

An article for thought

Exploring the “F” word.

The Grief recovery Institute, USA and its affiliates offer a variety of programmes for people who have undergone a loss in their life. The Grief Recovery Outreach Programme of the Institute is designed to assist griever in completing the pain caused by any loss. The institute also conducts the Grief Recovery Certification Programme. This thought provoking article is contributed by courtesy of this institute

This article focuses on the possible consequences of using FEAR to guide our recovery from significant emotional loss.

Retained FEAR is cumulative and cumulatively negative. If the griever does not feel safe enough to communicate about their fears, then the fears themselves appear to be real and begin to define and limit the griever. In a play on that old phrase “you are what you eat” ... “you create what you fear.”

Fear is one of the most **normal** emotional responses to loss. The fear of the unknown, the fear of the unfamiliar, the fear of adapting to a dramatic change in all our of familiar habits, behaviours, and feelings.

Fear is one of the most **common** emotional responses to loss. For example, when a spouse dies – How can I go on without him/her? Or, after a divorce. Where will I find another mate as wonderful, as beautiful?

These fears are normal and natural responses to the end of long-term relationships. If acknowledged and allowed, those fears and the thoughts and feelings they generate, can be **completed** and diminish without serious aftermath. As we learn to acknowledge and complete our relationship to our fear, we can then move on to the more important task of grieving and completing the relationship that ended or changed.

But, if we have been socialized to believe fear is unnatural or bad, then we tend to bury our fears to avoid feeling judged by our fellows who seem to want us to feel better very quickly after a loss.

There is also danger in that we have been socialized to express fear indirectly as anger. While there is often some unexpressed anger attached to incomplete relationships, we usually discover that it accounts for a very small percentage of unresolved grief. It is also important not to confuse Elizabeth Kubler-Ross’s “stages of dying,” which includes anger, with the totally unique responses that follow a loss.

An even larger danger looms in the fact that we develop relationships with and loyalties to our fears. We believe them as if they were real. We defend them with our lives, and to some extent, it is, indeed, our lives that we are gambling with. As we develop a fierce relationship with our fears, we lose sight of our original objective, which was to grieve and complete the relationship that has

ended or changed. **It is as if we have shifted all of our energy to the fear so we do not have to deal with the painful emotions caused by the loss.**

Reminders of loved ones who have died, or relationship that have ended will often take us on a rocket ride to the PAST, where we are liable to dig up a little regret. After thinking about that regret for a while, we might rocket out to the FUTURE, where we will generate some worry or FEAR. The point is that those fears we generate, while they feel totally real, are often the result of **some out-of-the-moment** adventures. It may be helpful to remember this little phrase: “My feelings are real, but they do not necessarily represent reality.”

While FEAR is often the emotional response to loss, in our society, **ISOLATION** is frequently the behavioral reaction to the fear. If isolation is the problem, then participation is a major part of the solution. Fight your way through the fear so that you will not isolate further. Recovery from significant emotional loss is not achieved alone.

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“The one battle most lose is the battle over the fear of failure...

try...

start...

begin...

and you’ll be assured you won the first round.”

- Robert Schuller, Tough Times Never Last, But Tough People Do!

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