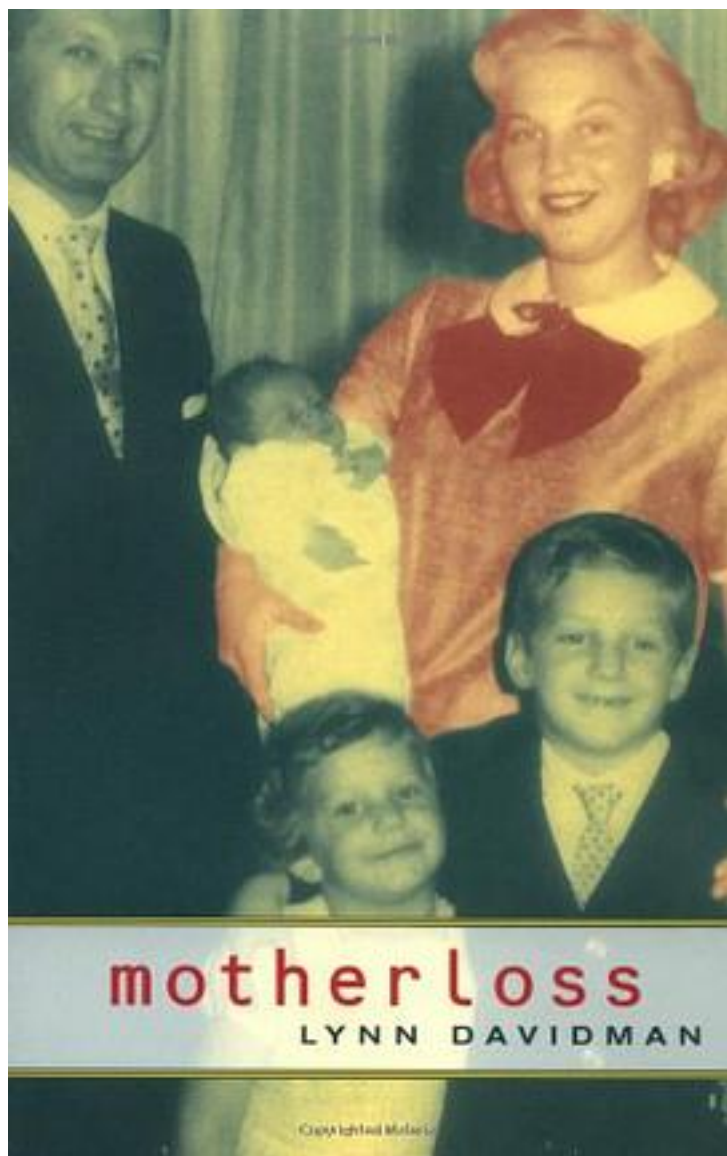


# Motherloss



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著者:Davidman, Lynn

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Lynn Davidman's path breaking study analyzes the immediate and continuing impact of a mother's premature death on the children she leaves behind. Drawing on interviews with sixty adults from a variety of class backgrounds, Davidman argues that the experience of mother loss is shaped by our social conceptions of women's roles in the family and in society. Speaking candidly, often with great emotion and insight, Davidman's interviewees were glad for the opportunity to break cultural taboos and silences about death and to create stories that reveal the power of this early loss to influence their lifelong conceptions of self, family, community, God, and love. With a profound sense of purpose and keen insight, Davidman highlights the narratives of ten respondents, weaving them together into a powerful book that reveals the numerous common themes - as well as the individual variations - in people's stories. This first study of the lifelong impact of mother loss on women's and men's lives will become the definitive work on perhaps the deepest and most complex disruption to occur in the course of a life. Davidman, who was thirteen when her mother died of cancer, enriches the narrative with her own insights of growing up as the only female in an Orthodox Jewish home with her father and two brothers. The book is enlivened by her movement back and forth between herself and others, individuals and society, thereby challenging the assumption that the personal has no place in our quest for knowledge and understanding. She successfully uses others' experiences to better illuminate her own, and at the same time develops an empathic understanding of their stories by reaching deep into her own memories and feelings about her mother's death and its impact on her life. Despite the silences, isolation, and confusion that accompany a mother's death, and the cultural messages to 'move on', Davidman's respondents find ways - in thoughts, prayers, memories, symbolic objects, and practices - to retain their mother's presence in their daily lives.

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