

THE PATH TO HEALING



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The 3 Steps to Healing

Awareness, Expression, Resolution

by Robert S. Vibert

I recently realized what was missing in many emotional healing techniques - a systematic and comprehensive approach that would ensure that the three key aspects of the emotional healing process would be properly handled.

Since early 2001, I have engaged in a dedicated and intense research project with a wide range of emotional healing modalities. I have participated in numerous workshops and conferences on healing approaches and modalities, read countless books and articles, watched dozens of training videos and been trained and certified in a number of these modalities. I have discussed the process and methodologies of healing with many experts in the field, and had the techniques applied to myself as well as applied them to willing "clients".

Thanks to my other income streams, and unlike many people involved in this arena, I have not approached it as a way to gain a living, and this has enabled me to easily abandon techniques that do not work well in favour of those that do. I did not hang up a "shingle" as healer, mainly because I was not satisfied with the results in both myself and others with most of these systems.

Drawing on my background in systems analysis, I watched for patterns and what underlying structures existed in these techniques. While I do not consider the research project complete, a clear picture has emerged concerning the emotional healing process and what steps are involved, in addition to how well many methods achieve their stated healing goals.

There are many excellent methods and processes which help people uncover their emotional pain and many that allow a good expression of that pain, but few properly addressed the final step - resolution of that pain, so one can live free of it.

My research reveals that there are three steps one needs to take for healing to be complete.

Step One – Awareness



Before one can remedy something, we need to know what it is that we are remedying. We need to be aware of it, and this awareness needs to be at a deep level, not just a surface-level idea of what is there.

For example, if one feels fear arise around speaking in a group, it is important to follow that fear and see if it is linked to another emotion or feeling. Exploring that

fear in depth could result in one finding that underneath that fear is a feeling of not being good enough to speak in public, or that he or she will be rejected as a person because his or her ideas will be considered inadequate, and then one will be abandoned by the group. This is just an example, but it does illustrate how stopping at the feeling of fear would mean one misses out on being aware of the other, related feelings of abandonment, inadequacy, rejection, etc..

I recently guided a woman through a healing session in which she started off feeling sad. As she healed the sadness, other emotions naturally arose without prompting (feeling hurt, not being able to forgive herself, feeling guilt) until we uncovered a feeling of shame. This shame was linked to an early childhood incident, which she had suppressed thinking or feeling about for close to 50 years. Once she healed that feeling of shame, a great feeling of release came over her - she had been holding onto that shame feeling for so long and now it was freed. The other feelings still needed to be healed, as they had only been identified and partially healed on the path to uncovering that feeling of shame.

Fortunately, there are a number of good approaches to exploring our feelings, and as long as they are respectful of the timing, safety, and support that we need to delve into these sometimes murky and potentially scary places, most of them allow us to identify the primary feelings and those lurking underneath, no matter how long that discovery process takes.

A common question that arises is why anyone would want to get rid of feelings or fix them. Unfortunately, that's the wrong question, as it assumes that there is a desire to be free of emotions. The real question would be, "For how much longer do you want your emotions and feelings to overwhelm you and prevent you from living your life in the manner that is most resourceful to you?"

There is a world of difference between eradicating emotions and feelings, and having a healthy relationship with them, where they arise and subside naturally, without causing you excessive distress. This is also different from suppressing or denying them, which is often the underlying approach to techniques that talk about "controlling your emotions".

Step Two – Expression

Once we have identified a specific feeling or emotion that we want to work with, it is often helpful to express that emotion, both as part of the awareness deepening and the acceptance of it. Being able to talk to ourselves about a feeling is a good first step. We feel fear, for example, and instead of trying to avoid or deny that feeling, we notice that fear. If next we express it out loud, this can be a very powerful act. Just looking ourselves in the mirror and saying the words "I feel fear", can be very liberating.

Taking this process of expression further, we would then express the words that describe the feeling to someone else. We need a good, patient listener who is not going to judge what we say, react to it, try to fix it or otherwise get involved in our experience of expressing the feeling.

As well, the importance of a safe environment to do this work is paramount - this would include a comfortable quiet



place where we will not be interrupted. If we feel safe enough, soon after the words start to flow will come other expressions of that feeling, which could include tears, shouting, sobbing, body sensations, etc..

Again, there are a number of methods which provide a safe context in which to express feelings.

Step Three – Resolution

The third step in healing an unresourceful emotion or feeling is to achieve some resolution around it. This resolution would include the following elements



a full exposure to the feeling,

a diminishing of the intensity of the feeling to a level that is first comfortable and then truly absent,

a feeling of peacefulness around the event or subject that triggered the feeling in the first place,

and some insight into what was going on for us.

Many emotional healing methods do not achieve all of these markers of success. Some try to immediately get an insight as to what caused the feeling and then use that insight to "think away the feeling", which is pretty close

to willfully suppressing it - it will arise again another day.

Some try to put whipped cream on the cow patty, by "reframing" a painful incident through rationalizing about it, verbally minimizing it, putting a positive spin on it, etc. - this again merely shoves the feeling into a storage place, from which it will probably emerge at a later date.

Some methods place a lot of value on the expression phase, having people scream, punch pillows, kick their feet, etc. etc., but then do not actually resolve the underlying feeling. I watched in one workshop as a woman screamed at 5 different representatives of her pain - 5 people who played the role of her antagonist - by the end of the workshop she was exhausted, but her issues remained unresolved. The facilitators confused exhaustion of the participants with resolution of problems.

Some methods attempt to quickly reduce the intensity of the feeling by use of physiological actions - having clients do lots of slow, deep breathing, for example, which is known to reduce tension in the body and induce feelings of relaxation and calmness. An effective method of curbing symptoms of distress is taking a deep breath and forcefully blowing out through a small hole in your mouth, letting your cheeks puff out. This puts pressure on the vagus nerve, which is one of the most important nerves in the body, and tells it to reset to a normal (calmer) state.

Attempts to "speed things along", which can include constant prompting of the client to "find another (deeper) feeling", often result in temporary relief but not resolution. The problematic feeling eventually returns. I once filmed a "master healer" running a number of healing processes and

declaring each to be successful. Unfortunately, in each case the client's problem returned within a few weeks, as the process actually only resulted in temporary relief.

