

How to Overcome Tragedy and Loss

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Has the loss of a loved one, a major physical or financial tragedy or a global disaster brought your world to a screeching halt? Are you finding it hard to deal with the emotional rollercoaster, blaming yourself and feeling anger and helplessness all at the same time?

Loss from a major natural disaster like the Haiti earthquake, the genocidal killing of millions due to the politics of war or a mine collapse killing dozens of minors will make the average person feel down, depressed and helpless leaving them angry and wanting to place blame on someone.

Research shows that over 24,000 children around the world die every day. In the US 1400 people die from cancer daily, 118 from automobile accidents and someone dies from cardiovascular disease every 36 minutes. When the number of deaths is high as in an earthquake or war, it is said that the deaths are statistics, but when one of those lost is a loved one it is a tragedy, no matter how the loss occurred.

How Do You Define Tragedy or Loss?

Loss and tragedy can be defined as no longer having something of value, the death of someone or a significant life event that evokes the feelings of sorrow, grief, financial ruin or fatality. The most intense forms of grief are usually associated with the death of a loved one but people also grieve and experience emotional upheaval when facing some of the following:

- Loss of health
- Loss of or inability to find a job
- Loss of financial stability
- Miscarriage or loss of a child
- Divorce
- Loss of a close personal relationship
- Empty nest syndrome when a child leaves home for college or marriage
- Death of a pet
- Loss of safety and security after trauma such as a terrorist attack

The significance of the loss tends to determine the intensity of the grief and the difficulty of the rollercoaster ride. Grief is not a one size fits all process nor is it processed the same way by any two people, even if they share the same tragedy. Grief is processed in many ways depending upon your personality, belief system, faith and the stressors or life experiences you have gone through leading up to the loss.

Understanding the Process

According to psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross in her book *On Death and Dying*, 1969, there are five stages of grief. They are:

- Denial – this can't be happening to me - shock and disbelief
- Anger –why is this happening, who can I blame - fear
- Bargaining – make this not happen and I will_____ - guilt
- Depression – I'm too sad to do anything or deal with this- physical and mental symptoms
- Acceptance – I'm at peace with what happened

Not everyone goes through all of these stages, but they are very normal and experienced by many. It is important to realize there is a process and it takes time. If there was a buildup of time before the loss occurred such as a loved one going through a terminal illness, some of the grieving stages will be experienced during the progression of the illness. Others may be able to process quickly and go from denial right to acceptance.

There are those that would argue that grief does not come in stages but liken it more to a rollercoaster ride with all of its ups and downs. A preferred way to look at it is waves. Because people definitely go through some type of a grieving process, the one thing that is most bewildering is that grief will wash over you in waves, often at the most unexpected and inappropriate times. There are also variations in the depth and time duration of those grieving waves. However, as time passes the waves will get separated by more time, come less often and be shallower.

Five Things That Help You Better Navigate the Grieving Process

In the field of Feng Shui creating positive energy in your surroundings is the first step to taking control of your life and creating calm and peace where chaos and loss now exist in your world. A loss or a life tragedy takes you out of your comfort zone and requires you to build a bridge back to your new comfort zone where your acceptance of loss lives. Some of the steps below will help you create that bridge and successfully cross to a future that accepts the changes and provides you the tools to move forward.

1. **Create a mini support group** of strong encouraging family members and friends – then talk and ask them to just listen. In real estate it's all about location, location, location. In the grieving process it's all about talk, talk, talk. Do not grieve alone. Sharing your grief with others helps to make grieving easier for you. The support group needs to help you stay self-sufficient, be patient with yourself and express your grief - the more you talk about the loss the more grief you release, like a pressure cooker that lets off steam. They cannot read your mind so it is important for you to take the lead role and talk.
2. **Seek out support from your faith**, external and internal. If you are active in a church or synagogue, get in touch with one of their counselors so you can receive their spiritual counsel as well as their professional advice. There may be more emotional issues hiding beneath the surface that will come to light when dealing with loss. Read the Bible or if you are not of a specific faith, read short motivational stories and books to encourage your mind to seek a better tomorrow.
3. **Remove painful reminders of the past** that are directly connected to your loss. Some may argue that you shouldn't do this for at least six months but if your objective is to move

forward and surround yourself with positive energy that will help you create the future, you need to remove the major reminders as soon as possible. Those are the items that will remind you constantly of your loss and the pain you are feeling. Then, create two lists using something simple like a yellow tablet. On the first list write everything you do not want to remember about the loss. This list could be very long if you just lost your father and for years you had a less than desirable relationship with him. Keep writing until you cannot think of one more thing to add. Then shred or burn the list and remove those old thoughts from your mind. On the second list write everything positive and good you want to remember about the loss – the ways you helped each other, took care of each other or just knew they were always there in case of need. Even the smallest of things can go on the list such as a special hug or sharing ice cream.

4. **Create a memories box** with pictures and favorite things of your loved one such as a pocket watch, a handkerchief, a ball or book. By putting this collection together you will always have the best of memories that carry the most positive energy nearby to relive and enjoy at a moment's notice but they will not be in sight to add to your grieving time and pain. If it is not too painful for you, your favorite picture of your loss or loved one can be left out in the privacy of your bedroom where you can acknowledge the good times spent together. More than one picture focuses energy on the loss and grief rather than looking forward and healing.
5. **Take care of yourself.** This step is overlooked by many and can further complicate an already difficult time in your life. The grieving process is mostly emotional but can quickly turn into a physical problem because of the stress, lack of eating, eating too much, fatigue, insomnia or a variety of other challenging health issues. Take time to breathe deeply, sleep more than the usual hours and eat regular meals but don't overeat. Exercise, meditate, pray, journal and do creative things like painting, sculpting, knitting, sewing and needlework to help you process your grief. Listen to classical or peace-filled Feng Shui type music <http://www.energy-by-design.com/HealingMusic.html> to nurture your inner self.

The process of grieving a loss or tragedy simply requires you to put one foot in front of the other and building the right bridge for you to get you back to a new comfort zone so you can create the future you want. Don't let others tell you how you should or should not feel or how long you should grieve. Let your body and your emotions be your guide.

Also, be aware that at times in the future, events called "grief triggers," a wave of grief or sadness could overcome you. These usually happen during the holidays and birthdays but can be triggered by a memory, seeing a child playing on the beach or looking at a family member with tears in their eyes. These are the times to look through your memory box and replace your sadness with fond positive energy memories.

By building a bridge to your future and creating your new comfort zone one step at a time you will reach the acceptance stage and realize you are at peace with your loss.

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Pat Heydlauff, president of Energy Design, helps business leaders streamline and transform their companies, resulting in employee satisfaction, client retention and bottom line profitability. She energizes and enhances the effectiveness and efficiency of workplace environments using color,

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