



Reinvention: The Gift after Loss

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Hello

There is a lot written about loss and the process of grieving for what has been lost, be it a person, lifestyle, job, or a dream that has been lost. The stages of grief - shock, denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance are well known. However loss is only one part of the picture. There is also the part that is about gaining something new. And that means grieving and eventually accepting a loss is only part of the process. It is also necessary to reinvent one's life. This can be about reinventing part of one's life or a lot of one's life. People who are good at the reinvention part tend to live much happier and successful lives. People who don't do reinvention tend to be victims and I don't know many happy and successful victims.

There is a gift for you to claim after loss

People don't readily reinvent their lives unless they are unhappy. Why change if you are happy? Why change when things are going along swimmingly? Which is one reason why a life where everything goes smoothly without any hiccups is not a good thing, as well as being a non-existent thing. If you think other people seem to have it better than you then you almost certainly have it wrong. Life smacks everyone, many times, in the face. If you don't want to learn to reinvent your life you are in trouble. Because you are not going to go through life without loss, without pain, and without some really big changes coming your way. If you learn to reinvent your life you can move on to something new - and here is the gift - something even better. If your life just ticks along wonderfully each day you are going to end up without a lot of skills not to mention very little depth of character. If you are really good at reinventing your life, you can use the opportunity of loss and pain to rise up better than ever. But you need to know how to do it. And like many other life skills, not everyone knows what to do.

Regain your sense of curiosity and explore

If you are going to make the most of your reinvention stage, then you need to be good at exploring. Usually we are. We are born very curious. Unfortunately we often lose that as we get older and begin to cling to the safe and familiar. Sometimes we are rewarded for not being curious. If you were then change it. Begin to reward yourself for being curious and adventurous. If you want to be good in life, and good in dealing with change, then hone your exploration skills.

Give yourself time to explore before you make any decisions unless you have a life and death reason, such as needing food and shelter, for making a quick decision about the way forward. There are lots of areas for exploration. Explore yourself. Understand more about who you are - your values and interests and beliefs. Try out new hobbies. Meet new people. Travel and experience different cultures. Try out different types of jobs. That doesn't mean you have to keep changing jobs. Just shadow some people in different jobs and see what each one is like. Talk to people in different jobs and really get the truth about what each one entails. And make up your mind to keep an open mind during your explorations.

Your brain likes working towards goals

Then set yourself some new goals in life. In the early part of our lives we tend to have goals set for us by society. Go to school, then tertiary studies, then a job, then a marriage, then children and so on. Most of my clients who are feeling very dissatisfied with their lives realise that they

have stopped setting new goals. Setting goals is something you want to do for the rest of your life. You always need new and different things to strive for. The human brain is designed to want to realise goals. Although new goals can be challenging, we are usually happier when striving to reach a new goal. You can set goals for the part of your life relating to your loss, or some people use a loss to relook all life areas and make big changes by setting new goals for a whole lot of life areas. When you set goals write them down and make a commitment to achieving them. Write a contract with yourself where you commit to reaching your goals. People who write goals and make a commitment to achieve them are much more likely to realise them. In fact, if you just keep your goal as an idea or wish in your head the chances of you achieving it are small.

Resource yourself to succeed

When you have set new goals for yourself write down a list of all resources available that could help you achieve that goal. Resources include people, organisations, educational resources - courses, seminars, books - the internet, friends and colleagues, as well as your own personal qualities that can support you in achieving your goals.

Set up your environment to succeed

Because new goals means change, and that means doing something different you need to change your environment to support you in achieving your goals. Everything you do in your life, from the time you get up in the morning to what you do for the rest of the day is routine and is designed to support your past goals. Look at what you can change that will make it easier and more natural for you to take the steps necessary to achieve your new goals. This can mean changing your routine. It can mean changing how you spend time. It can mean changing the layout of your environment. It can mean changing how you spend your leisure time. If you change nothing about your environment when you set new goals then you are making it more difficult for you to achieve them. You are making it easy to keep to the status quo.

Keep on keeping on

And then there is persistence. People don't change behaviour easily, although it can be done, and is done often. Life is not easy, and neither is change. So stick to it. Reward yourself for successes. Rather than criticise yourself for failures use them as learning experiences to understand why you do what you do and what you need to work on to do things differently. And above all, just keep going. If you keep taking one step at a time you will eventually get to where you want to get to. If you give up, well, you just stay where you are.

