

Change Your Mindset to Thrive After Infidelity, Loss and Heartbreak

1: Allow Yourself to Grieve

Denial: Overview

- This is the first of the five stages of grief. It helps us to survive the loss. In this stage, the world becomes meaningless and overwhelming. Life makes no sense. We are in a state of shock and denial. We go numb. We cannot come to terms with what we just saw or heard. We wonder how we can go on, if we can go on, why we should go on. We try to find a way to simply get through each day.
- Denial and shock help us to cope and make survival possible. Denial helps us to pace our feelings of grief. There is a grace in denial. It is nature's way of letting in only as much as we can handle.
- As you accept the reality of the deception and start to ask yourself questions, you are unknowingly beginning the healing process. You are becoming stronger, and the denial is beginning to fade. But as you proceed, all the feelings you were denying will begin to surface.

1. Ask yourself if this is real. (Yes – this is real. It doesn't seem real, but I know in my gut that it is).

2. Ask yourself if there is something you can do to change it? (No. He/she has moved on and the quicker I accept it, the easier and less painful this will be for me. And the reality is that if he/she found it so easy to walk away, then if not now, it will probably happen later anyway. At least now I can start to work on healing so I can move forward.

Exercise: Realize that denying the reality is just allowing you to process the news in small doses that your brain can manage.

Take the time to ask yourself these questions and answer them. Realize that he/she is not as committed to our relationship, and even though it

hurts like hell, knowing it now rather than later will give me more time to recover and make a new start).

3. Was any of this my fault? (I'm sure there may have been some things I could have done differently, but it also takes two people to make something work, and if his/her first impulse is to walk away, instead of trying to work things out; who knows what might happen later? It may just take longer for him/her to leave, but if it's that easy to leave me, I'd rather be on my own).

Anger: Overview

- This is also a necessary stage of the healing process. Welcome it. Feel it. Embrace it and let it move through you to the other side. The more you truly feel it, the more it will begin to dissipate and the more you will heal.
- There are many other emotions under the anger and you will get to them in time, but anger is the emotion we are most used to managing.
- The truth is that anger has no limits. It can extend not only to the one who deceived you, your friends, your family, yourself, but also to God. You may ask, "Where is God in this?"
- Underneath anger is pain, your pain. It is natural to feel deserted and abandoned, but we live in a society that fears anger. But anger is strength and it can be an anchor, giving temporary structure to the nothingness of loss.
- At first grief feels like being lost at sea: no connection to anything. Then you get angry at someone, maybe yourself for not seeing the signs before it was too late, maybe fiends who may have known but didn't say anything, or just friends who encourage him in his exploits. Suddenly you have a structure – your anger toward them. The anger becomes a bridge over the open sea, a connection from you to them. It is something to hold onto; and a connection made from the strength of anger feels better than nothing.

We usually know more about suppressing anger than feeling it. The anger is just another indication of the intensity of your love; and now you're angry that you loved so much, only to be hurt in return.

Ask yourself:

1. What am I feeling? (I feel numb. I'm not sure if I'm alive or dead. I'm not sure if this is real or if I'm having a nightmare. I feel sad. No – sad is not the word; DISTRAUGHT– yes, that's it! (Mentally deranged, crazy, deeply agitated, distracted). Yes, sad is too mild a descriptor of what I'm feeling right now. I can't think. I can't sleep, I can't stop crying and I'm not really sure why exactly I'm crying. I can't FEEL anything. And yet I FEEL everything! Pain, remorse, anger, sad, distraught, confused, lonely, and mad. It's tangible, not only can I feel it, I can almost touch it).

2. Embrace the PAIN.

In the privacy of your home: sleep as much as you need to, talk to yourself if you have to, you're not going crazy, and even if you feel that way, it will pass; this is normal. Vent to your friends, eat what you have to in order to survive, pray and cry out, scream, run, do whatever it takes (except to hurt others) but don't try to force the process. Your heart knows how to heal itself. Be patient and allow the pain to “move through” you – rather than trying to pretend everything is okay.

Exercise: Welcome the pain. Feel it. Embrace it and let it move through you to the other side. The more you truly feel it, the more it will begin to dissipate and the more rapidly you will heal.

