

# Life After Loss

In 2001, I experienced the most profound loss I had ever known. My father was only 58 when he lost his battle with pancreatic cancer. For me, it was devastating, life changing and just sheer hell. I say all the time that I had a life prior to my dad's passing and I have a life after my dad passing, and no two lives are the same.

If you have experienced a great loss in your life, you know what I'm talking about. It's unlike anything you have ever felt. Not only do you physically lose the one you love, but you also lose your life as you knew it and the dream of what you desired it to be in the future. It has taken me nearly 10 years to really understand how to deal with a significant loss. I have found that it's not something you can "talk" yourself through, or read a book on how "to feel better."

Rather, it is a moment by moment choice to *consciously surrender* – surrender your feelings of regret, guilt, anger, and the illusion that there was something you could have done to have prevented their death. It is so vitally important that you have compassion for yourself and remember that you did not choose when your loved one came into this world and it was never up to you as to when they left.

Most people grieve their loss - which means they feel the enormity of their emotions, but they don't know how to process and resolve them. I have noticed, in our society, when a working mother gives birth she is allowed an extended leave of absence. Yet when a death occurs, the majority of working folks are given a couple of days or possibly weeks and it's "life back to normal". The only problem is, your life is never the same when you experience a significant loss. When your whole world has been shattered, it is very difficult to try and squeeze back into the old way of living.

A significant loss can make you feel disoriented and out of touch with your own life and reality. You may find yourself using various coping mechanisms such as keeping yourself distracted or hiding behind a made up façade that you are really okay. Sometimes you may use pills to sleep or alcohol to help you relax. Some people use sex and food. While others immerse themselves in work, career, kids, or worse yet – they'll create a whole lot of drama and chaos in their lives.

Grief is nothing more than unresolved feelings of sadness, disappointment, regret, guilt, unmet expectations, the loss of future hopes and dreams, anger, etc. If this grief remains unresolved long enough, it becomes toxic and it will whittle away at your self-esteem – i.e., you are not enough, valuable enough, or loveable enough, your life isn't worth living without them.

While these emotions are very natural to the human condition, if they are not processed in a conscious way, the long term effects on your emotional and spiritual health can be devastating.

I think what is important to recognize is that these emotions can serve as a gateway into expanding your consciousness versus contracting it. This will require a real “digging in” on your part. When you experience significant loss, it always shines a spotlight on every unhealed loss you have experienced – and that can include a job, a marriage, a home, a childhood, etc.

When these losses are compounded by a loved one’s passing, it can be overwhelming and life can feel very paralyzing. So you must roll up our sleeves and get down to business about what you are feeling, the stories you are making up about those feelings, and surrender into a more healed perspective, (without knowing what that will look like), about your loved one’s passing.

### **Unhealed Grief Looks Like the Following:**

Your beliefs about death are rooted in grief. You believe that death can separate you from the ones you love. Therefore, you believe that bodies are more real than the love and bond between the two of you. You believe that death is an ending, a separation, and that it has the power to take someone or something away from you, leaving you abandoned and destitute. This is what causes suffering and the inability to expand your consciousness beyond physical relationships.

Grief comes from the part of your mind that life begins when we are born and it ends when we die. It is always associated with the past and projected upon the future. Unresolved grief is extremely self indulgent, self serving, and only thinks about itself. Essentially, you make your loved one’s passing all about you - “How will I go on?” “How could they leave?” “I can’t believe this is happening to me.” “What about me? How am I supposed to go on without them?”

I know this may sound very harsh. But it is not nearly as harsh compared to what these toxic thoughts and feelings can do to your psyche. Again, these emotions are normal to the human condition and by no means am I suggesting that they be judged as bad or wrong. However, it is also fair to say that there is great healing in them if you allow your consciousness to expand beyond these emotions.

The other problem is that you get stuck on the actual passing date and all the events surrounding it. You will replay that event, or experience the pain of the loss, over and over to the point that when you think of your loved one it is always clouded by the reality that they are dead.

Pretty soon you have an unconscious “story” that tells you that in order for you to never forget them, you must hold onto a certain amount of grief. This is your way of honoring them and proving your love for them. Approaching your loss in that way will only take you further into the illusion of separation, death, and despair. It moves you closer to what it is you don’t want rather than what you do want.

What you really want to know and integrate into your being is the Truth – bodies die, but soul’s live forever. Love lives forever. You are an eternal being, born of the One True Light. Your home is with Spirit and it is in right and natural order that you and your loved ones return back to your Source, which is pure Consciousness, pure Spirit, pure Essence.

