

Running Head: HUMAN DEVELOPMENT COACHING

Human Development Coaching

Position Paper

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*Abstract*

In this paper, the writer discusses links between spiritual development, transformative learning, and positive psychology, as resources to coaching. Her position is that the essence of human development is realized in self-fulfillment, which is manifested as spiritual joy, and the key to unlocking this joy is in the will. She explores the important role that disorienting dilemmas have as barriers, and stepping-stones, to fulfillment. She concludes by defining human development coaching as a hybrid form of dialogue that assists humanity in reaching its best potential.

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*Position statement*

The essence of human development is realized in self-fulfillment, which is manifested as spiritual joy. The key to unlocking fulfillment and joy is in the will. Life changes, loss, and unmet needs, are disorienting dilemmas that are barriers to fulfillment. Some resources to removing barriers are spirituality, transformational learning, and positive psychology. Coaching is a vehicle to open the mind and spirit to this place of fulfillment and joy.

Coaching is not psychotherapy or counseling. The focus is not on pathology, or problems. Instead, the client is treated as whole and resourceful. The coach asks powerful questions to help the client discover their own best answers. Life coaching is different than spiritual direction. The focus is on some aspect of a person's human development, which is inclusive of spirituality, and is not centered on direction as much as on forward movement or improvement. The coach assists the client by using resources (above) to move the client to a new perspective that leads to greater self-fulfillment.

*Ethics of Social Responsibility*

There are many ethical responsibilities associated with helping humans develop to their potential. This is especially true when working with people who are vulnerable because of life-changing circumstances (such as divorce or death of a spouse) that have altered their way of looking at life issues (Miller & Harvey, 2001). For this reason, the coach and client cooperatively design an alliance in which choices in the coaching journey need to remain the client's (Garlo, 2006; Krigbaum, 2006; Whitworth, et al., 1998; Hargrove, 1995). This is because transformational learning experiences have the potential to bring about big changes in the personal lives of clients. For example, what happens when a client gains insight to other choices when living in an unhealthy relationship? It is the professional and personal responsibility of coaches to be clear that the purpose of coaching is so that life-changing

potential can occur. In fact, a client is considered coachable when they are ready to purposefully seek change, as well as do the work to get there. When a client drags their feet and comes to the coaching call unprepared to do the work, it is the coach's responsibility to point this out. It is in the client's best interest for the coach to end the relationship if the client is not ready to step into the change of the client's choice.

Krigbaum (2006) wrote about a crucial link in coaching, "Ethics and competence are symbiotic twins. True coaching competence cannot exist without the understanding and use of coaching ethics. Coaching ethics cannot be palpably manifested without competence in coaching skills" (pp. 79,80). It is in the mastery of coaching that good coaches are also ethical coaches. This happens through promises a coach makes to the profession and ultimately to the client. These include:

- Trusting that the client is completely capable, as being creative, resourceful and whole
- Being curious about the client's whole life, not just the issue at hand
- Allowing the agenda to come from the client
- Designing an alliance that grants power to the coaching relationship – not to the coach

A coach fulfills these promises through listening, intuition, curiosity, self-management, and by calling the client forth to action and/or learning (Whitworth, et al., 1998).

An important aspect of ethical responsibility in helping others achieve their full potential, is for the coach to keep her personal beliefs and customs to herself, to not impose them upon the client (O'Hearne, M. & Hamrick, C., 2006). Even though my spiritual beliefs are tied to my philosophy of human development, I cannot assume a client has the same understanding, belief, or connection to these concepts. It is my responsibility to be curious about these elements—to

ask questions that cause a stirring deep within—while trusting the client completely to make choices that work for them. Vogel (2000) emphasized, “Once we open the door to talking about beliefs and the practices of faith, we are called to listen in deep open ways and to recognize that sharing faith can be done non-coercively so that we are able to understand and honor different experiences and beliefs” (p. 21). I have adopted this code of ethics for my coaching clients and training sessions.

## Human Development Coaching

This paper defines Spiritual Joy as the apex of self-fulfillment. It is an examination of elements of human development, transformative learning, positive psychology, and spirituality, as resources in human development coaching. Included is a comparison of common relationship traits of teachers and learners, with that of coaches and clients.

What we say yes and no to in our lives are moments of learning that help shape us through each experience. Author Joan Vella (2000) makes three assumptions regarding spiritual dimensions of adult learning.

1. Human beings are designed to be Subjects, decision makers, in their own lives and learning.
2. Each learning event is a moment of spiritual development in which people practice being what they are—Subjects of their own lives and learning.
3. Transformation is not grasping an external set of information, knowledge, or skills, but rather a change into one's new self, informed by the new knowledge and skills (p.8).

These assumptions are upheld by proponents of *adult learning* (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Balanky et al., 1997), *transformational learning* (McGonigal, 2005; Taylor, 1998; Cranton, 1994; Clark, 1993; Mezirow & Associates, 1990), *spiritual development* (Catoir, 2003; English, 2000; Gillen & English, 2000; Mulqueen & Elias, 2000; Vella, 2000; Vogel, 2000), *positive psychology* (Seligman, 2002; Miller & Harvey, 2001; Myers, 1992), and *personal life coaching* (Garlo, 2006; Whitworth et al., 1988).

The desire to be happy is a deep spiritual longing that requires self-transcendence through stages of adult development. This is a normal part of growing and becoming, which helps us make meaning out of the journey of life.

### *Human Development*

Abraham Maslow was one of the forefathers in the study of human development. He was the first psychologist interested in “peak-experiences” (1970), and pointed out that as people grow and develop, there is a hierarchy of life-giving needs that when met, enable them to reach a level of self-actualization. Maslow wrote about the undeniable link between psychological well-being and ‘being’ spiritual. “Man has a higher and transcendent nature, and this is part of his essence” (p.xvi). His theory was the foundation of research in human development, potential, happiness, fulfillment, and their connection to spiritual growth.

### *Transformative Learning*

Several studies (McGonigal, 2005; Taylor, 1998; Cranton, 1994; Clark, 1993; Mezirow & Associates, 1990; Mezirow, 1991) define transformative learning as an adult education process and product of adult development. The focus is on the process an individual internalizes in order to transform information into true learning. This process also has a contributing basis in understanding how humans cope with life changing circumstances that have an effect on who they are, or become. Clark, (1993) asks, “What experiences in life have shaped who we are? Some predictable: leaving home, raising kids, developing competence in a career. Some unpredictable: divorce, death, winning a national award, we can identify effects on our development on who we are as human beings” (p.47).

### *Positive Psychology*

In 1998, Martin Seligman launched the idea of positive psychology during his term as president of the American Psychological Association. Rather than continue to have therapy

focus on pathology alone, Seligman (1998) created an initiative to study the effects of positive psychology to help people thrive and develop toward their potential.

Miller and Harvey (2001) argue in their paper that a relationship exists between a psychology of loss and positive psychology:

The resiliency literature further reveals the paradoxical relationship between positive psychology and a psychology of loss. On the one hand, it is almost impossible to ignore the issue of whether individuals may develop certain forms of psychopathology as a consequence of their loss. Yet the issue of how individuals can “bounce back” from their loss to lead rewarding and productive lives has relevance not only for the study of resiliency, but also for positive psychopathology and the presence of resiliency forms the core of our argument about the human potential to construct acts of great value and meaning from events which represented a great loss to the individual (p. 318).

### *Spiritual Joy*

The concept of Spiritual Joy unfolded by Catoir (1998). He put forth the notion that humanity was created to enjoy life and the Lord. He states that we don't have to wait to get to heaven to feel joy. It is available to us as Spiritual Joy, a free gift from God. This is not a feeling. It is a way of life. This information confirms Maslow's (1970) early writing, “The conception of heaven that emerges from the peak-experience is one which exists all the time all around us, always available to step into for a little while at least” (p.66).

### *Coaching*

During this same time frame Whitworth, et al (1998) authored *Co-Active Coaching*, a how-to guide for personal life coaching. Today there are hundreds of books, training programs, and manuals on coaching for personal and professional purposes. Each of them have a foundation based in helping clients reach their fullest potential. Today, coaching is proving to be

an unequalled aid in opening the mind and spirit to fulfillment (Williams, 2006; Whitworth, et al., 1998; Hargrove, 1995).