Bargaining: Overview

- Before a loss, it seems like you will do anything to make your loved one stay. You bargain with him/her. If you were unaware of the affair, bargaining may take the form of a temporary truce. “What if I lay low for a while and not say anything, maybe he will see what he has and return to me.” Then we can go back to being the happy couple we were when we just got married?” We become lost in a maze of “If only...” or “What if...” statements. We want life returned to what it was; we want the man we love back in love with us. We want to go back in time: fix the problems that may have been the cause of him straying ...if only, if only, if only.

- Guilt is often bargaining's companion. The "if onlys" cause us to find fault in ourselves and agonize about what we "think" we could have done differently. We may even bargain with the pain we now feel. We will do anything not to feel the pain of this loss. We remain in the past, trying to negotiate our way out of the hurt, but then we come to the realization that everything has changed and now there is just "the past."
- People often think of the stages as lasting weeks or months. They forget that the stages are responses to feelings that can last for minutes or hours as we flip in and out of one and then another. We do not enter and leave each individual stage in a linear fashion. We may feel one, then another and back again to the first one.

Realize that you are the only one bargaining because you are the one left behind. He isn't bargaining; he has moved on. It is a painful realization and you cannot quite grasp the reality of this being real, and so you bargain, first with him, then with yourself. Realize that no amount of bargaining can bring the relationship back from such a precipice. Realize that even if you were successful in persuading him to stay, that you would never be quite secure in the knowledge that he will always stay. You would always know that you were the one who had to give up something of yourself so that you could have him back. You would always know that he didn't value you enough to fight for your relationship. You would always know, that he is not as committed to this marriage as you are.

Ask yourself:

- Do I want to live/be in a relationship with someone who gives up on us so easily?
- Do I really want to be so uncertain of our relationship that I become so afraid to do or say anything that might make him unhappy?
- How much does he value our relationship if it is so easy for him to just walk away without trying to make it work?

Exercise: Answer these questions honestly. Step back out from your emotions and write down the responses as if you are taking an inventory in a warehouse. Detach yourself from the pain while you take this inventory, and read the answers back to yourself once you are done.

Depression:

- After bargaining, our attention moves squarely into the present. Empty feelings present themselves, and grief enters our lives on a deeper level, deeper than we ever imagined. This depressive stage feels as though it will last forever. It's important to understand that this depression is not a sign of mental illness. It is the appropriate response to a great loss.
- We withdraw from life, left in a fog of intense sadness, wondering, perhaps, if there is any point in going on alone? Why go on at all? Depression after a loss is too often seen as unnatural: a state to be fixed, something to snap out of, but it's not something to be fixed, it is something to be experienced as painful as it will be.

Ask yourself the question:

Is this situation I'm in actually depressing? (The loss of a loved one is a very depressing situation, and depression is a normal and appropriate response).

To not experience depression after a loved one leaves you would be unusual. When a loss fully settles in your soul, the realization that he didn't value your relationship enough to work at fixing the problem is understandably depressing. If grief is a process of healing, then

depression is one of the many necessary steps along the way.

Exercise:

- Allow yourself to submit to the feeling of being depressed. It's normal. Don't try to fight these feelings. Just allow it to wash through you.
- Sleep all day if you have to. Walk around in your PJ's all day long, if you want to. Eat, or not eat. Cry or not cry. Remember, your soul knows how to heal itself.
- Pray, scream at God. He can take it! It's not His fault, but He will take it. Realize also that sometimes people are moved out of your life because they no longer have a part in your story. There may be so much better ahead of you and God knew they would only hold you back. Remember, God sees the future and knows the whole truth and sometimes later you may realize that He saved you from a living hell. That was my story. It may be yours also.
- Accept that he is gone and that God must have something so much better for you to have him removed out of your life. Perhaps you were settling for so much less than what you truly deserved.

Acceptance: Overview

- This is often confused with the notion of being "all right" or "OK" with what has happened. This is not the case. Most people don't ever feel OK or all right after being abandoned by a loved one.
- This stage is about accepting the reality that he is physically, and emotionally gone and recognizing that this new reality is the permanent reality.
- We may never like this reality or make it OK, but eventually we accept it. We learn to live with it. It is the new norm with which we must learn to live. We must try to live now in a world where the person who promised to love us "until death do we part," did not keep his end of the vow.