I don’t think the name matters as much as having the awareness that relationships are not solely determined by two bodies being on the planet. And if one body is deceased while the other body remains alive, that doesn’t mean that the relationship is over or that you are even out of relationship. It is vital that you hold to the knowingness that it was never the body that you were ever in relationship to begin with. You are in relationship with the spirit that the body houses. Essentially the body is nothing without the spirit or one’s soul.

It is so important to really understand and grasp that every life situation you experience between your birth date and death date is to help you wake up. What are you waking up to? You are waking up to the Truth that you are more than your body. You are more than your job, money, house, lifestyle and the things that go along with the external world.

## **What It Means to Heal**

There was a Buddhist Monk that taught great lessons of Love, Joy, Life, etc. He spoke of death as being a transition into the next part of a soul’s journey rather than an end. Life is continuous and you get to have as many incarnations as you need to remember the Truth of who you are. He taught that if you speak or act upon thoughts of healing and wholeness, happiness would eventually follow.

Later in his life a very dear friend of his, who was also a monk, passed away. When the Buddhist Monk was found crying by another mutual friend he was asked, “Your friend has only transitioned. Why are you crying?” And the Buddhist Monk simply replied, “Because I am sad.”

I love the fact that this Monk, with all of his wisdom and knowing, was able to be human . . . *and wasn’t afraid to express it or experience it.* He didn’t use his own teachings and what he knew to be true to “fix” or “spiritualize” his sadness. Rather, he embraced his sorrow with consciousness, purpose and intention.

Most of us don’t even know what the heck that last sentence means. We live in a society that is very focused on using the external world to heal all of our ailments – and our expectation is

that it better be fast. We have become so sophisticated in distracting ourselves from feeling anything that would be deemed uncomfortable.

In our society, we don't "do grief". We do "medicating". We would rather drink, take pills, over eat, spend money, use other people, use sex, do a bunch of drugs, watch too much television, get caught up in other people's drama and chaos and the list could go on and on. We will do anything to avoid feeling the sorrow that comes from losing someone we love so deeply.

But I totally get it . . . I really do.

No one told me about how to handle such intense emotions and I did everything I just listed above. I didn't grow up with people around me encouraging me to get in touch with my feelings and chances are, you didn't either. In fact, I was completely invalidated when I did feel sad, angry, confused or frustrated. Growing up in my world, crying was NOT okay.

You have to learn what it means to be human and what it means to be spirit. It's not just one or the other, it's both. Human beings feel emotions and your spirit self can use those emotions to help you evolve, deepen your capacity for love and bring you closer to enlightenment. The problem is that you live too much in your human self and have cut yourself off from your own inner Divine Connection with your spirit self.

## **3 Steps to Healing**

### *Allow Yourself to Feel*

As strange as it might sound, you must practice feeling your feelings . . . all of them, the good and the bad and everything in between. Simply allowing yourself to feel what you feel without judgment is loving and compassionate towards yourself. That alone can begin the healing process.

The Christians have what is known as *The Dark Night of the Soul*. is a sacred space within your consciousness that holds the capacity for deep healing. It is the place you surrender your sorrow. You cry and scream from the deepest parts of your soul. You experience your "reality" and all of your beliefs about it being ripped to shreds. It's as though you are dying. Yet, it is not YOU that is dying, but rather, your beliefs about yourself, your life, and who you think yourself to be is dying.

You must resist the temptation to distract yourself. Even though these emotions can be overwhelming, if you suppress them and don't allow them to be felt, they will become toxic and lodged in your cellular tissue. In these types of cases, you may need professional help to support you in your process

If you find that the people around you "don't get it", then you must find people that do. If you are someone who has lost a child or a spouse, these types of losses can be especially difficult to

talk about with your friends and even your family members. The reason is because most people don't even want to think about themselves going through a loss like that. So if you are feeling like other people are treating you like the plague, try not to take it personally. They simply do not know how to be with you in your grief.

That is why it is vitally important to surround yourself with folks who have either been through the same thing, or, can relate to the depth of sorrow you feel. Just because people around you don't know how to handle your grief, doesn't mean you should try and just "move on." When you have a significant loss, there is no moving on. You can't skip steps. It is about being in the process of learning how to deal with your emotions and adjusting to your life without your loved one.

### *Change Your Thoughts*

As we said before, your beliefs about death are rooted in grief. We live in a world of beginnings and endings. Life is always in process. It is constantly expanding and contracting, forever changing and always in motion.

