

Dealing with Change and Loss

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Time of Change for Us All

- Probably at no time have the lives of so many of us changed by so much and so quickly
- Some will be “small changes”, some will be “very significant and life changing”
- Some of us may have found adapting not too difficult at the moment and some of us may have found it quite devastating and this may change over time
- This seminar has been written in relation to the impact of the current Corona Virus, but much is relevant to any time or situation of change or loss

Loss & Change

- All change involves loss, even if the change is perceived as positive
- All loss involves change
- It is an inevitable part of life – with or without the current situation
- How we cope with change loss may be influenced by how much perceived control we feel we have
- The changes that we are all experiencing at the moment are being imposed upon us and that can make it much harder

Pause

- In your own time you may want to think about:
 - How many changes and losses you have experienced and hopefully negotiated
 - How much and what has changed in your life in the last few weeks?
 - What do you think is going to change in the next few weeks?
 - How in control of your life do you feel?

Our Thoughts and Questions in Times of Change?

- Change? What Change?
- OK so something is / has changed – Can I cope?
- What impact will this have? How will it affect me?
- This is bigger than me – How it is affecting others – people I know / society?
- How long is this change going to last?
- What will the future look like?
- Do I think I will be able to adapt and cope?
- Who am I?

What Loss / Change Events?

- In the current circumstances they could be:
- Death
 - Loss of relationship / physical presence / sharing activities / work / clubs
 - Loss of employment and financial security
 - Loss of role / sense of belonging / being able to provide the care and support as we normally would
 - Loss of health – mental and physical
 - Loss of things we had planned / significant events – weddings, celebrations, new role, school leaving events, etc.

What Loss / Change Events?

- Loss of hopes / dreams – how will the world look after this – will a planned future be possible?
- In the middle of the Corona Virus
 - many of the normal changes / losses will be happening i.e. illness, deaths
 - many of the expected / perhaps hoped for changes will not be happening - new job, moving house, new school etc.

Loss, Bereavement, Grief and Mourning

- **Loss** - the fact that you **no longer have** or have **less of someone or something**
- **Bereaved** literally means which means “torn apart.”
- **Grief** the response of internal intense emotions, feelings and thoughts experienced following a loss – this is internal
- **Mourning** takes our internal grief and externalizes It may be shared and social i.e. rituals, ceremonies , or more personal being allowed to cry, talk about the loss

The many faces of loss

- All loss has an affect on us
- Enforced changes can be a great cause of anxiety
- Our history involves losses and these may affect how we deal with current and later losses
- The reaction to loss is grief– this is a natural reaction, but can be a confusing, painful, frightening and messy
- Grief is something that has to be worked through & is dangerous to repress or ignore . People are currently in survival mode, but in the longer term they will need to process the loss if they are to stay mentally healthy

The many faces of loss

- Rabbi EARL GROLLMAN "Grief is not a disorder, a disease or sign of weakness. It is an emotional, physical and spiritual necessity, the price you pay for love. The only cure for grief is to grieve."
- Processing grief takes energy and is stressful
- All grief is individual and experienced differently, but there are some common features. The fact that we process grief in different ways is especially important when we are in enforced isolation with others

What do we feel / experience?

Feelings come in waves, will mixed up and there our times of complete normality

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • disbelief / unreal | • helplessness |
| • anger | • hopelessness |
| • guilt | • out of control |
| • overwhelming sadness | • elation or relief |
| • fear | • strange physical symptoms |
| • betrayal | • sense of injustice |
| • confusion | • Why ME? Why THEM |
| • shocked | • "Am I going mad?" |
| • sadness | |

What do we experience?

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| • numbness | • sensing a presence |
| • denial | • anxiety / panic attack |
| • switching off emotions | • lower immune system |
| • searching for answers | • physical pain / illness |
| • going over & over events | • disturbed sleeping or eating |
| • restless activity | • absent mindedness |
| • crying | • treasuring or avoiding reminders |
| • hallucinations | |
| • hearing voices | |



Trauma

- We may experience traumatic reactions to sudden change / loss
- This may also activate previous unprocessed trauma
- In most cases trauma reactions will pass in time – usually a month or so
- If not then people may need to look for further help

The Purpose Grief

- Our mechanism for coping with loss
- No rigid timetable
- No linear stages – the reactions to grief are more cyclical and can be experienced at the same time and in any order
- Tasks (adapted from J. William Worden)
 - To accept the reality of the loss
 - To work through the pain of grief
 - To adjust to a changed life
 - To find the right place in our emotions for that which we have lost and move on with life.
- But not always a straightforward process

Working Through Loss and Grief

- Be real with yourself and GOD - no “oughts” or “shoulds” when it comes to how we feel
- Find ways to express your feelings safely
- Try to avoid making major decisions, unless forced upon you
- May help to list the changes you have / are experiencing and think about how you negotiated them what helped?
- Be realistic about what you can and cannot do in these circumstances – challenging false guilt
- Look after your physical health – sleep, eating, physical exercise
- Listen to each other especially the people you are sharing a confined space with. Accept & try understand how each of you needs to process loss

Working Through Loss and Grief

- Maintain contact with the outside world
- Find things that you can do that are an expression of who you are. We may have lost a role and so holding onto our identity, what makes me “me” is important i.e. writing, drawing, playing an instrument, making a cake, gardening, etc.
- Find things that are relaxing and enjoyable for you
- Try to make some plans even if only small so that there is a sense of gaining some control over our own life

Anticipatory Grief

- Anticipatory Grief – waiting for / expecting a loss, whilst living with on-going losses
- In addition to current losses, people may be expecting more loss, although may not know when – job, business, family members who are ill etc.
- The impact
 - The on-going & no end-point wears people down
 - The powerlessness of watching without being able to change
 - Feelings of Frustration / trapped
 - Anxiety “waiting for an event”



How Can We Help Others Through Change and Loss?

- Be a listening ear and a presence – phone, on-line
- Help people to express their feelings and talk out their concerns.
- You do not have to have the answers - trite answers are worse than no answer
- But allow people space and time
- Do not judge other’s emotions, reactions, responses - encourage them that grief reactions are normal (they are not going mad)

How Can We Help Others Through Change and Loss?

- Don't get into theological debates to justify God.
- Encourage them to take care of themselves.
- Show that you care
- Pray for them
- Know when to and where to refer /suggest further help.
- Look after yourself – you too are going through change and loss at this time.

The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing... not healing, not curing... that is a friend who cares.

Henri Nouwen



Where is God?

"Meanwhile, where is God? This is one of the most disquieting symptoms. When you are happy ... You will be, so it seems, welcomed into his arms. But go to him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain, and what do you find? A door slammed in your face, and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside. After that, silence. ..."

C.S.Lewis "A Grief Observed"

But in time CS Lewis got beyond this grief

Where is God?

- Jesus – “a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief”
- Jesus weeps with those who wept at Lazarus’s tomb
- It’s OK to question God – the story of Job
- Footprints – perhaps more than a “nice” poem