### *Background of Position*

The loss of my own marriage (and other relationships) followed by stages of grief, growing pains, and transformation back to a place of joy and fulfillment, opened my eyes to a new awareness of coping skills, resiliency, and a natural desire to pursue happiness once again. However, I could see that my experience was not the same for everyone. Many people in the support groups I attended were stuck in their grief and became unable to easily move on toward joy. There were harbored feelings of hurt, anger, jealousy, and sadness that looked to me like large black balls of iron chained to those who stayed under the dark cloud of negative thoughts and emotions.

Spiritual direction pointed me toward my ability to help others move beyond loss and into fulfillment. In looking at how I might turn this skill into life work that would be fulfilling for me, I discovered my desire to be a coach.

At the same time, I began the Masters in Human Development program in order to become a master at my work, through my study. Along each step of the way I have seen an affirmation of the fit between human development, moving beyond loss, and coaching.

I completed a study of loss to fulfillment (Schwartz, 2005) by interviewing fourteen people who were either moving on after a divorce or after the death of their spouse. This study began to substantiate the points leading to my position statement. Those interviewed were all on a journey that involved a form of transformational learning. The divorce or death they experienced was a disorienting dilemma that caused them to have a shift in their ways of thinking and feeling, and ultimately being, in order to cope with the loss.

This learning pointed to the fact that in our human development, life changes known as “disorienting dilemmas” (Mezirow, 1991) can cause everything from grief to depression, to pathology. However, there are many resources available to help us cope and be resilient in order to bounce back to a state of happiness as before the dilemma. In fact, through these resources, the greatest transformation often involves a state of change that brings about further joy than known before the occurrence of the disorienting dilemma. In my study mentioned above, several people commented that even though their loss was the most painful experience of their life, it also resulted in the best personal growth they’d ever experienced. Through their own transformation, they were able to reach a higher level of self-actualization.

### *Resiliency*

What is it that makes resiliency possible? Studies from Myers (1992) show that exterior circumstances such as money, winning prizes, etc. do not have a lasting effect on our state of happiness. Neither, thankfully, do tragic losses such as a death of a loved one or paraplegia. “Without minimizing catastrophe, the consistent and astonishing result is that the worst emotional consequences of bad events are usually temporary” (p.48). So, what it is that causes humans to bounce back, or even bounce further ahead on the happiness chart?

### *Created for Joy*

A loving God, in His own image and likeness, has created us to be joyful. Myers (1992) writes:

The universe has a Creator whose extraordinary love compelled this Spirit-Being to assume a human form, to experience suffering, and to break the bonds of death, thereby assuring us that we matter, that we are accepted, that we can live with hope. The radical and liberating implication: No longer is there any need to define our self-worth solely by our achievements, material well-being, or social approval. To find self-acceptance we

needn't be or do anything. We need simply to accept that we are, ultimately and unconditionally, accepted and loved. People who have this idea of God—as loving, accepting, caring—tend to enjoy greater self-esteem. There is, it seems, an interplay between our God-concept and our self-concept, our personal theology and our psychology (p.192).

### *A Divine gift*

The creation of who we are in God's design is a grace (defined as an unearned gift), freely given by virtue of our humanity. The gift of joy is referred to in the Bible as a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:2). Evans (1993), "...the fruit of the Spirit flows from one's graced acceptance of the Spirit's infused gift of God's own love (p. 430). According to Catoir (2003) "Joy is the infallible sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit" (p.172). The Holy Spirit dwells within us, in our soul.

Who are we to turn our mind, heart, or back on God's gift to us? Yet, it is part of our human nature to define ourselves by achievements, material wealth, and how others judge us (Catoir, 2003). Our thinking gets in the way of our being the best self we have the Divine gift—and therefore potential—to become. I refer to this gift as Spiritual Joy.

### *Spiritual Joy*

Spiritual Joy is at the core of our human development. It is the apex of self-actualization. Catoir (2003) writes, "Spiritual Joy is joy with a capital 'J.' It is God's life abiding in you. It is something added to any other happiness you might be feeling at any given moment. When you...thank your Maker for all His graces, you will experience a Joy that the world cannot give" (p.x). It is because of this that humans are born to be resilient and to pursue personal fulfillment. "Faith knowledge is part of the information we use to live joyfully. It is the knowledge we receive from Divine revelation. God exists. God is love. Eternal life is a reality" (p. 45).

Christians know the promise of Resurrection reveals eternal life with our Creator. Resurrection also happens on Earth after tragic loss, and disorienting changes in our life. The transformation of our minds and hearts, back to Joy once again, is God's ongoing covenant with us, of Resurrection.

Cognizance of Spiritual Joy as being part of our make-up is not a necessary factor in receiving the benefits of it. Just as a lack of education about faith, or even a belief in God, does not keep Him from loving all creation. At the same time, an understanding and acceptance of this Divine gift opens one's mind and heart to choose that which has been freely bestowed and is waiting for us to apply in how we live our life (Catoir, 1988). Imagine the difference between knowing and applying the benefits of exercise and healthy eating, versus the accidental hit and miss of this choice? Applying knowledge, understanding, and belief, in the practice of our choices, add up to a far greater advantage. Maslow (1970) stated, "...the more one knows of the actual consequences of growth—choices and regression choices, the more attractive become the growth choices to practically any human being" (p.98).

### *Free Will*

Research shows that the key to unlocking fulfillment is in the will (Catoir, 2004; Seligman, 2002; Mezirow, 1990). God does not make the choice for us to accept and use His gifts, knowledge, or skills. He has given us free will to do so, or not. Catoir (2003) writes, "The soul is made up of intellect and the will. The will decides what thoughts the mind will be allowed to think, for as you think, so will you behave. The will controls the decisions we make in life. The mind does the fact gathering, and the will has only one function: to say yes or no" (p.45).

### *Positive Psychology*

Understanding the basis for how the mind and will work leads to the possibility of responding to our thoughts at will, or as we choose. According to Amen (1998) our thoughts send electrical signals to our brain, which influences every cell in our body. Negative thoughts affect the limbic system and cause negative feelings like irritability, moodiness, and depression. However, we can teach ourselves to control thoughts in positive ways—to feel better. This is the physical description behind “will-training” (Catoir, 2003) and positive psychology.

While pop psychology is all about finding easy answers that will lead to living happily-ever-after, the serious goal of positive psychology is to help people lead a meaningful and fulfilling life. This involves the emotions, the spirit and the intellect in the need to understand the meaning of our existence through our experiences.

Meaning making cannot be separated out of transformational learning, spiritual development, or coaching. They are woven together like threads of the same cloth, which clothes us as we grow toward our potential. Meaning “systems,” in Mezirow’s (1991) view are created through habitual expectations that come out of the way we grow up, the culture in which we live, and previous learning (p.26). They become a “frame of reference” for interpreting what happens to us, around us, and what is likely to happen next in our world.

### *Transformation*

As we grow up, we learn new information and sometimes have to adjust our thinking about prior learning. Life changes bring about continual adjustments to the ways in which we see the world. When these are difficult, contradictory, or painful, we can either choose to reject the new information, or change our earlier perception. An example is what can happen after a loss such as divorce. In the grieving cycle, an individual may experience a variety of feelings. They might feel angry and blame the spouse. They may feel ashamed and blame themselves.

They could be in denial and behave as though the loss doesn't bother them. In getting to a point of transformation, Clark (1993) says that the disorienting dilemma causes the individual to do personal reflection of their assumptions and beliefs. This process can change how they develop new meaning, and therefore potentially transform their life.

Myers (1992) points out that how we think about (internalize) a circumstance is far more important than the external circumstance. This is because how we think about any given topic drives how we feel about it.