Other techniques take advantage of the normal human desire to avoid pain and our built-in defence mechanism, disassociating, to simply further disassociate the client from the feeling. Again, this does not resolve anything, but just shoves it down further into the person's hiding places for uncomfortable feelings.

One truly unfortunate thing about techniques that do not provide resolution is that the client is often held responsible for the success or failure of the process. People are told things such as "you are not ready yet to heal this", "you are resisting the process", and "you need to do something else first before you can heal this".

There are a small number of techniques that I have found that incorporate processes to facilitate complete resolution of the unresourceful or excessive feeling, and in this article I shall discuss two, that if properly used, have a very high success rate:

AER (Awareness, Expression, Resolution) and
Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT).

The proper use of EFT is a topic best covered in another article, but suffice to say here that one should follow closely the process outlined by the inventor, Gary Craig, and avoid introducing elements of other systems which attempt to "speed things up" or "reframe a feeling" - the goal is resolution, not speed or further disassociating from the feeling.

Getting to resolution

Having watched hundreds of people try various healing processes, with varying degrees of success, I boiled down the results to these four essential elements of a long-term successful healing process. They are simple, practical and easy to look for:

- The client experiences full exposure to the feeling, for as long as it takes for resolution to occur - they remain fully associated. As this can be seen as counter-intuitive, given human nature to avoid pain and the large number of relief methods being promoted on the basis of being "quick and painless", one must overcome the tendency to run away from the feeling. Having someone else guide you through a fully-associated process a few times makes it easier to eventually be able to do it on one's own, if desired. "Fully associated" means you feel the feeling, and are looking out through your own eyes, not watching yourself as if watching a movie.
- The feeling will diminish in intensity, first to a level that is comfortable and then dissolve completely. Many relief oriented processes stop once a comfortable intensity is reached. However, stopping prematurely can lead to the feeling being re-triggered, as it is not gone from the system, much like cancer can continue to spread if not eradicated.
- The amount of time needed for a feeling to diminish can vary tremendously, so patience is important and the classical 50 minute therapist's hour is often not conducive to complete resolution in a single session - it might take hours. An important element here is that there is no attempt to make the unresourceful feeling go away or change - it is accepted for what it is, in each moment, and allowed to run its course until it dissolves of its own accord.
- Once the intensity of the feeling has been reduced to null, a new sense of peacefulness around the event or subject that triggered the feeling in the first place is reported. If that peacefulness

is not present, it is likely that related feelings are present, and each in turn would be handled like the first, until the peacefulness arises.

- Some insight into what was going on for us, what meaning we can give to the fact we had strong feelings about an incident, can and often do arise after holding oneself in the peacefulness for a while.

If the healing process you are presently trying does not give you long- lasting resolutions (the problem keeps resurfacing, despite the temporary relief you experience), you may want to look for someone to guide you through a properly run, fully associated session of EFT or similar process such as AER. You may "get lucky" with one of those processes that make you feel better temporarily, using "reframing", lots of deep breathing and other feel-good whipped cream, but true resolution comes from true honoring of the feeling, and that means staying in it until it dissolves of its own accord.

Many of the existing healing oriented methods could be improved and provide long lasting results if the concept of full association with the feeling was incorporated into them. As I continue this research, I find that positive results grow in number and intensity, so long as I keep present the three steps of complete healing and ensure that resolution is reached in each case.

At the same time, I am not surprised by the resistance to this concept of resolution I have encountered from some practitioners of traditional cognitive oriented therapies. Besides not answering the apparently common human tendency towards complicated methods, it is often difficult for a practitioner to watch someone else be in the depths of their pain without their own pain being triggered. However, once we have healed our own pain, it becomes far easier to patiently support those doing their 3 step healing work.

Remember to stay with the healing process until healing is complete, remaining in the feeling as fully as you possibly can.

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Emotional Healing

A 3 Step Process

Simple? Yes.
Easy? No.

STEP ONE - Approach.

This is the "getting to it" stage... where you are simply getting in touch with the pain. It means bringing your feelings to the surface, drawing in the parts of you that are in denial, remembering the feelings.



For some people, this is a very difficult stage. If your pain is far from your conscious awareness, it may take some time to connect with your feeling self. Patience and perseverance are the key words here. Think about how many years you've been out of touch with your feelings, and how many ingenious methods have been used to suppress, repress and compress your pain! The "pressions" have accumulated and become a veritable fortress wall, which you must find ways around or through in order to rescue your trapped/lost essence. Even the most "emotional" people will often find themselves faced with enormous resistance when they sit down with intent to feel.

This phase can include things like banging things, yelling, growling, using judgment release statements, doing formal goal-setting (note cards, written statements, whatever), even visualizing and affirmations. It can include imagery, picturing events or people. All kinds of tricks and tools can be used here - physical, mental and emotional - but **the purpose is to get to step two.**

Many people either just stop here, or skip to step three and work to re-evaluate/release judgments/take in loving light without going through step two. And if a person has been very distanced from their feelings, it may take a long time doing phase one to GET to phase two, but the important thing is to know that phase one is only a stepping stone, it's not the place to stop. **The point of all this activity, the only point, is to get to step two (ignition),** to get the feelings moving and expressing in their most natural way.

STEP TWO - Ignition.

What is ignition? Usually, it's crying. It's that moment when you break through the barrier between your mind and your feelings, and the feelings take over your body and are in charge. Spontaneous combustion occurs. Hence the very appropriate term: "bursting into tears".



Once ignition is achieved, the emotions themselves dictate the expression. If you can **let this happen**, you'll probably experience tears, sobbing, shivering, shaking, yawning, laughing. Sometimes accompanied by words, screaming, yelling, growling, physical movement.

Usually movement during this phase does a sort of ebb and flow. You will probably find yourself moving through many emotions, not just crying one thing. That's the nature of emotions. They're not linear, and they're all connected to each other, although sometimes compartmentalization has happened as a result of extreme suppression or fragmentation. Whatever the flow is, let it happen, if you can.

You'll probably also experience a sort of emotional "stutter". A tendency to start/stop. Resistance and mental activity may try to stop the process, to distract you in an attempt to move past the pain, or just get you to move on quickly to step three.

Mind will tell you, "that's enough, we're ready for analyzing now..."