- In resisting this new norm, at first many people want to maintain life as it was before their partner left. In time, through bits and pieces of acceptance, however, we see that we cannot maintain the past intact. It has been forever changed and we must readjust. We must learn to reorganize roles, re-assign them to others or take them on ourselves.
- Finding acceptance may be just having more good days than bad ones. As we begin to live again and enjoy our life, we realize we can never go back and change what has been lost, but we can make new connections, new meaningful relationships, and new interdependencies.
- Instead of denying our feelings, we listen to our needs; we move, we change, we grow, and we evolve. We may start to reach out to others and become involved in their lives. We invest in our friendships and in our relationship with ourselves. We begin to live again, but we cannot do so until we have given grief its time.

Ask yourself:

- Did I grieve fully?
- Is it now beginning to be less painful?
- Are you now finding it easier to smile, really smile?
- Can I now remember some of the things he did to hurt me, and simply shake my head at what I allowed him to do to keep the peace?
- Can I now see or visit places we used to frequent and feel nothing?
- Are you now wondering how you could have been so distraught over this man leaving, and now you have to actually wonder how it's possible for you to feel absolutely nothing for him?

Welcome to a New Beginning! What are some of the things you ALWAYS wanted to do, but you didn't because he didn't want you to, or he wasn't interested, or he didn't think it was important?

2: Begin to Heal

Change locations if possible:

Yes, if at all possible, just move somewhere where there are less reminders of the infidelity. If you remain in the place where you experienced it, there will be too many reminders and it will take longer to heal. You won't get away from all the reminders however, you will still be reminded by the restaurants you used to go, the music you used to listen to, the car he/drove, but removing yourself from the familiar places will minimize the frequency of recurring memories – until soon you are able to pass by or visit them with only a faint memory of what used to be.

Take the time to heal

Don't rush the healing process. That would be like fighting a losing battle anyway. Your heart will heal when it's good and ready, and the quickest way for it to heal is to allow the pain to move through you, until it reaches the other side. Don't try to avoid the pain. Welcome it and surrender to it.

Accept and feel your emotions

Cry, pray, scream, sleep, talk to yourself – accept the process and allow it to move through you; that is the only way that you will truly heal. Trying to pretend that you're not hurt or in pain will only prolong your suffering, and could end up making you a bitter, sad person.

Forgive

It's over, and in order to move forward successfully you MUST forgive.

Forgiveness does not mean you have forgotten; it means you've released yourself from any bitterness that can consume you and make you bitter. Forgiveness is for you

Ditch the blame game

- We have a tendency to blame ourselves for things others do wrong. Stop it!
- Everyone has the power of choice to choose what they want to do. Even when there are problems in a relationship, if one partner decides to go and cheat instead of sitting down with their spouse to work things through – they chose to do that.
- Cheating was their choice and you should not blame yourself for the choice they made.

Re-engage with you

- Use this time alone to focus on you
- Your needs
- Your dreams
- Your hobbies
- Your interests
- Rediscover who you were before this person was a part of your life
- Who do you want to become now that you are in this new place
- Write them down so you have them hard-wired in your brain
- Remember – the possibilities are endless

3. Rediscover You

Fill your free time doing things that interest you

- What did you always want to do but couldn't do?
- Did you want to learn to swim, dance, or ski?
- Did you want to go to the gym, outdoor markets, the theatre?

Learn a new skill

- What new skill did you want to learn but never had time, or was discouraged

- Did you want to learn a new language
- Did you want to learn photography?

Travel/ Visit difference places

- What interesting destinations do you want to visit?
- What about museums
- Take road trips on weekends

Join new clubs to meet people with similar interests

- Networking clubs for your profession
- Volunteer clubs to help others
- Ethnic clubs to enjoy time with people of your own culture

Take care of yourself

- Spa day, or just a manicure/pedicure
- Collect shells along the beach
- Sit on a blanket in the park and people watch
- Sit by a lake and listen to nature

Surround yourself with friends and loved ones

- Visit friends
- Hang out with family

- Go on picnics with people who love you
- Keep in touch by phone or video chat

Move Forward!

- Be thankful for the what you have learned in this process
- Help others who are less fortunate
- Learn from your experience
- Do not live in the past (It's gone and if you keep looking back, you can never move forward.)
- Release all negativity
- Open your heart to embrace new opportunities, new love
- Promise yourself never to use your bad relationship to color all others
- Embrace your freedom and your potential

Be Happy. You Deserve It!!!