A good example is what happens to a person who worries that something bad may occur. Imagine the mother of a teenage girl waiting for her daughter to come home late after going out with friends. As the curfew comes and goes and there is no explaining phone call, thoughts of what might have happened cross the mind of the anxious mother. The longer the wait, the more time there is to imagine worst-case scenarios. As these thoughts send electrical signals to the brain, her body begins to react in the same way as though the bad news had actually been delivered! She may have an increased heart rate, sweaty palms, inability to concentrate on anything other than her scared and negative feelings, which could result in tears or physical illness. When the daughter arrives home, safe, and simply late, the mother is likely to react from her worried thoughts, not from the reality of the situation. This is a common example of how the actual circumstances were far different than what happened in her mind.

These kind of thoughts = feelings = reaction, happen in every waking hour of our day. Previous experiences and learning will impact the processing of this information. In the situation described above, the mother will learn through repeated (similar) experiences which thoughts to disregard in waiting for her daughter. Instead of feeling gripping fear, she may impose stricter rules and consequences for tardiness. A more rational thought process replaces the initial route that followed worry.

Life-altering changes, such as the death of a loved one, the loss of a job, a disabling accident, or even a move from one town to another, are events that create a need to find meaning. These kinds of losses are not positive events that will “necessarily build human strength,” but Mulqueen and Elias (2000) noted that loss can become a means for “showcasing” human strengths and potential. Because suffering and loss are embedded in the ebb and flow of life on planet Earth, the need for coping, resilience, healing, and movement out of grief, are critical transitions in human development. Miller and Harvey (2001) found that psychological growth is very often associated with individuals’ acts of creating positive meaning when coping with major loss (p.315).

*Processes and Conditions: Results of a Survey*

In Schwietz (2005), *From Loss to Fulfillment*, I heard significant testimony to support that people find meaning in loss when their coping processes and conditions contribute to personal growth and fulfillment. According to Cranton (1994), the transformative learning theory lists processes and conditions of perspective transformation:

- A. A disorienting dilemma;
- B. Identification of assumptions in the current knowledge/approach;
- C. Critical self-reflection of these assumptions – how they influence or limit understanding;
- D. Critical communication with others as other ideas and approaches are examined;
- E. Testing and application of new perspectives.

In light of the emphasis of my paper on joy, I posed questions to fourteen subjects in Schwietz (2005). Included here are excerpted responses from six of questions I posed in *From Loss to Fulfillment* (pp. 5 – 23). The common disorienting dilemmas (A) were either a divorce, or the death of a spouse. Note that assumptions (B) are the original feelings or outlook of the respondents. Critical self-reflection (C) shows up in their responses as self-learning. Critical

communication (D) is talked about as very important in the support of family, friends, and professionals. The test of new perspectives (E) is reflected in the advice they give to others and to their final words to me in question # 6.

### **1. What stands out to you as most significant about your feelings of loss?**

Participants answering this question came at it from several perspectives. These talk about the loss and the effect of it upon them and their families.

*“The most significant loss was of his family, the loss of this connection. The loss of his physical person in the household was big, but I was the breadwinner, and I was strong.”*

*“I never felt anger. It was despair. I didn’t know where I was going to go. It was the lowest point I ever experienced. I didn’t feel anger because when I examined the problems that we had, I knew I had a big part in that. I felt more sadness than anger.”*

*“I felt the most significant loss for my children. The stats showed that they wouldn’t feel like family anymore. I didn’t have close family. His was very close. I worried my children would lose that sense of family, which they did. He didn’t include them.”*

*“I remember having feelings of uncertainty in the beginning of what is coming down the road.”*

The following four said they had spiritual movement in their lives.

*“What was most significant thing about the loss is that it is a tremendous growth opportunity. I did turn to God in a way I had never done before.”*

*“I’ve been reading a lot about spirituality. It is okay to feel bad. The joy is in being in an environment where I can talk about this and it is okay. I have this with my closest friends.”*

*“Going through a painful loss causes me to grow spiritually. If you avoid the pain and get into some kind of addiction, you are still trying to find something outside of you. I found the strength inside of me. I wasn’t dependant on something outside of me.”*

*“It was a turning point in my life. The Epiphany of my life. It went right to the core of my being. It changed beliefs and convictions in my head, things about marriage and what was important. There were daily revelations of myself. Self-examination. I wanted to be a better person. It was actually a motivator in my alcoholic recovery.... I looked in retrospect and asked was it working for you? If true to yourself, you say no and say maybe I should try something different this time. There was a time period where I didn’t really know who I was. A dark night of the soul where I had plans and visions and goals and they all tied to the other person. They are stripped away and left empty. Like unmolded clay. I had the opportunity to reshape my life.*

Others spoke of the loss death brought to them.

*“Time does soften the pain.”*

*“Not being able to share things after he died was the most significant. Many times at work I would think I have to remember to tell him something when I get home. Then I’d remember that I couldn’t do that. I liked making him laugh. I came from a happy home and was able to give that to him.”*

*“I recall weird things... I go to the lake and say out loud (to no one) ‘Damn it, this is your job, it’s not fair to die and leave me with this.’ Once I thought he was home and that scared me.”*

## **2. Do you remember moments or times in which you first felt a ray of hope, or saw a glimmer of goodness beyond the loss?**

There were only a couple of people who could not clearly recall when this moment occurred. It seems to be a huge turning point for people to grab hold of that glimmer in order to find more hope and joy behind it.

For some, it was having friends, a support group, or a connection with others who showed their concern and care for them.

*“That began – a glimmer – after a couple of months I had a couple of friends who were hand holding and stuck with me. They never gave up on me. Then I went to a Beginning Experience (B.E.) weekend (for individuals who have suffered a divorce). I wound up with a roommate who today is one of my best friends. It became clear to me that I was not alone. There were others who were in the same boat, and some worse than mine! They had come out of it and were getting on with their lives. This gave me hope.”*

*“Yes, the first time I went to bible study at my church. I had only said hello and then joined the group. I felt like this is wonderful. It felt good. I had a sense of belonging and tenderness. They were bringing me into the conversation as if I were one of them. I hadn’t been part of anything for so long. The family is busy with their own lives.”*

Some, who responded to the survey, talked of an internal push to feel better or to find happiness. Most were supported in doing so within a support group or through a trusted friend.

*“I forced myself to know that I would make it somehow. I do have a dear (Priest) friend who helped me through. I told him I will never love again, that I have a wall around my heart. ‘No,’ he told me, ‘that isn’t living. You will let love into your heart again.’ Maybe I will again one day. I don’t know. Having a friend like that was key. I could talk to him, swear at God and he didn’t judge me.”*

*“I went to my divorce group and it was always small and odd. I felt so bad for those in pain. I realized that I felt good and it was wonderful to feel an incredible happiness. This made me realize I would one day be my cheerful self again. I got the idea that I had to quit leaning on my daughters. I forced myself to go to a movie by myself. I began to feel maybe I was healing. I could see how far I had come. I used to cry all the time. Now I just cry for my grandson who died, and I can stop before it gets out of hand.”*

*“I remember some laughter. I caught myself and said, ‘look I am laughing!’ Some days were mixed with smiles. I was going to the men’s group led by a psychologist. I came with an issue. Each week there was my issue. People would say, ‘You’re stuck.’ The counselor said to me. ‘Do you want to hear what you need to do? You need to make a choice’. He didn’t give me more information, but left me with finding the answer. I didn’t see it. As time past, I looked back and when you come back, it is a measuring stick, when a new guy comes in you can see they are stuck and you can see where you were. Then I could tell him the same things about being stuck. I could see I needed to make some choices. I questioned what I needed. Then I realized that when you are in a problem you need to make a choice. Now I can help my kids see that. There is value invested in helped me move on.”*

*“Yes, it was probably within about 6 months. After some accidents resulting from being preoccupied, I began to feel in better control. I would pay bills rather than avoid them. Giddy times came out of forced happiness...I told myself I’ve got to enjoy myself. I know I need it. I even went through a compulsive spending time. I build model ships of wood. It was like I was compelled to feel happy. Drawn to it, I don’t know what drew me. It came more naturally after that. I was able to get rid of some things and was making it on my own. I got into making bread. I make a double chocolate bread. With a bread maker. The more relaxed I become the more I can pay attention to my hobbies. My mind relaxes, I am in the zone. The poignant moments come and I am relaxed and in the zone and working on a hobby. They are bittersweet, but are tender and special. Like only a husband and wife can have for one another. Then I go do something else. It is unique and special.”*

For two respondents, it was legal aspects that helped them find hope for a new day.

