

FINDING THE POSITIVE AFTER LOSS



At some point in our lives we will all experience loss. It may be the end of a relationship, being let go from a job, losing a home, or the death of a loved one. It is natural to go through a grieving process. By looking for opportunity in adversity or finding ways to remember the good things about who or what we've lost, we can help ourselves to recover mentally and emotionally.

TIPS FOR GETTING BY



Try to see your experience as strength. When bad things happen they can be painful to go through, but as you continue to live your life without the person, thing, or situation you once had, you become a stronger person. Going through a loss and learning to carry on helps give you the skills to deal with tough situations in the future.



Learn from others. You are not alone! There may be support groups in your community to help you get through whatever loss or tragedy you've gone through. If you're not ready to talk about things face-to-face or can't find the right kind of support group, the internet is full of places where people gather online to talk about their shared experiences. Share your story. Ask questions about how other people got through tough times to remind yourself that if they can do it, you can do it too.



Look for opportunity amid adversity. Sometimes loss opens us up to new possibilities. You may feel guilty or selfish at first for exploring these thoughts, but there is nothing wrong with looking for ways to improve or change your life after something tragic has happened. The end of a romantic relationship or death of someone that you had been caring for may free you up to spend more time with friends or pursue interests that you've been putting on the back burner. If you've lost your home to disaster, you might consider relocating to that place you've always dreamed of living.



Remember the good times. When you've lost something you love, it is almost automatic to focus on the pain that you are feeling about your loss. By remembering the good times you had in a certain place, with a pet, or with a person, you're practicing gratitude for having had those experiences. It can be even more helpful to have someone else who is sharing your loss join you in reminiscing. Maybe you'll even be able to share a laugh together.



Do what makes you happy. Pampering yourself can help you remember how to feel good after dealing with a negative or tragic situation, and bring you back to a place where you can appreciate all the positive things that life has to offer. You might choose to do something exciting or something relaxing—it's all about doing whatever you love.



Find ways to honor your loss. By memorializing the loss of a loved one, you help keep their memory alive. You may choose to create a fundraiser for a special cause in their name, plant a tree in one of their favorite places, hang their pictures in your home, create a memorial web page or Facebook page, do some of the activities they enjoyed, or even get a tattoo that reminds you of them.



Don't be afraid to get help. It's perfectly normal to have trouble adjusting to life after something bad has happened to you, but if you find it's been weeks or months and you can't seem to function or just don't know what to do to feel better, it's time to get help. Your employer may have an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), you can get a referral for a mental health professional from your primary care provider, or if you don't have insurance you can look for services with payment assistance at findtreatment.samhsa.gov.

FAST FACTS



You are not alone! Nearly 60% of people have experienced a major loss in the last 3 years.¹



Healing takes time. Following a loss, nearly half of people said it took up to 6 months for their strong feelings of grief to lessen.²



You might literally hurt. Over 2/3 of people who went through a life-changing event had physical symptoms while they were grieving.³

IF YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE STRUGGLING WITH YOUR MENTAL HEALTH, VISIT [MHASCREENING.ORG](https://mhascreening.org) TO CHECK YOUR SYMPTOMS.



It's free, confidential, and anonymous. Once you have your results, MHA will give you information and resources to help you start to feel better.

Sources

¹WebMD. (2019). *Grief: Beyond the 5 Stages* conducted by AmeriSpeak. Retrieved from <https://www.webmd.com/special-reports/grief-stages/20190711/the-grief-experience-survey-shows-its-complicated>.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

LOOKING FOR GOOD

Changing the way we see negative situations, reframing common negative thoughts, and practicing gratitude have been shown to reduce sadness and anxiety. This worksheet walks you through different ways to rethinking situations or thoughts.

WHAT IS THE SITUATION YOU ARE FACING THAT MAKES YOU FEEL BAD? OR WHAT IS A COMMON NEGATIVE THOUGHT YOU STRUGGLE WITH? _____

REFRAME

EVEN THOUGH THE SITUATION IS HARD, IS THERE SOMETHING YOU HAVE LEARNED FROM IT OR SOME OTHER SILVER LINING? IF YOU COULD GO BACK AND CHANGE THE ORIGINAL THOUGHT, WHAT'S A HEALTHIER THING YOU CAN SAY TO YOURSELF?

For instance, if you've just lost a loved one after they have been extremely sick, does it feel healthier to think about their death as an end to their pain?

GRATITUDE

ARE THERE OTHER THINGS GOING ON IN YOUR LIFE THAT YOU ARE THANKFUL FOR?

This doesn't have to be related to the situation above. For instance, you can be thankful for your good health, having a stable home to live in, or a recent promotion at work.

REMINDE YOURSELF

HOW CAN YOU REINFORCE YOUR REFRAMED THOUGHTS AND REMIND YOURSELF OF WHAT YOU ARE THANKFUL FOR? MAKE A LIST OF WAYS.

Example: Copy what you've written in the boxes above onto post-it notes and stick them in places around your house as visual reminders.
