



## The Journey from Loss to Healing

There is one hard and fast rule when it comes to coping with the death of someone you love: there are no rules.

Every death is different, and every relationship is different, so the way each of us experiences loss and grief will be different. Grief is a journey, and when someone dies, those of us who mourn will take that journey in a unique way. It's a journey through some of the most emotionally intense and painful passages of life, and sometimes it will seem as if nothing and no one can help. However, there are some common guidelines that can be an anchor to anyone who is suffering through loss.

"Grief will take as long as it takes," writes Rusty Berkus in *To Heal Again: Towards Serenity and the Resolution of Grief*. "There is no right way to grieve—there is just your way."

### Death: Part of the Fabric of Life

For centuries, death was woven into the fabric of life. People were born at home and died at home, and families and cultures developed rituals to help them deal with the loss. However, in the past century, as death moved into hospitals and mortuaries, people became more removed from death. For many people, this made the process of grieving and healing much more difficult.

But we are coming back around to understanding. Books, grief counseling, the growth of the hospice movement and personal rituals all attest to the ways we are confronting death in new ways.

### Guidelines for Grieving

On a personal level, losing someone we love can leave us lost and unsure of what to do next. Although there

are no rules to the grieving process, there are guidelines that can make the journey easier. Grief falls into roughly four stages: shock and numbness; searching and yearning; disorientation and disorganization, and reorganization (or healing). During any of these stages:

- **Do not expect too much of yourself**, at least not for awhile.
- **Be gentle with yourself** and let go of ideas of the "right" thing to do or the "right" way to behave.
- **Seek support.** Ask friends to help you—with practical details, as well as just by sitting and listening.
- **Don't be afraid to talk about your loss** and about the person who has died. This is an important part of the grieving process. When it comes to death, silence is not always golden. If a friend is uncomfortable with your stories, find friends who can be there.
- **Don't be afraid to seek help** if your pain or depression becomes more than you can bear. Sometimes our friends can't give us the help and support we need.
- **Remember that a person dies, but a relationship doesn't.** Although the person you loved is gone, he or she lives on in you.

In his book, *Awakening from Grief: Finding the Way Back to Joy*, John Welshons calls death a great teacher for the living and a gift to help us live deeper lives.

"Nothing inspires us to want to find true happiness more effectively than thinking about our own mortality, and nothing else can communicate the urgency with which we need to pursue deeper levels of love and the sense of being fully alive." ✱

## 10 Ways to Sidestep Holiday Stress

From the rising of the moon on Halloween eve until the setting of the sun on Super Bowl Sunday, the holidays create more opportunities for anxiety to get a foothold than a tile roof makes for Santa's reindeer. Here are 10 ideas to help you keep your own footing during the upcoming season.

1. **Take good care of your self.** Eat healthfully, get plenty of rest, exercise.
2. **Make lists and set aside specific times to accomplish certain tasks.** Prioritize. Consider scratching a few items off your list.
3. **Ask for help.** It's more fun to do things together—from decorating the house to wrapping presents.
4. **Make a budget and stick to it.** No matter what. If you use your credit cards during the holidays then spend the rest of the year paying them off, try not charging anything this year.
5. **Shop by catalogue.** Give gift certificates.
6. **Look for ways to share day care arrangements if the kids are out of school.** Maybe this is the year the older ones get a job, or perform volunteer work.
7. **Remember to play.** Have fun. Share special time with the children or other family members.
8. **Make houseguests as self-sufficient as possible.** Let them help. Don't give up your own bed unless you must.
9. **Plan well in advance.** If family gatherings cause tension and anxiety, consider alternatives that can lessen the effects.
10. **Take a walk;** breathe in the fresh air. Find a place where you can be quiet and restful. Go there often. ✱

## A Letter From



Michelle Barone, MA, MFT

*I hope you find this newsletter helpful. I am always looking for ways to help my clients find joy and lead a fulfilling life. I have spent the last year studying a process that facilitates lasting change: NET, Neuro Emotional Technique.*

*I am now certified in NET, a mind-body technique that I find exceptional. I have personally experienced its benefits and clients report swift, long-lasting change. If you are ready to clear old patterns, reduce stress, and unlock hidden potential, it is time to experience NET.*

*In line with mind-body healing, I continue to marvel at the changes that occur for people when they increase their use of whole food and whole food supplements, and eat in accordance with their unique body chemistry. Support your mental health by insuring that your physical health is also well cared for.*

*Your mental and physical health is your most important asset. Take time and invest in yourself.*

*Currently, I work with individuals, couples, families, children and teens. I bring my knowledge of interpersonal neurobiology, mind/body therapy and alternative health/education to my work. I maintain a large referral base of supportive health care providers. I currently serve on the board of the Glendale Area Mental Health Professional Association as the e-list facilitator.*