Poor mind needs to be treated gently but firmly here. Mind has an important job, but in this process, mind has been overzealous and unknowingly cruel. Mind has to be brought to understand that it's role in **THIS** process is to listen, to hold still and listen, to sit quietly in a chair and wait and **listen**, until the tears reach a truly natural ending place.

The first thing that may come up here for you is mind's fear that emotional expression will lead to punishment and death. **This is a very real fear**. If you find yourself spinning in mind's survival terror, you might want to try some tricks to get past this barrier.

Again, this 2nd step is the most important, and ideally, more time should be spent here than on the other two.

If you are uncertain what spontaneous movement looks/feels/sounds like, spend some time with a baby. Watch how infants express their every emotions through their bodies. Rage, terror, hunger, need... it all gets expressed, entirely without words.

The goal here is to let your body remember what it knew how to do when you came into this world. And for some, training/conditioning/shaming, etc. has been so intense, that "to become as a little child" will not be an easy thing. **Be persistent.**

STEP THREE - Shifting.

Evaluating the process, adjusting to the change, taking in loving light in the place of what has just been moved out. Re-thinking, re-evaluating your perceptions. If enough emotion has moved, this phase happens automatically and the change is lasting. Sometimes it feels like an Einsteinian A-HA!

What's happening here is that Mind is responding to emotion opening and unfreezing, in the way it was originally *meant to*, and both mind and emotion can then work together to see things in a new and creative way. Many judgments that were frozen in place by underlying pain naturally dissolve here.



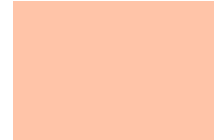
The goal of most psychotherapy has traditionally been to move the individual as quickly as possible through their past pain and bring them to this last phase. Belief in the power of the mind has been the cornerstone of traditional therapy, power of the mind to overcome old wounds if we can only remember them and bring them to consciousness. And the mind IS a truly powerful thing. By using the mind solely some great awarenesses **can** be reached. Memories can be brought to the surface, shifts in awareness can happen. **But** (and this is a very BIG but...), forcing your way past the pain to reach an "Ah-HA!" will mean you leave parts of yourself behind you. The parts that have not finished crying their pain will not go with you to your new state of "understanding", and to your mind, these parts will seem stubborn, resistant, retarded, slow, stuck in old beliefs, etc. etc. You'll find yourself saying, "I thought I learned that, I thought I already resolved that..."

You must allow all the feelings to cry themselves to completion, until they

"The intuition is always correct. There are no limits to its power even ultimately to attain the greatest heights of the intellect via the right brain."

*Noel Huntley
The Real
Reason Why
Women Have
Been
Oppressed*

reach NATURAL evolution and understanding. Then all of you can move forward. Permanent shifts, and truly creative shifts, including the ability to create your own reality, require the real work to be done with all feelings. That means returning again and again (and again) to phase two.



THE RESULT - Adjustment, Creativity, Expansion, & Manifestation.

An adjustment period takes place based on the changes we feel. It is always positive. If you are still feeling negative about something or someone, then you have not finished crying. In the end, this process does not bring you to a place that is unloving or angry. It always takes you to a place that is loving and forgiving. It brings you to a new place of understanding others and gives you the courage to change your life.



The work you do to heal your past hurts **will** bring balance to your life. No longer will you rely only on mind for the answers to what is true or real or right. Your healed soul will be able to enrich your life in immeasurable ways. It is the most life-affirming process that you could ever experience.

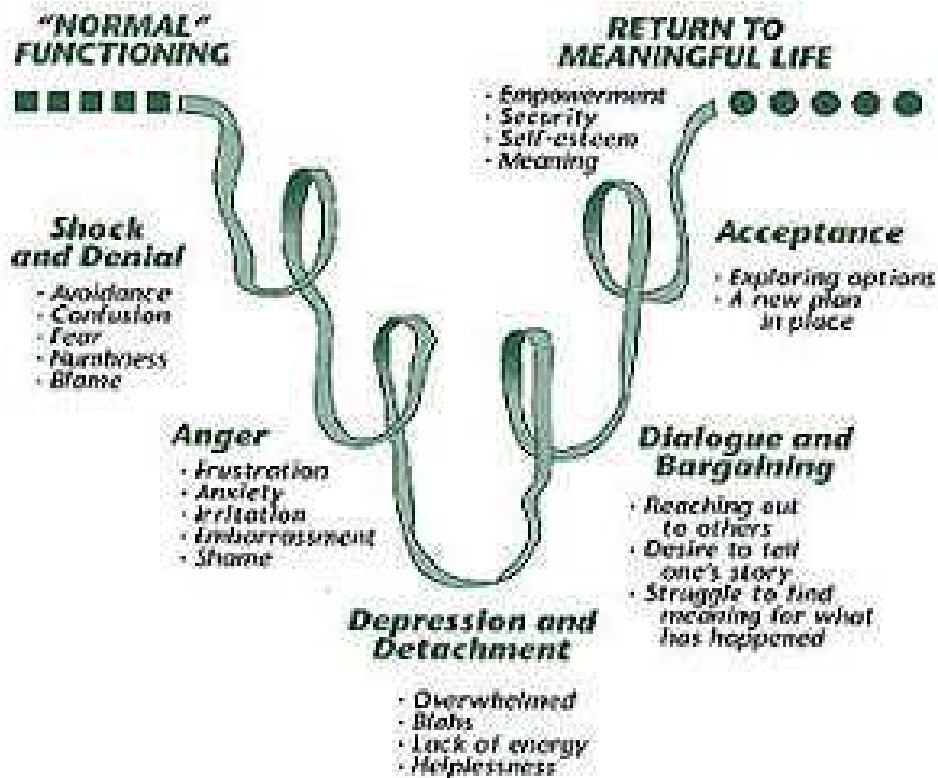
THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross & David Kessler

Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance

The stages have evolved since their introduction and they have been very misunderstood over the past three decades. They were never meant to help tuck messy emotions into neat packages. They are responses to loss that many people have, but there is not a typical response to loss as there is no typical loss. Our grief is as individual as our lives.

The five stages, denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance are a part of the framework that makes up our learning to live with the one we lost. They are tools to help us frame and identify what we may be feeling. But they are not stops on some linear timeline in grief. Not everyone goes through all of them or in a prescribed order. Our hope is that with these stages comes the knowledge of grief's terrain, making us better equipped to cope with life and loss.



