

DIVORCE / DEATH / LOSS – TRANSITIONS AND CHANGES

By: *Suzy Yehl Marta, President and Founder, Rainbows*

The marriage isn't over when the divorce is granted and the death isn't final when the spouse is buried. After the divorce or death takes place, we feel like life is out of focus. We are not sure how to act, how to feel, how to respond, or even where we fit in.

It is important to sort through the scattered pieces of our life and reassemble an acceptable new world for ourselves. This can be extremely difficult to do when we may be changing homes or jobs, when we are thinking about dating after so many years of being married, or when our responsibilities have increased. Any puzzle is easier to solve if we take it piece by piece. Adjustment to being single requires sorting out many pieces. Because of this, the transition may take three to five years or possibly longer. We must not limit ourselves on the length of time it takes to heal; rather, we must allow ourselves the time we need.

Life is change...filled with endings, beginnings, and transitions. Some of these are painful and some are a natural part of the cycle of life. During these periods of adjustment, we are rebuilding an acceptable lifestyle in which to exist.

The question so often asked is, "How do I move through the changes successfully?" When it seems that the rug has been pulled out from under you, just lying there seems to be the only alternative. However, there are Actions of Grief. These are concrete steps to rebuilding:

1. **BELIEVE IT HAS HAPPENED**

Some things that happen have no basis of logic. Accepting this can prevent much bitterness and self-blame.

2. **ACKNOWLEDGE THE PAIN**

Society does not encourage us to feel pain of any type. With grief, the only way to get beyond it is to go through it...admit that the pain is there, feel it, lean into it, do not avoid it. Experiencing the pain will free you of it. Otherwise, it remains a heavy burden locked inside of your heart. Your story must be told repeatedly.

3. **REACH OUT**

Make your needs known to your family and friends. Let them know honestly what it is you need physically and emotionally. Remember, they cannot read your mind. Loved ones can be a tremendous support when asked.

4. **SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS**

Do not keep them bottled up. Use good judgment as to when and where. Talk, scream, cry – grief requires these outlets

5. **UNDERSTAND THE TIMETABLE**

Grief does not have a timetable. It may take years to heal. Allow yourself as long as it takes. Do not let others rush you.

6. **ACCEPT THAT LIFE IS FOR THE LIVING**

All relationships take emotional and physical energy. Put the energy that you gave the relationship that has ended into positive directions. Get a job, start a new hobby, or open your circle friends.

Our life will settle down and become livable again. Although it will be different, we may discover that some of the changes are better than "the way things used to be". In time, we may realize that we are better, stronger, more caring persons because of all we have gone through. Often, after transitions happen, especially the painful ones, we can look back and see the personal growth that has taken place. We can see ***the rainbow after our family's storm.***