### Services Offered

- Individual, couple, family counseling
- Healing grief and loss
- Stress management
- Alternative education/homeschooling support

- Parenting classes and support groups

*Office and phone sessions by appointment. Please visit my website [www.michellebarone.net](http://www.michellebarone.net) for listings of groups, classes and speaking engagements.*

*Treat yourself gently,*

Michelle Barone, MA, MFT

## How Well Do You Fulfill Your Needs?

*A number of years ago, humanistic psychologist Abraham Maslow realized that the foundation for physical and psychological wellness had to do with getting certain needs met. He developed the "Hierarchy of Needs," from which the following quiz is adapted. Answer the questions to determine how well your basic and growth needs are being met.*

True False

### Physical

- I get adequate sleep and rest.
- My basic nutritional needs are met.
- I have a place to live that provides warmth and shelter and I am physically comfortable.
- Exercise and recreation needs are met through regular routines and planned activities.
- My need for sexual expression is fulfilled.

### Safety and Security

- With very few exceptions, I feel secure and safe from harm.
- There is adequate stability and routine in my life.
- I experience financial security and a sense of prosperity that isn't based on money.
- I feel emotionally safe.
- I can expect consistency and fairness in my daily life.
- My need for meaningful work is filled.

### Love and Belonging

- I feel loved—important, wanted, valued, and desirable.
- I am able to love myself as well as others.
- I have intimate or affectionate relationships with significant others.
- I have a sense of belonging in my family.
- I am able to understand others and feel understood by them.
- I have a few very close friends and a larger circle of other friends and associates.
- I am involved in communities such as clubs or teams, spiritual groups, professional, cultural or social organizations.
- Though I am sometimes alone, I don't often experience loneliness.

### Esteem of Self and Esteem of Others

- I feel competent and up to the rigors of day-to-day life.
- I live with integrity and respect for myself.
- I trust my opinions, my thoughts and ideas, and my intuition.
- I have confidence in myself and my abilities.
- My self-care includes physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual aspects of my life.
- I feel useful and I make valuable contributions to others.

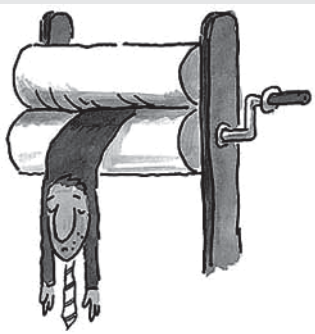
*Having our needs met doesn't mean we begin at birth with the need for adequate food and shelter and move forward as we age until we fulfill our needs for self-actualization. Life is not lived in a straight line. Nor does being self-actualized mean everything is perfect. Rather this quiz offers checkpoints along the way of gratification and personal growth. If you have any questions about this quiz, or want more information, please don't hesitate to ask.*

# Male Bashing: Let's End the War

Much attention for the past five decades has been given to the status of women in the world, in an attempt to redress the historic inequality experienced by women over the centuries, including the stereotype of women being submissive or incompetent. You'd think that, five decades later, we'd have come to some parity.

Not at all. Now we have male bashing.

The put downs and negative stereotypes of males are all over the place—in the media, in jokes, on clothing, in everyday conversations. Men (and boys)



are routinely portrayed as insensitive, unintelligent, blundering fools. Fathers are characterized as hopelessly clueless, husbands as lazy dolts, brothers as disgusting pigs—and the comic portrayals are growing increasingly negative.

Anti-boy sentiments are plastered on girls clothing (such as T-shirts that read

"So Many Boys, So Little Minds" and "Boys Lie"). At worst, men are depicted as controlling and violent.

The main message: males are fundamentally wrong, inferior and unworthy of respect.

Of course, no one is condoning violence, abuse, neglect or irresponsibility. But this collective message distorts the culture's view of men, affects friendships and romantic relationships and hurts our boys.

Wendy McElroy, author of *Liberty for Women: Freedom and Feminism in the 21st Century*, says: "It cannot be overstated: Most men are good, hard-working human beings who love their families and never raise a hand in violence. Because their decency is not sensational, they are ignored by media and politicians, who focus instead on men who rape or otherwise give their gender a bad name. A better reaction is to hold the decent men closer to us and value them more."

## The Effect on Our Boys

Seeing the contemptuous images of men in the media and hearing the belittling, disempowering comments about males, boys may come to believe that not much is expected of them, and that things like childcare and deep emotions are over their heads. Even worse, when we bash males *for being males*, we strike at the core of

a boy's identity, a surefire recipe for problems with self-image and self-esteem.

This seems to be showing up today in numerous ways. Our boys are falling behind in school, earning fewer college degrees and committing suicide at a significantly higher rate than girls.