Denial



This first stage of grieving 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 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 loss 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 begin to surface.

Anger

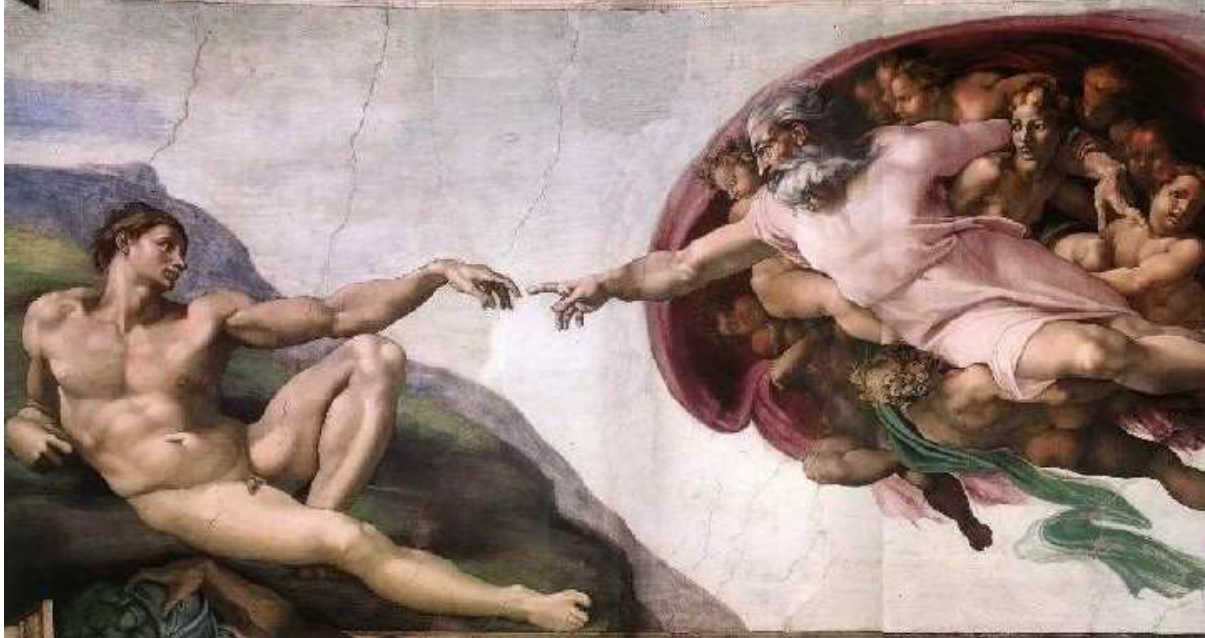
Anger is a necessary stage of the healing process. Be willing to feel your anger, even though it may seem endless. The more you truly feel it, the more it will begin to dissipate and the more you will heal. There are many other emotions under the anger and you will get to them in time, but anger is the emotion we are most used to managing. The truth is that anger has no limits. It can extend not only to your friends, the doctors, your family, yourself and your loved one who died, 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. 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 a person who didn't attend the funeral, maybe a person who isn't around, maybe a person who is different now that your loved one has died. 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.



Bargaining

Before a loss, it seems like you will do anything if only your loved one would be spared. “Please God,” you bargain, “I will never be angry at my wife again if you’ll just let her live.” After a loss, bargaining may take the form of a temporary truce. “What if I devote the rest of my life to helping others. Then can I wake up and realize this has all been a bad dream?”



We become lost in a maze of “If only...” or “What if...” statements. We want life returned to what it was; we want our loved one restored. We want to go back in time: find the tumor sooner, recognize the illness more quickly, stop the accident from happening...if only, if only, if only. Guilt is often bargaining’s companion. The “if onlys” cause us to find fault in ourselves and what we “think” we could have done differently. We may even bargain with the pain. 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. 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.

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. The first question to ask yourself is whether or not the situation you’re in is 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 dies would be unusual. When a loss fully settles in your soul, the realization that your loved one didn't get better this time and is not coming back is understandably depressing. If grief is a process of healing, then depression is one of the many necessary steps along the way.

Acceptance



Acceptance 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 about the loss of a loved one. This stage is about accepting the reality that our loved one is physically gone and recognizing that this new reality is the permanent reality. We will 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 our loved one is missing. In resisting this new norm, at first many people want to maintain life as it was before a loved one died. 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 often feel that in doing so, we are betraying our loved one. We can never replace what has been lost, but we can make new connections, new meaningful relationships, new interdependencies. Instead of denying our feelings, we listen to our needs; we move, we change, we grow, 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.

At times, people in grief will often report more stages. Just remember your grief is as unique as you are.

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Again, while Kübler-Ross's focus was on death and bereavement, the grief cycle model is a useful perspective for understanding our own and other people's emotional reaction to personal trauma and change, irrespective of cause.

FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF - ELISABETH KÜBLER ROSS	
EKR stage	Interpretation
1 - Denial	Denial is a conscious or unconscious refusal to accept facts, information, reality, etc., relating to the situation concerned. It's a defence mechanism and perfectly natural. Some people can become locked in this stage when dealing with a traumatic change that can be ignored. Death of course is not particularly easy to avoid or evade indefinitely.
2 - Anger	Anger can manifest in different ways. People dealing with emotional upset can be angry with themselves, and/or with others, especially those close to them. Knowing this helps keep detached and non-judgemental when experiencing the anger of someone who is very upset.
3 - Bargaining	Traditionally the bargaining stage for people facing death can involve attempting to bargain with whatever God the person believes in. People facing less serious trauma can bargain or seek to negotiate a compromise. For example "Can we still be friends?.." when facing a break-up. Bargaining rarely provides a sustainable solution, especially if it's a matter of life or death.
4 - Depression	Also referred to as preparatory grieving. In a way it's the dress rehearsal or the practice run for the 'aftermath' although this stage means different things depending on whom it involves. It's a sort of acceptance with emotional attachment. It's natural to feel sadness and regret, fear, uncertainty, etc. It shows that the person has at least begun to accept the reality.
5 - Acceptance	Again this stage definitely varies according to the person's situation, although broadly it is an indication that there is some emotional detachment and objectivity. People dying can enter this stage a long time before the people they leave behind, who must necessarily pass through their own individual stages of dealing with the grief.

