

Healing After Heartbreak



THE ART OF LETTING GO

It has been six months since I left the corporate world – and there are some things I will always miss. Like saying good morning to colleagues on my way to the office where I worked every day. Or getting caught in the excitement as we prepared for another big meeting or presentation. I now realize what a huge transition this was, moving from a corporate headquarters with hundreds of employees to a small home office of one. Though I would never trade in my current life, with its freedom and independence, I lived in that other world for 31 years...

... And I still feel the pangs of letting go.

At different points in our lives we all experience the difficulty of letting go – not only physically but with our hearts and minds. We may need to do this with our relationships, careers or sometimes the place we call home. Even destructive relationships can be hard to walk away from. Author Casey Clair, in *Still Single*, speaks of the emptiness of her five-year affair with a married man and “the hours of self-doubt and unhappiness” that plagued her. She writes: “It all coalesced into a wound that even I couldn’t ignore.” It was the pain that finally forced her to leave him.

We may also have to face the loss of our health or abilities through illness or an accident. When change is thrust upon us, it is often more taxing than when it’s our decision. Either way letting go is never quick or easy. No matter whom or what YOU need to let go of in your life, here are ways to get through the process.

· Allow Yourself to Grieve

Ironically it is your own resistance that causes you the most pain. The more you resist giving in to emotion, the harder it becomes to get through this transition. Stoicism does not lend you strength. It is more helpful to re-live the good moments of the relationship or situation you must leave behind and acknowledge what it has given you. Then let the tears come.

· Share Your Experience

You may need to talk about the changes in your life. This is the time to turn to supportive friends or family members. Or even to strangers who understand what you’re going through. Faye, a violinist and writer who suffered the loss of her parents followed by that of her beloved cat, says, “The one thing that’s made any

letting go easier is finding people who have gone through exactly the same experience.”

It may also be reassuring to read about others who have been at the same crossroads - where the past is still so close you can touch it, and the future too dim and vague to offer much comfort. A couple of times in her life, though, Faye experienced losses that the people around her could not relate to. “At the bottom level,” she says, “we face letting go alone, in the night. It’s really about hope.”

· Learn to Accept

Children grow up and leave home; relationships evolve and people move on. This is life. As put by actor William B. Davis: “It struck me while I was sitting here; everything changes but the sea.” There is a season to everything, and the timing of change is usually not within our control.

Looking back, you will likely realize that you also had no say when that particular relationship or situation began. C.A. Dowler is a career and business mentor. In talking about her process of letting go, she points out: “As I had no control over when and how that wonderful thing came into my life, I have no right to now hold on to it when it’s ready to go.”

There IS a gap in your life. What you feel is the absence of what you had before. Yet it is only through acceptance that you can let in the new, whether it’s another person or set of circumstances.

· Embrace the New

When a toddler reaches for something different, she can easily drop the thing she was holding. Releasing is something we are able to do naturally, but as we grow older we learn to hang on tight. Part of the reason is our longing for the familiar and our fear of the unknown. We don’t know what lies around the next corner, or if we can ever again find the happiness we see ourselves losing.

It takes courage to really let go. You have to trust that what is now coming into your life is what you most need. Then take a deep breath, and let yourself turn another page.

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