It's time to stop.

Here are some things you can do:

## Take a Personal Stand

Stereotypical male-bashing portrayals undermine the core belief of the feminist movement, which is equality. Few men want a return to the "good old days." We all, men and women, need fresh vision in seeing ourselves and each other so that we can put a stop to the gender war.

Here are some ways we can take a personal stand, as urged by McElroy and others:

**Refuse to participate in male bashing.** Don't hurl insults at "all men." If a man has wronged you, address him personally, not by gender. Don't laugh at jokes that skewer males.

**Object to advertising that portrays men in an offensive way.** J. C. Penney ran a TV ad showing a father at the breakfast table, with his infant crying and throwing things. The father asked the child when his mother would be home. When several people objected to this image of an apparently incompetent and uncaring father, Penney's got the message; their subsequent holiday ad featured a father, mother and son all happily shopping together.



**Train yourself to become more aware of male bashing.** When you hear claims with specific gender references, switch the gender and think about the message.

**No matter what your gender, be aware of praising the males in your life.** None of us tries harder as a result of criticism or failure. Rather, we build on

success. Let the men and boys in your life know their success in your eyes. Be a safe space in which they can explore what it means to be male.

It's not only for the sake of our men and boys that we need to stop male bashing. We all benefit by learning to live in partnership rather than power struggle, recognizing how we can complement and support each other, with mutual honoring of our respective vulnerabilities and strengths. \*

# The Ultimate Act of Self-Care: Clearing Clutter

When the mountain of paperwork and other clutter on her desk approached Mt. Everest proportions, Amelia would "organize" by sweeping it all into paper bags and boxes that she stashed in closets and under tables.

George didn't even bother stashing his clutter. The obstacle course from his front door to the rest of the house meant friends and others generally just didn't come over, and he grew increasingly isolated.

Kathleen kept her house pretty clutter-free, but her garage was loaded top to bottom with boxes of things she hadn't used or read in years, including a box marked "RIP" filled with "mementos" of her divorce 20 years earlier.

Fortunately, all three individuals managed to regain control of the clutter in their lives by enlisting a few friends to help and by examining what drove their clutter habit. And one by one, miraculous things began to happen:

Sorting through papers, Amelia ran across the name of a colleague whom she hadn't spoken with for years. The following week, the colleague called out of the blue and offered her an irresistible business opportunity. George fell in love within a few months of clearing his clutter and later married. Kathleen found herself suddenly presented with numerous opportunities for

international travel, something she hadn't done in several decades.

Miraculous or not, clearing away physical clutter often has the unexpected effect of clearing away emotional clutter, too, that may be holding us back from our heart's desire.

In fact, organizing your life is one of the kindest acts of self-care there is.

Think about it: When things are organized, we spend less time looking for things, set a good example for our children, reduce overwhelm, do more with less time, make better use of our talents and skills, increase our self-confidence, feel more in control and make more/spend less money.

There is no shortage of ideas and books on how to organize. Julie Morgenstern, in her book *Organizing from the Inside Out*, takes the "how to" a step further and suggests that to arrive at any kind of a sustaining system, we need to understand and work with or around our psychological obstacles to a clutter-free environment. Do you see yourself in any of these obstacles?

**Need for accumulation.** People who need to keep a lot of everything around them may be filled with anxiety and dread at the idea

of getting rid of things.

**Unclear goals and priorities.** Organizing is about defining what's important and setting up a system to reflect that.

**Fear of success/fear of failure.** Disorganization may be a convenient way to hold back.

**Need to retreat.** Clutter can be a protective shield to keep others at a safe distance.

**Fear of losing creativity.** A common myth is that creative, "right-brained" people need to work in chaos to produce high-quality work. Balderdash!

**Need for distraction.** Clutter can provide a convenient excuse to avoid uncomfortable issues or unwanted tasks.

**Sentimental attachment.** Infusing objects with personality, emotions and meaning ("That vase will be sad if I throw it out.") usually results in living with an enormous amount of clutter.

**Need for perfection.** Often, people won't deal with clutter until it can be done perfectly. Translation: It will never get done.

Identifying these obstacles can help us create an effective, lasting solution to clutter and free us from energy-sapping self-criticism. ✨



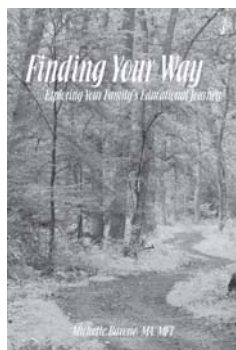
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Michelle's new book, *Finding Your Way*,

*Exploring Your Family's Educational*

*Journey*, is now available through [lulu.com](http://lulu.com).

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