(Based on the Grief Cycle model first published in *On Death & Dying*, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, 1969. Interpretation by Alan Chapman 2006-2009.)

Five-Step Emotional Healing Process

By David Beales and Helen Whitten

Part of the Emotional Healing For Dummies Cheat Sheet

Become familiar with the situations that disturb you, take action to enable yourself to balance your emotional response to them and make this emotional healing process an integral part of your life.

1. Notice the situation that upsets you.
2. Observe your:
 - Physical signals from body-mind
 - Emotions
 - Thoughts
 - Behaviours
3. Stop, step back, take a breathing space to calm yourself and reflect on what's happening. Ask what you need to do now.
4. Act to resolve the situation by applying physical strategies, emotional self-care, and thinking methods, and integrating these into new behaviours.
5. Embrace change with emotional needs as your guide.



Grieving and Healing:

5 Steps to Help You Through the Grieving Process

How to work through grieving and begin to enjoy life again

From Sharon O'Brien, former About.com Guide

At some point in life, everyone loses someone they feel especially close to and we enter into grieving. The loved one can be a parent, child, spouse, dear friend, or even a beloved companion animal.

The grieving that follows a loss is real, and can be very painful.

While it may be tempting to deny grieving in an attempt to avoid the pain, it's much healthier to accept those feelings of pain and loss, and to work through the grieving process in an intentional way.

In his book, "Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy, Second Edition" (Springer, 1991), J. William Worden, PhD, describes what he calls "The Four Tasks of Mourning." These tasks can be the means by which a healthy person works through the pain of grieving for a loved one, and moves into the next phase of life.

In my practice as a therapist, I have counseled many people who lost a loved one and worked through the grieving process. Combining my own experience with clients and Worden's work, here are five steps that can help you get through grieving in a healthy way.

1. Learn to accept that your loss is real.



For many people who are grieving a loss, the first impulse is to deny the loss. Grieving denial can range from downplaying the loss, as if it's not important, to having the delusion that the person or pet is still alive.

It's often easier for people who are grieving to have an intellectual understanding of the death (the person or pet is physically gone) than an emotional understanding (the loved one is not coming back). So the first task for the grieving person is accepting that the loved one is really gone.

2. Make it OK to feel the pain.

The pain of grieving can be both emotional and physical, and unfortunately there's no way to avoid it. Denying the pain of grieving can lead to physical symptoms and can also prolong the grieving process.



Some people try to avoid grieving pain by being busy or traveling; others try to minimize grieving their loss by idealizing the loved one or refusing to allow negative thoughts about the loved one enter their minds. Some grieving people use drugs or alcohol to deaden the pain.

Feeling the pain of grieving is difficult, but it's an important step toward healing.

3. Adjust to living without the deceased.

When a loved one dies, we also lose the part of our lifestyle that included the deceased. So while we are grieving for the loved one, we are also grieving for the parts of our life that will never be the same. Sometimes it can take a few months following the death for this realization to sink in.

For example, if a man's wife dies, he misses her physically and emotionally, but he may also have lost a dear friend, sexual partner, golfing buddy, and fellow grandparent. Part of his grieving will naturally include missing the parts of his life that have changed because of her death.

When a beloved pet dies, we miss the companionship and the love, but we can also miss having a special friend to come home to, walks in the park, playtime, riding in the car, or other activities we shared.

Grieving the loss of shared activities can feel as painful as grieving for the person or pet. So it's a natural tendency for some people to feel that their lives are more empty following a loss. This is a normal feeling for a time, but part of the grieving and healing process includes acceptance, and shifting our focus to include other people and activities.



This opens the door to finding new opportunities for love and companionship.

4. Find a safe place in your heart for your loved one, and allow yourself to move on.

This task can be especially hard for a grieving person because it can feel at first that you're being disloyal when you start to think about enjoying a life that doesn't include the deceased.

It's likely that memories of the loved one will stay with you throughout your life, and sometimes, even years after the death, you may feel a stab of pain when you think about the beloved person or pet that was so important to you.



When this happens, it's important to remind yourself that it's a normal part of the grieving and healing process. Allow yourself to have these feelings.

Learning to cherish a memory without letting it control you is a very important step in the grieving process. By finding a special safe "place" for that person, you can heal from grieving and move back into your life. You begin to find joy in new experiences, and you can take comfort in the knowledge that you keep your cherished memories with you, wherever you go.

The "place" where you decide to keep your memories is up to you. You can visualize tucking your loved one into a space in your heart, or you can keep a box of cherished photos or momentos. Perhaps you'd like to find a special tree or nature setting that you can revisit. Give some thought to where you'd like to hold memories of your loved one.

The important thing is learning how to cherish a memory without getting stuck there.

5. And finally, what do you do with the love that you feel?

For many people, the hardest part of losing a loved one and grieving that loss is figuring out what to do with all the love they feel for the person or pet who is gone.

Remind yourself that you don't have to stop loving someone just because he or she is no longer with you. When a memory pops up, send a loving thought and know that you are loved in return. You may find comfort in this, and the strength to continue on in your journey.



Ten Steps to Healing From Trauma

By Martin V. Cohen, Ph.D.

Whether you have been a crime victim, involved in an accident or natural disaster, or were the victim of childhood abuse, the resulting trauma is similar. Pervasive fear and feelings of helplessness are natural reactions to events you probably had little or no control over. “I was totally traumatized,” and “I thought I was going to die,” are among the most often used phrases used to describe such occurrences. Unfortunately, trauma and the stress that follows, is on the rise at the turn of the new millenium in America.

Fortunately, there are ways to overcome the “aftershocks” of traumatic incidents. A cluster of symptoms consisting of

- (1) Persistently **REEXPERIENCING** the event (e.g., flashbacks, nightmares, etc.),
- (2) **AVOIDANCE** (e.g., avoiding people, places or activities that trigger memories of what happened) and
- (3) **HYPERAROUSAL** (e.g., jumpiness, feeling on edge, irritability, etc.) can be treated effectively with the following steps toward healing this condition. In 22 years of practicing psychotherapy, specializing in treating trauma victims, I’ve seen them work.