*“Coming out of the divorce court. I knew it was legally behind me. I heard the words of the priest I had gone to for support. He knew it was time for me to move on, and now I knew I had a new opportunity.”*

*“Hope came about when we put in for the joint physical custody.”*

Others found hope through a need that had gone unmet, through fears not realized, and through a message from God.

*“Five years after the divorce I was on a Beginning Experience (B.E.) weekend. One of the speakers talked about letting go. She stood there looking like she was at a casket. I realized that is what I didn't have. I didn't have the final goodbye that a widow has from her friends. Then the B.E. team leaders hugged me and gave me what I needed. It was a blessing. I was then able to see my role in the divorce and the part I played.”*

*“I got the first job I applied for. There was cosmic order, things were falling in place and coming easily. I knew I was on the right path. Fears were not realized. I felt good. Today...I have wonderful friends and family who help me see my gifts. Opportunities come up like to facilitate a divorce support group, to volunteer to canter and sing at church. I was led to leadership in many areas. There were many reassurances. I didn't do these things before because I was sitting with my husband. My life is better today than when I was with him.”*

*“I started back going to church and heard a meaningful song, “On Eagles Wings.” Then one day I was in a furniture store and I sat in a recliner. Over the store sound system came this song. It filled my heart. It made me feel like God was with me, and it was a turning point. It was like I was meant to hear it. It was sent from God.”*

### 3. What are some things that were most helpful to you in moving on?

It was a pleasure to hear people respond with several elements within one answer to what helped them move on. Some talked about support groups and friends. Others mentioned God, the Church, prayer, and a spiritual guide.

*“The people I’ve met through B.E. and some friends from out of state who gave me a blank check on their time. They did more than tolerate. They actively understand and tried to help me in different ways. I feel like God cut me a lot of slack. I am not a religious person, but I’ve learned some things about God and about prayer. I think I could very well be dead now. But I am alive and kicking. I am also determined to try and help others going through this. I feel a burning urge to give something back.”*

*“The men’s group. The counselor was enlightening and wise. He directed me without taking me there. I listened to a lot of Ernie Larson tapes. I had him autograph some tapes. I go to a lot of his seminars at Hazelton. He says if you don’t know where you are going, you are going to end up somewhere else. My pastor had what I wanted. He presented in homilies, things to look at in your life...being a person, husband, etc., that led to goal setting. It was a collective. The first time I was going to AA, church, Alanon, ACA, divorce groups, hearing all of this and wondering how to apply it all in my life. It was awkward and painful. I sat with my counselor and he did a psychological talk and without my knowing, he connected the dots for me. He validated me and helped me feel loved and helped me see things differently in my life.”*

*“When I realized the truth and not was not in denial. I went to a conference at Notre Dame for the separated and divorced. It was so much more than I expected. The spirituality was more like a retreat than a conference. I went with another woman from my support group, Divorce and Beyond.”*

*“One of the things I’m doing now is work with a spiritual guide who calls herself a pattern buster. I am looking at childhood beliefs and what occurred, what were thoughts, emotions, reactions, and consequences. Over and over again I have relived these experiences. I found that I had a core belief about myself. It was that I was flawed. I had to sacrifice myself for others. Now I realize they were lies. I am creating what I believe now and my own personal story. This is very helpful.”*

Setting goals and making “tangible” effort helped others.

*“Having so many friends call to ask me to dinner or to a movie. The support of everybody. I looked at myself and thought how do I have to change to make a new life? I can’t sit and think how would we have done this? I needed to do things on my own. Forcing myself to change my way is what got me going. The fact that I had guts to do the things I did, is what gave me strength. If I climb a hill I can get to the top and look down and say, look what I’ve done. I did have survival guilt and I’ve gotten past that. I wanted to continue to live. I used to set goals for myself. I am goal oriented. Like deciding on three shirts to iron then I can sit down to read. Traveling was a goal. I learned to force myself to do things I wasn’t crazy to do. I still have meltdowns now and again. I sit down and cry and say, I don’t want to do this alone. However, I can laugh at myself. If I don’t I will be crying. Laughter has always been my thing.”*

*“Tangible things...journaling...that was enlightening. My therapist said I should create one moment a week to look forward to. I thought if one is good, more is better. I kept myself busy and distracted. This didn’t help with dealing with the grief, however. The textbooks from Rebuilding were helpful. I took a 100-question test at the beginning of the Rebuilding classes, and again at the end. The author had developed a national average for people. They said, in 6 months, you should be here...I am doing far better than most. By exposing myself to others grieving, I could see my own progress.”*

*“When I go through transitions I do a lot of looking back. It is time to look more at the future. I think it would be helpful to start looking more toward the future. I’m planning to start independent study and career coaching. It is the beginning of a new year. I want to write down some of my goals.”*

Time, gratefulness, children, and honesty, came up as motivators for others.

*“Time. Learning to be quiet with myself. I wanted to keep busy constantly so I wouldn’t have to think. Quiet time was a good thing. There were no books on this or support groups at the time. I didn’t continue counseling.”*

*“To feel grateful for being aware that the sun is shining. Thank you for turning on the lights again. To smile, to hear the birds sing, and to enjoy the sunshine.”*

*“What my kids think, and that I have them. They mean so much to me. What has been really healthy is that my former wife has been dating someone for two years now. She told me she started going out with him when she told me she wanted out of the marriage. Her honesty has made a difference.”*

#### **4. What are some elements that you are most grateful for in getting through the grief?**

A change came about in people choosing several (different) perspectives. Respondents talked about how they now see the world, deal with negative thoughts, past behaviors, and other people’s grief.

*“I am grateful to be able to get up and not be crying. To feel normal and not in a terrible mess. I did go to a psychologist. I was depressed and down on myself. I said things like, ‘I should have,’ etc. She told me to start thinking in another way. Changing my thinking made this happen. When you have a negative thought, replace it with ‘anyone could make that mistake.’ I was so relieved, I felt like I was born again.”*

*“One thing I am grateful for is that this has given me more time to focus on my handicapped son. I look at my boy and see how far down the road his mother’s illness had taken us. I got him a physical and changed meds for him. His diet is better. Also, I have a better understanding of my own vulnerability to share with others and learn about being a better person. From going through grief training, and what I saw out there and disagreed with, I am testing my thinking with other widowers and widows. Also, being willing to explore my own emotions has been very good.”*

*“I am grateful for the new perspective I have on other peoples grief. It has given me more understanding about others misbehavior. No one chooses to be angry. It happens when problems are not taken care of. I wanted to blame him for everything. When I finally figured out that I was choosing to be angry and choosing to be a victim, I could let it go and I knew what I needed to forgive myself. I was concentrating on forgiving him, but I needed to start with me. It was easier to forgive him once I could forgive myself. I think the core of why we hold onto anger and hurt is because we are defending ourselves. I can keep blaming others and do not look at me.”*

*“I can say that I am grateful for the therapist I had. She was blunt and good at breaking co-dependence issues. After I quit seeing her, I sometimes think of her and the tools she gave me, and that works. I had a good job and as I talked to others divorced I realized I didn’t have to worry about a job and money. I’m happy being alone.”*

New friendships and spirituality often go hand in hand.