Though it is important for you to feel your feelings, it is also important that you be willing to expand your consciousness beyond your emotions. This will take some time and you can't move into this phase until you have had some time to feel and process your loved one's passing.

It is vital that you hang in there with yourself long enough to be able to continue your healing process without ego identification, i. e. perceiving yourself as a victim, someone who has been abandoned, or left behind. You must even be willing to give up the thoughts that your future is diminished or worse yet, doomed because your loved one's passing.

Be careful not to idolize or place your loved one on some kind of pedestal because they have passed. Your past experiences with them were not the only best days of your life. Be mindful not to compare your life now, without them, to the life you had with them. Both lives can be equally fulfilling. But you must be willing to take the journey of real transformation.

Significant loss always challenges your thought process. It causes you to question your own mortality. It can wake you up to what is most important and valuable to you. It can even alter the course of your own life in ways that you couldn't even imagine. If you allow it, loss can bring forth in you a life that is much more inspiring, purposeful and fulfilling.

I realize that thinking in this way can be very difficult to do, especially if you are dealing with the loss of a child or spouse. Yet, if you do not dare to step out of your old ways of thinking about death, you will never grow beyond the grief. You will miss the blessings and gifts that come from such painful experiences.

Most everybody can intellectualize these ideas. Few people can integrate them into their being-ness to the point that they become completely transformed. When you can truly get to

the point of seeing your loved one's passing as the best thing that could have happened to you and to your loved one, then you are on your way to real spiritual transformation.

A lot of people get caught up in thinking that if they find peace or happiness after their loved one has passed, they will be dishonoring them in some way. Or, they are afraid that they will forget them or forget how special they were. That is not the case at all.

The last thing your loved one would want is for you to suffer on their behalf. The best way you could honor them is to heal, move forward and reap the gifts from their passing. The point is, there is good in everything. There isn't one heartache that doesn't come bearing seeds of blessings. But you must get your mind to think that way.

Death is not an end. It is a natural movement in the process of evolution. This is not to say that you won't miss your loved one's physical presence. You will. But don't stop there. Don't dwell on their physical absence. Open your mind to seeing all the good that came from your time spent together.

Work diligently to change your beliefs about death. Focus on that which lives forever, Love. Just because a person dies, does not mean that the love between the two of you dies. Love is what connects you to all things, including your deceased love one. Love is in your heart and there is nothing that can destroy that. It can be suppressed and covered up, but it cannot die.

### *Turn Your Loss into New Life*

When you experience a significant loss, it feels like you and your whole world has fallen apart. It's like humpty dumpty – you don't have a freakin clue as to how to put all the broken pieces back together. From where you sit, there doesn't seem to be anyone or anything that is ever going to help mend your heart.

Significant loss brings significant change.

One of the hardest things for a human being to do is to surrender to a greater will or a plan that is other than their own. It is very difficult for us when our plans get changed and things don't go our way. We set our lives up in a way that will hopefully bring us happiness, security, stability, enough money to pay our bills and a guarantee that we will never be alone.

Though it sounds good and seems like the responsible thing to do, it doesn't hold up when major loss happens. Most people go through a bargaining process, *"if I could only have my spouse back, my child back, my mom or dad back, I would live a better life. I would give more money to charity. I would love them more, I would appreciate them more, etc."*

At some point it is very necessary that we move out of that place and into a place of acceptance. When you can really get into acceptance you will have energy to put towards a

worthy project, begin to help others, or clean up some old inner wounds as a way of honor them.

The best way you could ever acknowledge your deceased loved one is to take action towards contributing something that is positive towards the lives of others. I can't really say that if my father had not passed nearly eleven years ago, I would be where I am today. Maybe I would have eventually end up here - I don't really know.

What I do know is that it blew the lid off of a deeper calling, a purpose that is much more worthy of my pursuit. I live a much more inspired life today than when I did when he was here on the planet. You can do the same.

You must be spiritual with your loss. Let it evolve you. Allow it to bring forth deeper levels of consciousness within you. Invite it to teach you about Life, Love, and what connects us, whether we have a body or not. Let it transform you into something better than you were before. Give it the opportunity to move you closer to your purpose and destiny. You're still here and there is a reason why, let your loss reveal that to you.

Just because you have suffered a major loss, doesn't mean you have to limp through the rest of your life. Learn to give the world the best you have to give. Let your heart break open, expand yourself through the pain and allow your life to unfold in a way you never dreamed possible.