1.-- Recognize that your symptoms are normal reactions to abnormal circumstances.



Although you may feel like you are out of control or “going crazy,” in reality, you are experiencing what are called post-traumatic stress symptoms.

2.-- Talk about your thoughts, feeling and reactions to the events with people you trust.

Then, talk about it some more. Keep talking about it until you have no need to talk about it anymore.



3.--Do whatever it takes to create a feeling of safety and tranquility in your immediate environment.



Do you need to sleep with a night light on for awhile? Can you develop a discipline of meditation or listening to soothing music?

4.-- As much and as quickly as possible, resume your normal activities and routines.

Traumatic events can throw your life into a state of chaos. The sooner you resume these activities and routines, the more normal your life will feel. Structure can provide feelings of security as you etch your way back to stability.



5.-- You are in a recovery process. Give yourself the proper rest, nutrition and exercise.

If you were recovering from the flu you would not forget these health tips. Do the same for yourself as you recover from traumatic stress.

6.-- Take an affirmative action on your behalf.

For example, if you were a victim of crime, prosecuting the perpetrator may be an empowering experience. If this is not an option for you, write in your journal. Strike out at the perpetrator with words. Take some action on your behalf.



7.-- Become aware of your emotional triggers and learn to cope with them creatively.

You may have a flashback to your trauma by engaging in a similar activity, going to a similar place, seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting or feeling something that reminds you of the original trauma. One way to cope with this is to recognize that you are experiencing an emotional trigger and engage in positive self-talk (e.g., "This is frightening but I am safe now.")

8.--Try to find some deeper meaning in what happened to you.



True, you were victimized but you *can* become a survivor. Survivors often find that changes in their outlook on life are possible, even preferable. What have you learned from your traumatic experience? Record these insights in a journal or voice them in a support group that is sympathetic to your situation.

9.-- Seek therapy.

Psychotherapy, particularly with a certified EMDR practitioner who specializes in trauma, is often very effective in helping people overcome the aftermath of trauma. If you can't stop thinking about what happened; if you are always feeling anxious and on guard; if you find yourself avoiding your normal routines or if you are experiencing some of the other symptoms of post-traumatic stress, you can probably benefit from professional help. The EMDR International Association can give you a referral to a certified EMDR practitioner in your area (www.emdria.org), telephone (512) 451-5200. If you were a crime victim, most states offer victims assistance to pay for psychotherapy.



10.-- Be patient with yourself. Healing takes time.



Your recovery will have it's ups and downs. Follow the guidelines in this article and know that you are in a recovery process that will take time.

Remember, you may have been victimized but you do not have to continue being a victim. In this unfortunate case you were rendered helpless but to continue in that status is very limiting. By following the steps outlined above, you will emerge as a survivor. Your traumatic experience can make you a stronger and wiser person. The potential is there for you to learn and grow in ways you may not have considered had the trauma never occurred.

THE 10 STAGES OF HEALING

To lose something of material value can suddenly leave us stunned and momentarily beside ourselves. But when we lose *someone* of value, that loss is magnified a thousand-fold...our lives are changed forever, and our sense of who we are becomes immeasurably shaken.

At some point in our lives, everyone suffers loss--some more than others--yet few of us are prepared for the anguish, the sense of aloneness, and the overwhelming feeling of devastation that follows. There is a defining moment in every person's life that changes us, shaping who and what we are. Loss is often a catalyst for that change, whether the loss is physical, emotional, spiritual or all of the above.

Loss can take place in many forms: death of a child, a parent, a spouse, a close friend or relative; loss of positive childhood experiences; loss of a pregnancy; loss of career and means of support; loss of a close relationship; global loss; loss of what it means to be happy.

The private tragedies that we all so often experience are some of the most tragic forms of loss: family secrets; personal addictions; child abuse; unwanted and unexpected marital discord; infidelity; separation and divorce; physical and emotional abandonment. Associated with the losses inherent in private tragedies are the secrets that keep us from truly knowing ourselves, secrets that can often sabotage healthy relationships with others.

We can heal from loss far more effectively than we are led to believe. First we have to make a decision to heal. To assist in dealing with grief and healing, it is essential that we first have an adequate sense of self-esteem. Self-esteem develops when we feel loved, whole and are able to show love in return.

Balance and incorporate simple things into your life. Take time for your life—this is essential for monitoring your own life's pace. Watch out for expectations of perfectionism, not only does it require a lot of energy, it doesn't exist. Learn to cut corners and to devote more attention to those things that are within your capabilities.

When you experience loss and grief, reestablish your self-confidence by remembering past accomplishments with joy--and don't underestimate the power of prayer. When faced with unpleasant tasks at hand, plan to tackle them head on rather than procrastinate. Pacing life will expedite the healing process and help maintain normalcy as much as possible.

If you are at the beginning of the healing process and your life is full of painful emotions, memories or crisis, the idea of healing over time may seem irrelevant. You may feel terrible now and you want to feel better. You may feel desperate and want answers, and most importantly, you just want the pain to go away. Unfortunately, there are no easy answers. Healing does take time. You don't just zip through it. Strong feelings will arise as you work through the grief stages of denial, anger, depression, bargaining, until finally you come to an acceptance that life goes on post-tragedy. There is no magical timetable for healing.

Grieving is a natural part of the healing process. As you shed tears and weave in and out of the stages of grief, you are progressively moving on. A person does not simply "get over" a trauma or tragedy. However, through grieving, it is possible to steadily move toward more inner peace.

If you have difficulty getting in touch with your inner grief, or you cannot seem to justify all the sadness you are feeling, take some time to journal and record your losses. Whatever it is that you are grieving, talk about it, feel it, and know that taking time to mark your losses can provide relief and validation.

It might help to ask yourself some of the following questions--addressing these questions can be a

cleansing exercise to assist you in the process of healing:

*"What opportunities were taken away from me"?

*"What dreams and visions have I lost"?

*"What areas of my life are now lacking because of this"?

*"What might my life be like now had this tragedy not occurred"?

The process of healing is different for each of us. It is a very personal experience. We each have our own journey. My journey is not yours, your mother's, your friend's, spouse's, nor anyone else's but my own. And your journey to healing is uniquely your own. There is no good, bad, right or wrong way to work through the journey.

