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Can you transform loss into gratitude and hope?

If you have experienced loss and are in the midst of the grieving process, there is hope. Grief is a natural response to loss and it is normal to feel sad, but there is a way to overcome this, in time, by helping others or practising gratitude.

A few years ago, I received an overseas phone call at around 4 am, informing me that my mum had passed away. After the initial shock, which shook the foundation of my very existence, I shifted quickly into robotic mode, followed by a deep grieving process.

I remember how I described the feeling that accompanied this to my friend: "I have to carefully place every step on the ground, almost as if I am walking on a frozen lake, to ensure I don't break through and fall into a deep sea of sadness".

Family, friends, my colleagues and boss, and even strangers showed great compassion and support during this time and I am still grateful for that.

Grief is a natural response to loss. While not every event is as dramatic as death, most relationships that come to an end, with a loved one or even in business, trigger some form of grieving in which we need time to adjust.

According to an article published by Harvard Medical school, "Doctors classify grief into two types: acute and persistent. Most people experience acute grief, which occurs in the first 6 to 12 months after a loss and gradually resolves. Some, however, experience persistent grief, which is defined as grief that lasts longer than 12 months."

Well, 14 months after this early morning phone call, I realised that my self-pity had become as strong, if not stronger, than my grieving. And I decided it was time to step out of my own way and actively make changes.

I tried to think of what I could do and remember contacting Beyond Blue. But in the end, my love of travel, cultural exploration and curiosity, and the opportunity to have a stopover in Europe, led me to decide that helping others overseas was the right thing to do for me. From this moment onwards, I was more myself again. I got excited and was full of plans. And to make a long story short, I moved to Senegal for 3 months to work in a centre that supported Talibé children living more or less on the street or in very difficult circumstances.

If you have caught yourself with similar feelings after experiencing loss, maybe you would like to consider volunteering in your local community. Giving to others can help to protect your mental and physical health. It will reduce your stress levels and keep you mentally stimulated.

Volunteering doesn't have to involve a long-term commitment or take a huge amount of time. It can be as little as checking on your neighbour, supporting a soup kitchen for the homeless or walking dogs for a dog shelter. Giving, even in simple ways, can help those in need and help improve your own health and happiness.

I remember friends and colleagues saying that it was so amazing what I did, but in the end, volunteering helped me just as much, if not more. I found new connections, gratitude for my own health and appreciation for how lucky I actually was.

Founding father of positive psychology Dr. Seligman describes in his book, Circle of Hope, the practice of 'Three Blessings'. The idea was that each day for a week, participants had to write down three things that went well and why they went well. This exercise reliably lowered depression and raised life satisfaction for as long as six months.

Losing a connection with someone can be very hard and often there are a lot of emotions and history involved around it. But there is always light at the end of the tunnel if you can shift your energy and focus onto the positives in your life and hope that your future holds something better. Energy flows where your attention goes.

If you are struggling to make changes by yourself, or simply need direction, **get in touch and let me support you during your transition.**



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