*“I think my new found friendships are an element I’m grateful for. Certainly. There is the spiritual side of things, too. I can find little miracles on a recurring basis. Things that I couldn’t control and just happened without me. It probably made a difference in staying in this*

*world and going to the next. There was a stable environment in church. It was healthy, uplifting, a revelation. I didn't get a great deal of friendships from church, like from elsewhere."*

*"There are three things for which I am grateful. 1.) My prayer life. 2.) Friends who have been helpful. 3.) Professional help that I am working with. I belong to a job transition group."*

*"Besides God and the church/mass, I met new friends I have made through the Catholic singles group. I met a lot of women who are like me. I was accepted and met where I was. The Divorce and Beyond support group was great. I made friends and had great facilitators. I did a lot of reading that I sought out on my own. Holidays were very difficult. I had started meeting people and I thought I didn't need to continue to go to my support group. Then the holidays came and I was right back to where I was. In Rebuilding there is a chapter on denial that hit me like a ton of bricks. I knew in my heart that I looked like I was dealing well, but in my mind I was telling myself that he would come back."*

*"I've been lucky. I go to mass about 6 days a week, as often as I can. I pray a lot more than I did. I was looking for help from God's all-powerful love. I also pray to the Blessed Virgin."*

There is a strong theme around gratefulness for children. In divorce or death of a spouse, children continue to hold families together.

*"I am grateful for my two children who have supported all the crazy things I've done and have been there to help me. When I called them before going to the Amazon for a few weeks, they didn't rant and rave. They let me make decisions and supported me in selling the house and buying a town home. A dear sister invites me to dinner. My other sister doesn't even call me. This hurts me. One week later she called to see how I was. I was angry for some time. I hope I*

*can be different for her if it happens to her. The survivor is the one who needs the support. I treat others who've gone through this because of what I know now."*

*"My kids. My daughter had the hardest time and showed it the most. I was caring for her while grieving for myself."*

*"The first thing in general is my children. That was part of what motivated me to seek help. I needed to be healthy for them. The gifts I've received are resilience, self-knowledge, a spiritual connection, and the determination to be healthy and well. The gift is also the commitment to alternative medicine techniques and being a pioneer in that area with skills and abilities that are marketable. My experience helped me to be compassionate and to teach others in anything remotely like this situation."*

*"I am grateful that we didn't pit our kids against one another. My divorce cost me \$175. I used my head, and bit my tongue."*

**5. If you could give advice to others about how to get unstuck, or how to move to joy, what would it be?**

It was uplifting for me as the listener to hear the advice of these storytellers. They have learned through their grief, healing, faith, and fortitude, what worked for them and they were eager to pass that learning on. Their answers are varied with a couple of similar themes. These are: trust God, you are never alone/join a support group, try new things, do self-discovery, get out with others, and choose joy.

*"The first thing I would say is that you are not alone. You are never alone. When I first got into this I thought I was an island. You are a peninsula. You may get overwhelmed by the storms, but you are connected to land, to others who want to be helpful. I would tell them to call me or someone else to get help. Second, developing a relationship with God made a big difference. That happened through prayer. My prayers were answered, yet they were not. I*

wanted it to be over and to be happy again. That didn't happen, but something else did. I think it made me a better person. I am alive. I was like the walking dead. I've learned that nothing is impossible with God. He will do it in His own time frame, but that doesn't mean it won't happen. You've got to trust in Him. He may have a completely different plan for me. God expects us to do what we are capable of doing and leave the rest to Him. I can't change my ex-wife, or my kids. I can work on me and I'm determined to do that. God knows what my weaknesses are."

"I think my faith has been a terrific gift from God. Pray and put it in God's hands and smile. But everyone is so different. The divorce could have been avoided. All that pain was unnecessary. I thought I could help him then I realized he doesn't want it."

"Join a support group. Talk it out over and over to get through your feelings. This opens the door to going deeper. Don't feel embarrassed to share your story with others experiencing the same thing. I believe in 'Where two or more are gathered in My name, there is God.' "

"Get involved in a group. Try it and if you are not ready, go again in 6 months. If after two sessions you feel stuck – go to a professional."

"Being stuck is temporary, it is not right or wrong, and it is a fact. You know the things you enjoy, get out of the house and do at least one of them, put away a little mad money and spend it frivolously. And by the way, that closet you were going to clean out, you might as well do it. You can't do anything wrong, you own your grief, and earned it."

"Challenge yourself. If you don't like where you are at, look in the mirror and start asking yourself the questions. 30 years ago I took a canoe trip with 9 people I didn't know. I got to know and rely on them for all things...life and death. We were confined and people told one another what they like and don't about you. If you don't like what you see, you have the ability

*to change. People that don't do that limp along and look for others to make them happy, but this starts in you. Sister asks if I challenge others. She called to tell me that was a good thing to try and get them to look at things in new ways. Support group makes me see that my situation isn't as bad as someone else's. It gets me off the self-pity thing."*

*"We need to go through our transition. We can avoid it, but we need to allow the time it takes to go through the uncomfortable feelings in an uncomfortable place. To help with this, learn mediation or artwork to help you get to the present. It will help let go of the past and focus on the future. I found that books would come along at the right time from friends. Some of my favorites are, Transitions by Jeff Bridges, The Road Less Traveled, and Let Your Life Speak, by Parker Palmer. A faith life is really important too. Find the inner source. A lot of outer things are changing. Find the calm inside. Stories and books about myths and journey of the hero have helped. Stories from the past help you relate, writing memoirs to look back on your life to see where you are now, to know where you've been."*

*"We have to be willing to do the work of self-discovery. Get to know who we are and honestly admit to our part in the demise of the relationship. We have to be to get over the anger and forgive the spouse. This means to let it go. Don't get into another relationship too soon. This becomes a "fix" rather than work."*

*"Find your true self. It takes a lot of work. Go through self-help books. It is finding healthy people to reflect back the Christ in you, the real person you were created to be. Okay, you are feeling ugly now, but that is not the person God created in you. Find a healthy friend or source to reflect that source. In 1991 I went to a college class reunion. I met up with roommates. It was healing because it got me connected with who I was then. Then life changes, but remember that person was good. Try and remember the person you were when you were*

*your best. Find yourself in all the mess. So often in marriage you compromise. In unhealthy marriage you give up too much of yourself and you are no longer the person you once were.”*

*“You have to push yourself to try new things. Start out with something small. Like going to a movie alone. Set goals. Go beyond the box, as they say. There is comfort in the box, but in order to start a new life, one that wasn’t what was chosen, but decide to want to make the most of it. It takes time to arrive at this. Each year does get better in a loss like that. You have to keep going beyond yourself.”*

*“Think positively, get out and be with people. Help if you can. I read a lot and walking is a big thing. I have the feeling that my husband’s spirit has been with me. So close...two weeks after he died I was alone for the first time in my life. The thought came to me, ‘clean the front closet’. I didn’t understand why...it was clean. I wrote that in my journal, and then read in past writing, that my husband had lost his glasses before dying and we couldn’t find them. The thought came again to clean the closet. I opened the closet door and found a jacket hanging there. I figured I would have it cleaned and ask my son if he wants it. I began to see if anything was in the pocket. There were my husband’s glasses.”*

*“Denying the pain doesn’t help. You have to go into the pain and look for the lesson of what grief and loss are telling us. We all experience loss and pain. It is up to us to find the lesson in it. What does it want to teach us? Be open to it. Don’t shut it down. Conventional religion doesn’t teach that. It comes from inner spirituality and how we make meaning of our losses.”*

*“Joy is a choice. You can choose to stay stuck or move. Take action to get there. You don’t have to go fast.”*

*“I heard the definition of joy. Now I can’t remember... Everything is overcome-able. There is a solution. God will make a way where there seems to be no way. There are things*

*greater than us out there. Working with others gets us out of ourselves. There is a Bible quote that I like. It is, 'We will arrive at a place where we are filled and wanting nothing.' "*

## **6. What else would you like me to know?**

Here, people were able to give their last words of positive encouragement for others. While there was a lot of pain and suffering, most have said they have come through it. I think of it as the Resurrection.