Be mindful that self-love and acceptance is at the core of any healing.



The following guidelines can help as you reclaim your life:

- 1. Allow yourself time to complete the grieving process.**
- 2. Be aware of your feelings on all levels; physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual.**
- 3. Bring as much positive energy into all areas of your life, and don't be afraid to reach out and talk about your feelings and emotions.**
- 4. Practice relaxation and incorporate moments of mindful meditation into your daily life.**
- 5. Give yourself breathing space. Slow down and give yourself the necessary time to heal. Remember, you don't "get over" loss, you progressively "move on."**
- 6. Keep a journal of your feelings and what you want for yourself and your life.**
- 7. Ask yourself what your heart and soul wants and what's keeping you from it.**
- 8. Remind yourself that you are in charge of your life at any given time and have a choice to heal or stay wounded.**
- 9. Become aware of any negative attitudes and conscientiously work at letting in some joy and happiness.**
- 10. Remember that you are never alone. Love is everywhere.**

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The 12 Stages of Healing ©

The following guideline briefly describes various stages of physiological and emotional shifts, which occur during healing processes. The foundations of this work, AKA *Somato Respiratory Integration*, developed out a form of subluxation based chiropractic, Network Chiropractic/Spinal Analysis; developed by Donald Epstein, DC. For more information regarding the studies of *The 12 Stages of Healing*, please contact Innate Intelligence, Inc. (Wiseworld Seminars) :
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"If you can't be in the stage you love...love the stage you're in!"

Each stage has a rhythm of its own. No one stage is better than another. We can not think or figure our way through any stage. Each stage represents one of the 12 rhythms of consciousness of humanity. Be with the stage that your are in. Don't resist the stage, honor it. The stage will come to completion as you have gained the information within its rhythm.

Many people never fully experience most of the 12 stages, spending their lives within the first few. Maintaining a clear nervous system helps to move consistently through the stages more rapidly.

Your breath and movements guide you through each of the 12 Stages of Healing. Go with your flow. Even your distress has a "story" to tell you. Let your peace teach your distress to heal.

◆ Stage 1: SUFFERING:



Different from pain, suffering is marked by a profound awareness that something is wrong. Parts of our being are disconnected. The awareness of this disconnection is usually made as we draw more upon our consciousness and energetic resources. This especially occurs when confronted by a traumatic or chaotic event or loss. The lesson of this stage is the acceptance that nothing works at this time, and that you are presently helpless.

**The talented French artist,
William Bouguereau (1825-1905),
expresses similar emotional turbulence,
within the human psyche.**

*My soul is full of whispered song,-
My blindness is my sight;
The shadows that I feared so long
Are full of life and light.
~~ Dying Hymn*

◆ Stage 2: POLARITIES AND RHYTHMS:

This stage begins with the search for the *magic genie*, who can or has been identified as the savior from our distress, pain, or crisis. We project from the alienated, isolated, traumatized, hurt, shamed, or ignored aspects of our being. These parts try to gain power over our helplessness through external authorities, procedures, treatments, etc. As we heal, we eventually discover that what we blamed or projected as being so wrong, is not so bad. Or we see that our genie is not magical. We begin to become aware of our rhythms and polarities and discover we are somehow involved in a process, and are partially responsible for our distress.



◆ Stage 3: STUCK IN A PERSPECTIVE:



This stage of healing involves the recognition that our distress is associated with the fact that we have been stuck in a perspective. Our concepts and/or our physiology have been fixated. We do not yet know why we've been stuck, or what to do about it. We just need to be with the simple revelation that we've been stuck!

◆ Stage 4: RECLAIMING OUR POWER:

This stage of healing is one in which we realize that the "script" determined by the above three stages is no longer desirable or no longer works. Initially, we are angry that we had lost our power, and we are determined not to let it happen again. As we progress through this stage, we choose to no longer dishonor ourselves, because we deserve more.



◆ Stage 5: MERGING WITH THE ILLUSION:

"...And said firmly, "I wish to go back to my place and see my beast again."

~Beauty in "Beauty and the Beast"

This stage is associated with having a strong enough sense of self to turn back onto our own alienated "shadow" or "light" to heal the illusion and create more wholeness; while merging with the fears,



pains, illusions, and concerns behind the suffering. At this major stage of healing, we can appear on the other side of our illusionary self. For many of us, the alienated, isolated, abused, ignored, denied, or redirected aspect may be one of "light", or "goodness", or "pure child". Merging does not mean we have to face our Beast, but rather, it means allowing us to merge behind the consciousness, which was generated by the creation of our separateness.

When we merge with our illusion, we feel a new sense of personal empowerment on intellectual, spiritual, and emotional levels. This strength comes from discovering the truth about certain aspects of our being that lie beyond the veil of illusion. Most of the time this "knowledge" is not cognitive.

Merging may not be forced. It can only safely occur when the bodymind is ready for it. Merging comes about naturally, as interference in the spinal system and the connective tissues of the body is removed.

Becoming consciously aware of what is behind the illusions, which produced the suffering, does not occur

in the Stage 5 of healing. Here, we observe ourselves during our interaction with our pain and suffering.

◆ Stage 6, PREPARATION FOR RESOLUTION:

This stage of Healing represents a point of increasing momentum and flexibility of the bodymind in preparation for the discharge and resolution of trapped perspectives, memories, information, energy, and patterns. Here, there is awareness that the energy behind the dissonant aspect of our life is about to be relinquished. This may be the type of feeling or sensation that we may feel, when we become nauseous, or before we actually throw up. It may remind us of how we feel just at the point of having a powerful sneeze, or at the point when we are about to make a change in our relationship.

Stage 6 involves more than preparation for the discharge and resolution that takes place in the next stage, Stage 7, Resolution. We may be able to resolve the dissonant or alienated aspect in this stage, without having to experience a forceful or violent discharge.



The essential rhythm in Stage 6 involves centering and grounding the bodymind's energy, so it is prepared in the event that discharge is necessary. This centering brings with it an awareness that discharge is a welcome and appropriate event in the healing journey. Knowing that there is a buildup

of tension that must be released, while experiencing that there are dissonant rhythms within, which must eventually resolve themselves, is a very important aspect of healing.