*"In hindsight, as much pain as I went through, and I still struggle with things I am not happy with, I would not want anyone to take away my pain. Not because I enjoyed it, but if it wasn't for that pain, I wouldn't have had so much change in my life. It's not about my former, that I loath her, but I am thankful she did what she did because of the growth and change and my new beliefs. I despise her for the change as well because of the ripping of the flesh of the family. I am only responsible for half of it. I am grateful for the change. I am looking forward to a better life and choosing better down the road. I would rather not go through it again, once was enough."*

*"Forgiveness lifted the burden and weight. It is an interior calm that I've never felt before. It was not easy. But I was determined and I willed it. There is a serenity. It took about a year to get to once I made the decision to forgive. Forgive others as often as you want them to forgive you. You must make this choice before you can move on. It will help you be at peace with yourself. Dealing with the loneliness. I had 7 people in my family and now they are gone. I depended on them for certain things. This is difficult. I've also realized that this is the way my life is now. I can complain, but I have to accept that this is the way it is. I have resolved to get out more, to beat the unemployment, to participate in Lenten liturgies, and to help others. I have much to be thankful for. My pets have been very important to filling in the loneliness."*

*“I am odd because I have moved so quickly through the grief. I didn’t bypass things. My faith base is a good part of it. A lot of people run from the church. I chose to turn to God for comfort and that has been a big part of my recovery. The Lord is my Shepard, a book by Herald Kushner, was a great resource. I am positive and I would like to have another marriage and children. Meanwhile, I am having a ton of fun now!”*

*“I am not afraid of dying. I used to be scared of what is going to happen to me, my family. I am no longer afraid of dying. I get to see my wife, and what is wrong with that? The more I embrace my grief the healthier I feel. When I avoid it is when I need to be very concerned about what I am doing. I don’t want to be stuck in my dying habits. I want to decide to change the little things.”*

*“The power of prayer is awesome. It got me through rough times. Journaling also helped ...I wrote a page of anger. Later I could see how far I’d come. Now when I read those pages, I can let go and have a new perspective. I don’t think I have been this happy in years. Now it time to move on.”*

*“That your grief will change and everyone is going to tell you about the steps and they are a bumpy road, it goes back and forth. The bumps get smaller from mountains to molehills. First you learn you are not alone and these feelings have happened to most people who have suffered loss. This is comforting even though it is sometimes hard to concentrate.”*

*“I know that getting back to the whole issue of spirituality has helped me a lot. It has helped a lot in healing and going forward. It has been positive. In going through all of this I started going through an annulment. It stirred things up from the past, and it clarified a lot. Understanding and applying Boundaries in Dating, was very helpful. It is a book by Townsend and Cloud. It helps to see things better in going forward. When you look at it, it shows what the*

*red flags are in relationships. It clears up the confusion. I read about family of origin issues, forgiveness, and going to a certain level and not moving.”*

*“I was on antidepressants. Now I am off of them.”*

In summary of these findings, subjects moving out of loss and into joy once again, demonstrate—in the stories they tell, each of the five (A-E) processes and conditions of perspective transformation. In addition, we can see how the application of new perspectives has become, or is in the process of becoming, a reality for them. These subjects focus on forward movement by not choosing to linger in the pain and suffering of loss. They practice will-training in the ways in which they self-motivate toward change. Most significant to them is *finding meaning* in the process of coping with the disorienting dilemma.

An essential condition of transformative learning is that of critical communication with others. Interaction helps individuals examine alternative perspectives in order to derive new personal meaning from the disorienting dilemma. Maslow (1970) found that basic needs are filled only by and through other human beings, and that the need for community is itself a basic need. Clark (1993) stated, “. . .human beings exist in relationship with the world by our capacity for praxis, the reciprocal linkage of reflection and action” (p. 49). Coaching works particularly well at assisting individuals in linking reflection and action.

### *Coaching*

Personal life coaching creates clarity out of confusion much like a searchlight reveals the way through darkness. Coaching is also a form of support, or buoy, that helps keep us afloat while swimming through deep and unfamiliar waters of life. A coach is an objective, caring, companion who will challenge and hold the client accountable as designed in the coaching agreement.

This relationship is different than a friend or family member can offer. Those who have a stake in the outcome of our choices will have a more difficult time objectively removing their own choices for us, by offering advice in conversation. The coaching relationship is different too, than the essential interaction with others who have shared similar experiences. Interaction with those who've suffered like we have helps us to step outside of our own hurt and needs to witness another's pain and have empathy for them.

The coach/client relationship is a vehicle to open the mind and spirit to fulfillment and joy. Hargrove (1995) asserts, "Transformational coaching shows people how to transform or stretch their visions, values, and abilities" (p. 23). In the work of changing our meaning systems, finding new perspectives, and getting out of the way of ourselves, the coach becomes an advocate for our best self. Mezirow (1991) reminds us that meaning exists within ourselves—not in books and external forms. Individuals have their own best answers—as to what will bring them fulfillment—within themselves.

Human development coaching combines the best of personal life coaching and transformational coaching, to become a hybrid form of dialogue. Vella (2000) refers to dialogue as "the guiding principle" in which the teacher takes on a new role that invites learners to be "Subjects" of their own learning. She writes, "Everything in your design moves toward dialogue as a plant moves toward the sunlight (p. 11). The role of the coach in helping the client reach their potential is similar to the teacher using dialogue as the guiding principle.

Picture the content of the coaching dialogue like a pool of water that surrounds the client. This pool represents the entire life, mind, spirit and heart of the client. The coach is invited to step into the water for the sake of the client. Their work will be to swim, play, splash, dive, float, and snorkel through dialogue, while looking for that which will bring the client more fulfillment.

The coach must be willing to step into the client's life fully, with respect, confidence, trust, and authentic belief in the client's desire for growth and transformation.

### *Conclusion/Summary*

The profession of coaching is all about assisting humanity to be its best. God created us for Joy, which we feel when we are at our best; our development as humans peaks upon self-actualization. We have free will to discover and make choices that can change our thinking, our feelings, and our lives. Change can also come as a disorienting dilemma—a barrier or hurdle in our life journey. Christians know the promise of Resurrection, which can be realized after Earthly losses. Transformative learning, positive psychology, and spiritual development, are proven resources for coaches to use in opening the minds and spirits of their clients toward full immersion in their potential.

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## APPENDIX

From Loss to Fulfillment

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HDIS2G A Study of Loss to Fulfillment

December 2005

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## From Loss to Fulfillment

What is it that causes an individual to move from a place of loss, to feel fulfillment and joy once again? Many studies show there is an essential need to go through a grieving period. However, often times people get stuck in their grief and loss. They lose interest in taking steps toward moving beyond the identity that connected them to the person (and life with them) they have lost. Fear, guilt, depression/sadness, anger, and other negative feelings stem from the loss and take time to work through.

In this study I have gathered the stories of fourteen people (nine female, five male) who have suffered loss through divorce or death of a spouse. I asked them to tell me about the elements that were most helpful to them in moving beyond feelings of loss and being stuck in darkness. I have included the specific questions I asked, as well as their words in response. Each storyteller has given me their permission in writing to share their stories.

In the total interview, I asked each person twenty questions. For the purpose of this study I have included ten of those questions. The responses are not in continuous order (by respondent.) Instead, I have sorted them according to like answers and the similarities for learning what was common and what was unique. I have compiled the learning to show a variety of methods people found helpful in their journey back to wholeness.

These stories have moved me deeply. The storytellers described love lost, and profound grief that followed. At the same time, each and every one of them described a desire to move from the unnatural state of loss, to joy and fulfillment once again. Their journeys are marked with milestones toward change and new life to follow. While most of the participants in this study reported that they are more fully in a state of joy, than in loss, some noted that with loss

comes a never forgotten gap. How we chose to live our lives *with* that gap will determine how much joy we will make room for.

### **How long were you married?**

Several couples were compelled to note an additional number of years to mark time they were together as a couple before the marriage. In one case, those years (12) were far greater than the years married.

28 + 3, 8 + 7, 3, 23, 10, 48, 18+3, 31.5, 31, 37, 42, 2+12, 7, 21

This is an average of (rounded to) 24 years married/together.

### **How long have you been divorced/widowed?**

1.4, 1, 30, 3, 14, 7.5, 18, 2.5, 1, 4, 5.5, .5, 6, 21

When talking about the time a person has been divorced, it was sometimes broken into years and months.

This is an average of (rounded to) 8 years divorced/widowed.

### **If you were to describe your feelings in a metaphor, what would that be?**

In asking this question, I wanted to get a clear picture of the kind of feelings associated with the loss suffered. Without knowing the level or feelings of loss, it is difficult to gauge or measure a person's movement to joy once again.

*"A free fall downward. I could not function. I lost 35 pounds. I was sleeping one or two hours a night. This went on for several months."*

*"A sinking ship. Like being kicked in the head or being stabbed. Like rearranging deck chairs on a sinking ship."*

*"Like I let people down. I didn't meet the church's definition of a perfect marriage, nor my parents, I felt like a loser compared to friends who had good marriages. I told myself I must have done something to make him want to leave me. I felt guilt."*

*“Drowning. I couldn’t breath. This was real. I felt panic and choking. Being totally alone at night was difficult.”*

*“I felt like I was run over by a train. I felt like the gum on the bottom of someone’s shoe. I met my husband when I was 16 years old. I felt like I had no identity without him.”*

*“Like a train ran over me. Like someone punched me out. I couldn’t believe this was happening to me. This shouldn’t be happening. He was going to retire and we had other plans.”*

*“I felt like I was losing my mind.”*

*“Roller coaster ride, up and down. Freight train or roller coaster, feeling stuck on it, emotions going up and down, thoughts racing and uncertainty of the future.”*

*“Emotional bleeding. Like an outpouring of feelings from the inside coming out. Depression. I have a lot of levity and I see things as funny in my life. I couldn’t do that anymore. I could hear jokes, but there was no laughter. Smiling was not there. Humor was gone. I looked at myself and didn’t want to be around me. I couldn’t keep rhythm. I couldn’t clap or dance. I was awkward. Hobbies, interests, ambitions, self-seeking things in life that I took pleasure in before didn’t matter anymore. I had suicidal thoughts because of the intensity of the emotional pain.”*

*“It is worse than if my spouse had died. She chose to do what she did. The over arching feeling is one of failure.”*

### **What stands out to you as most significant about your feelings of loss?**

Participants answering this question came at it from several perspectives. I’ve sorted the responses with the first four talking about the loss and the effect of it upon them and their families.

*“The most significant loss was of his family, the loss of this connection. The loss of his physical person in the household was big, but I was the breadwinner, and I was strong.”*

*“I never felt anger. It was despair. I didn’t know where I was going to go. It was the lowest point I ever experienced. I didn’t feel anger because when I examined the problems that we had, I knew I had a big part in that. I felt more sadness than anger.”*

*“I felt the most significant loss for my children. The stats showed that they wouldn’t feel like family anymore. I didn’t have close family. His was very close. I worried my children would lose that sense of family, which they did. He didn’t include them.”*

*“I remember having feelings of uncertainty in the beginning of what is coming down the road.”*

The following four said they had spiritual movement in their lives.

*“What was most significant thing about the loss is that it is a tremendous growth opportunity. I did turn to God in a way I had never done before.”*

*“I’ve been reading a lot about spirituality. It is okay to feel bad. The joy is in being in an environment where I can talk about this and it is okay. I have this with my closest friends.”*

*“Going through a painful loss causes me to grow spiritually. If you avoid the pain and get into some kind of addiction, you are still trying to find something outside of you. I found the strength inside of me. I wasn’t dependant on something outside of me.”*

*“It was a turning point in my life. The Epiphany of my life. It went right to the core of my being. It changed beliefs and convictions in my head, things about marriage and what was important. There were daily revelations of myself. Self-examination. I wanted to be a better person. It was actually a motivator in my alcoholic recovery.... I looked in retrospect and asked was it working for you? If true to yourself, you say no and say maybe I should try something different this time. There was a time period where I didn’t really know who I was. A dark night*

*of the soul where I had plans and visions and goals and they all tied to the other person. They are stripped away and left empty. Like unmolded clay. I had the opportunity to reshape my life.*

The final three spoke of the loss death brought to them.

“Time does soften the pain.”

*“Not being able to share things after he died was the most significant. Many times at work I would think I have to remember to tell him something when I get home. Then I’d remember that I couldn’t do that. I liked making him laugh. I came from a happy home and was able to give that to him.”*

*“I recall weird things... I go to the lake and say out loud (to no one) ‘Damn it, this is your job, it’s not fair to die and leave me with this.’ Once I thought he was home and that scared me.”*

**Do you remember moments or times in which you first felt a ray of hope, or saw a glimmer of goodness beyond the loss?**

There were only a couple of people who could not clearly recall when this moment occurred. It seems to be a huge turning point for people to grab hold of that glimmer in order to find more hope and joy behind it.

For some, it was having friends, a support group, or a connection with others who showed their concern and care for them.

*“That began – a glimmer – after a couple of months I had a couple of friends who were hand holding and stuck with me. They never gave up on me. Then I went to a Beginning Experience (BE) weekend (for individuals who have suffered a divorce). I wound up with a roommate who today is one of my best friends. It became clear to me that I was not alone. There were others who were in the same boat, and some worse than mine! They had come out of it and were getting on with their lives. This gave me hope.”*

*“Yes, the first time I went to bible study at my church. I had only said hello and then joined the group. I felt like this is wonderful. It felt good. I had a sense of belonging and tenderness. They were bringing me into the conversation as if I were one of them. I hadn’t been part of anything for so long. The family is busy with their own lives.”*

Some, who responded to the survey, talked of an internal push to feel better or to find happiness. Most were supported in doing so within a support group or through a trusted friend.

*“I forced myself to know that I would make it somehow. I do have a dear (Priest) friend who helped me through. I told him I will never love again, that I have a wall around my heart. ‘No,’ he told me, ‘that isn’t living. You will let love into your heart again.’ Maybe I will again one day. I don’t know. Having a friend like that was key. I could talk to him, swear at God and he didn’t judge me.”*

*“I went to my divorce group and it was always small and odd. I felt so bad for those in pain. I realized that I felt good and it was wonderful to feel an incredible happiness. This made me realize I would one day be my cheerful self again. I got the idea that I had to quit leaning on my daughters. I forced myself to go to a movie by myself. I began to feel maybe I was healing. I could see how far I had come. I used to cry all the time. Now I just cry for my grandson who died, and I can stop before it gets out of hand.”*

*“I remember some laughter. I caught myself and said, ‘look I am laughing!’ Some days were mixed with smiles. I was going to the men’s group led by a psychologist. I came with an issue. Each week there was my issue. People would say, ‘You’re stuck.’ The counselor said to me. ‘Do you want to hear what you need to do? You need to make a choice’. He didn’t give me more information, but left me with finding the answer. I didn’t see it. As time past, I looked back and when you come back, it is a measuring stick, when a new guy comes in you can see they are stuck and you can see where you were. Then I could tell him the same things about being stuck.”*

*I could see I needed to make some choices. I questioned what I needed. Then I realized that when you are in a problem you need to make a choice. Now I can help my kids see that. There is value invested in helped me move on.”*

*“Yes, it was probably within about 6 months. After some accidents resulting from being preoccupied, I began to feel in better control. I would pay bills rather than avoid them. Giddy times came out of forced happiness...I told myself I’ve got to enjoy myself. I know I need it. I even went through a compulsive spending time. I build model ships of wood. It was like I was compelled to feel happy. Drawn to it, I don’t know what drew me. It came more naturally after that. I was able to get rid of some things and was making it on my own. I got into making bread. I make a double chocolate bread. With a bread maker. The more relaxed I become the more I can pay attention to my hobbies. My mind relaxes, I am in the zone. The poignant moments come and I am relaxed and in the zone and working on a hobby. They are bittersweet, but are tender and special. Like only a husband and wife can have for one another. Then I go do something else. It is unique and special.”*

For two respondents, it was legal aspects that helped them find hope for a new day.

*“Coming out of the divorce court. I knew it was legally behind me. I heard the words of the priest I had gone to for support. He knew it was time for me to move on, and now I knew I had a new opportunity.”*

*“Hope came about when we put in for the joint physical custody.”*

Others found hope through a need that had gone unmet, through fears not realized, and through a message from God.