◆ Stage 7, RESOLUTION:



Discharge of bio-electric energy is associated with a discharge of mechanical energy. Successful discharge involves the bodymind system going from higher tension to lower tension. This may be discharge of the muscular system, such as movement of the trunk or extremities. Processes such as fever, coughing, sneezing, or vomiting are common forms of discharge. Crying, screaming, and laughing are also discharge phenomena. When the discharge occurs after the previous six stages, resolution can occur with the discharge.

When a sense of accomplishment, peace, and inner strength accompanies the process, the resolution has been achieved. This implies that integration, and ultimately, peace, has occurred between an alienated part of ourselves and the rest of us. The dissonant aspect of ourselves has had the opportunity to merge with the basic rhythm of wholeness, characteristic in Stage 5. With the information gained in Stage 5 (Merging) and the momentum built up in Stage 6, we have become grounded, flexible, and adaptable enough to grow from the isolated or limited aspects of our being to a greater sense of wholeness.

When discharge occurs at earlier stages of healing, we often focus on what we have lost, which results in increased tension between our true self and the alienated aspects of our being. While in Stage 7, however, the focus is primarily on the "wholeness" of our being eliminating something we no longer need. As a result, it is a welcome event that we have prepared ourselves to expect.

◆ Stage 8, EMPTINESS IN CONNECTEDNESS:



After the discharge of Stage 7, we are emptied. Rather than a space of Nothingness, we find ourselves in a place of Possibilities. We enter a state of gratitude, vulnerability, connection with our external rhythm, and alignment with events around us. Emptiness is the door between our usual, customary state of feeling and being in states of consciousness where we are aware of our wholeness, and experience our connectedness with the world around us. Emptiness is the portal that leads us to later states of awareness. Stage 8 is the first state of be-ing.

We welcome serendipity as a natural way of Life.

In **The Keepers of the Earth**, poet **Kristin Zamucka** writes:

*"And as you reach new plateaus of thought...
And old friends drop away,
Fear not loneliness.
For there is a silent communication between those
at the same level of awareness.
And for the first time, you will not be lonely...."*

◆ Stage 9: LIGHT BEHIND THE FORM:

From our place of emptiness and gratitude, we can truly appreciate our energetic fullness. In the earlier stages of healing, we are largely unconscious of the presence of the vital Life force, and may actually deny its existence. Now, we experience that we are more than our physical body, and actually become aware of the flow of Life energy, through us. This energy may manifest itself as warmth, vitality, vibration, color, or light. We more fully experience our connection to others.

The noted biochemist Rupert Sheldrake spoke about the nature of the vital force of Life in his book, *"The Rebirth of Nature"*:

"Energy is indeed present in all living things. Living organisms draw it from their environment, as plants take it from the sun in photosynthesis and animals take chemical energy from their food through digestion and respiration. They accumulate it in their bodies, and use it to power their movements and behavior. When they die, the accumulated energy in their bodies is released to continue on its way in other forms. The flow of energy on which your body and your brain depend at this very moment is part of the cosmic



flux, and the energy within you will flow on after you are dead and gone, taking endless new forms."

◆ Stage 10: ASCENT:



We experience our union with the creative force of the Universe. We transcend all limits, boundaries, languages, judgments, and our existing sense of self. We gain the wisdom of knowing the oneness of all of Creation during this stage. Stage 10 is the most sought after, even though two more stage exist beyond this point of healing.

This stage of Ascent is the level of healing that mystics, gurus, rabbis, and other religious leaders from both Eastern and Western traditions have long spoken about. Similar states of consciousness have been known as "nirvikalpa samadhi", in Hinduism, "knana samadhi nvdanta", in Zen, or the stage of "effortless insight" culminating in nirvana in Buddhism.

Our sense of Self can be viewed as a candle. Up to this point in the healing process, we may have a very bright candle, shining with the light of our being. As we moved through Stage 9, we became aware that there was a bright light outside, and it was coming into the room. Suddenly, we realized that our candle did not appear as bright as it did before.

If we walk outside into the brilliance of the noon sun, it would appear that our candle is no longer lit. This is the concept of how our sense of self has been relinquished or lost in the vast brightness of the Universal Consciousness of Stage 10.

In Stage 9, we experienced being filled with energy or consciousness. In Sage 10, rather than experiencing intelligence or consciousness expressing itself through us, we become the consciousness. As opposed to feeling the love within us, we become the love.

◆ Stage 11: DESCENT:

We are renewed beyond our limits and sense of self and enter into the world again. We know that we are part of all we perceive and are responsible for all that we know. We live without being attached to our situations. We love and serve. We know that the source of power, love, and consciousness is Universal. It does not come from us, it does not come from



others, nor does it depend on the outer events or circumstances that occur in our life. Instead of a conceptual understanding of our oneness with this Divine Source, we know it to be true at a cellular level. We no longer feel isolated from the Source, which was experienced in Stage 10. We incorporate this understanding into the deepest aspects of our being.

"It is right in the midst of life that we have to develop and express all that is beautiful and perfect and divine in our souls." ~Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan

◆ Stage 12: COMMUNITY:



In Stage 12, we experience our involvement with humanity and recognize that wholeness comes from bringing our individual gifts into community. This occurs in our internal and external communities. We receive gifts from within ourselves and from others. We recognize that all of our choices are spiritual ones and affect all beings. Eventually, we recognize that our limits stem from our own lack of wholeness.

In this Stage 12, our relationship to everything becomes sacred, including our wounds, we continue the ongoing cycle of healing. Consequently, we

seek to re-experience the rhythm of stage one; however, this time we are accompanied with a greater awareness from experiencing and healing through the first eleven stages.

"The modern quest for community is a quest for one's personhood.... The essence of community is wholeness...that meets my needs and those of the greater whole of which I am part. Community is a deeper reality within which I move and have my being. It is one of the names of God. Community is a gift of myself, what I give in endless participation with my world." ~David Spangler

Our primary community is that of our own bodymind. We are made of quadrillions of cells having a unique task to accomplish and a gift to give. These cells are organized into tissues, and these tissues are organized into organs and organ systems. When this vast internal community works in harmony, we grow, heal and fulfill our tasks in life, with each part giving its gift and receiving gifts from the rest. A freely flexible and responsive nervous system helps to maintain health and vitality within all Life processes.