*“Five years after the divorce I was on a Beginning Experience (B.E.) weekend. One of the speakers talked about letting go. She stood there looking like she was at a casket. I realized that is what I didn’t have. I didn’t have the final goodbye that a widow has from her friends.*

*Then the B.E. team leaders hugged me and gave me what I needed. It was a blessing. I was then able to see my role in the divorce and the part I played.”*

*“I got the first job I applied for. There was cosmic order, things were falling in place and coming easily. I knew I was on the right path. Fears were not realized. I felt good. Today...I have wonderful friends and family who help me see my gifts. Opportunities come up like to facilitate a divorce support group, to volunteer to canter and sing at church. I was led to leadership in many areas. There were many reassurances. I didn’t do these things before because I was sitting with my husband. My life is better today than when I was with him.”*

*“I started back going to church and heard a meaningful song, “On Eagles Wings.” Then one day I was in a furniture store and I sat in a recliner. Over the store sound system came this song. It filled my heart. It made me feel like God was with me, and it was a turning point. It was like I was meant to hear it. It was sent from God.”*

### **What are some things that were most helpful to you in moving on?**

It was a pleasure to hear people respond with several elements within one answer to what helped them move on. Some talked about support groups and friends. Others mentioned God, the Church, prayer, and a spiritual guide.

*“The people I’ve met through B.E. and some friends from out of state who gave me a blank check on their time. They did more than tolerate. They actively understand and tried to help me in different ways. I feel like God cut me a lot of slack. I am not a religious person, but I’ve learned some things about God and about prayer. I think I could very well be dead now. But I am alive and kicking. I am also determined to try and help others going through this. I feel a burning urge to give something back.”*

*“The men’s group. The counselor was enlightening and wise. He directed me without taking me there. I listened to a lot of Ernie Larson tapes. I had him autograph some tapes. I go*

*to a lot of his seminars at Hazelton. He says if you don't know where you are going, you are going to end up somewhere else. My pastor had what I wanted. He presented in homilies, things to look at in your life...being a person, husband, etc., that led to goal setting. It was a collective. The first time I was going to AA, church, Alanon, ACA, divorce groups, hearing all of this and wondering how to apply it all in my life. It was awkward and painful. I sat with my counselor and he did a psychological talk and without my knowing, he connected the dots for me. He validated me and helped me feel loved and helped me see things differently in my life."*

*"When I realized the truth and not was not in denial. I went to a conference at Notre Dame for the separated and divorced. It was so much more than I expected. The spirituality was more like a retreat than a conference. I went with another woman from my support group, Divorce and Beyond."*

*"One of the things I'm doing now is work with a spiritual guide who calls herself a pattern buster. I am looking at childhood beliefs and what occurred, what were thoughts, emotions, reactions, and consequences. Over and over again I have relived these experiences. I found that I had a core belief about myself. It was that I was flawed. I had to sacrifice myself for others. Now I realize they were lies. I am creating what I believe now and my own personal story. This is very helpful."*

Setting goals and making "tangible" effort helped others.

*"Having so many friends call to ask me to dinner or to a movie. The support of everybody. I looked at myself and thought how do I have to change to make a new life? I can't sit and think how would we have done this? I needed to do things on my own. Forcing myself to change my way is what got me going. The fact that I had guts to do the things I did, is what gave me strength. If I climb a hill I can get to the top and look down and say, look what I've done. I did have survival guilt and I've gotten past that. I wanted to continue to live. I used to set goals*

*for myself. I am goal oriented. Like deciding on three shirts to iron then I can sit down to read. Traveling was a goal. I learned to force myself to do things I wasn't crazy to do. I still have meltdowns now and again. I sit down and cry and say, I don't want to do this alone. However, I can laugh at myself. If I don't I will be crying. Laughter has always been my thing."*

*"Tangible things...journaling...that was enlightening. My therapist said I should create one moment a week to look forward to. I thought if one is good, more is better. I kept myself busy and distracted. This didn't help with dealing with the grief, however. The textbooks from Rebuilding were helpful. I took a 100-question test at the beginning of the Rebuilding classes, and again at the end. The author had developed a national average for people. They said, in 6 months, you should be here...I am doing far better than most. By exposing myself to others grieving, I could see my own progress."*

*"When I go through transitions I do a lot of looking back. It is time to look more at the future. I think it would be helpful to start looking more toward the future. I'm planning to start independent study and career coaching. It is the beginning of a new year. I want to write down some of my goals."*

Time, gratefulness, children, and honesty, came up as motivators for others.

*"Time. Learning to be quiet with myself. I wanted to keep busy constantly so I wouldn't have to think. Quiet time was a good thing. There were no books on this or support groups at the time. I didn't continue counseling."*

*"To feel grateful for being aware that the sun is shining. Thank you for turning on the lights again. To smile, to hear the birds sing, and to enjoy the sunshine."*

*"What my kids think, and that I have them. They mean so much to me. What has been really healthy is that my former wife has been dating someone for two years now. She told me*

*she started going out with him when she told me she wanted out of the marriage. Her honesty has made a difference.”*

**What are some elements that you are most grateful for in getting through the grief?**

A change came about in people choosing several (different) perspectives. Respondents talked about how they now see the world; deal with negative thoughts, past behaviors, and other people’s grief.

*“I am grateful to be able to get up and not be crying. To feel normal and not in a terrible mess. I did go to a psychologist. I was depressed and down on myself. I said things like, ‘I should have,’ etc. She told me to start thinking in another way. Changing my thinking made this happen. When you have a negative thought, replace it with ‘anyone could make that mistake.’ I was so relieved, I felt like I was born again.”*

*“One thing I am grateful for is that this has given me more time to focus on my handicapped son. I look at my boy and see how far down the road his mother’s illness had taken us. I got him a physical and changed meds for him. His diet is better. Also, I have a better understanding of my own vulnerability to share with others and learn about being a better person. From going through grief training, and what I saw out there and disagreed with, I am testing my thinking with other widowers and widows. Also, being willing to explore my own emotions has been very good.”*

*“I am grateful for the new perspective I have on other peoples grief. It has given me more understanding about others misbehavior. No one chooses to be angry. It happens when problems are not taken care of. I wanted to blame him for everything. When I finally figured out that I was choosing to be angry and choosing to be a victim, I could let it go and I knew what I needed to forgive myself. I was concentrating on forgiving him, but I needed to start with me. It was easier to forgive him once I could forgive myself. I think the core of why we hold onto anger*

*and hurt is because we are defending ourselves. I can keep blaming others and do not look at me.”*

*“I can say that I am grateful for the therapist I had. She was blunt and good at breaking co-dependence issues. After I quit seeing her, I sometimes think of her and the tools she gave me, and that works. I had a good job and as I talked to others divorced I realized I didn’t have to worry about a job and money. I’m happy being alone.”*

New friendships and spirituality often go hand in hand.

*“I think my new found friendships are an element I’m grateful for. Certainly. There is the spiritual side of things, too. I can find little miracles on a recurring basis. Things that I couldn’t control and just happened without me. It probably made a difference in staying in this world and going to the next. There was a stable environment in church. It was healthy, uplifting, a revelation. I didn’t get a great deal of friendships from church, like from elsewhere.”*

*“Besides God and the church/mass, I met new friends I have made through the Catholic singles group. I met a lot of women who are like me. I was accepted and met where I was. The Divorce and Beyond support group was great. I made friends and had great facilitators. I did a lot of reading that I sought out on my own. Holidays were very difficult. I had started meeting people and I thought I didn’t need to continue to go to my support group. Then the holidays came and I was right back to where I was. In Rebuilding there is a chapter on denial that hit me like a ton of bricks. I knew in my heart that I looked like I was dealing well, but in my mind I was telling myself that he would come back.”*

*“I’ve been lucky. I go to mass about 6 days a week, as often as I can. I pray a lot more than I did. I was looking for help from God’s all-powerful love. I also pray to the Blessed Virgin.”*

There is a strong theme around gratefulness for children. In divorce or death of a spouse, children continue to hold families together.

*“I am grateful for my two children who have supported all the crazy things I’ve done and have been there to help me. When I called them before going to the Amazon for a few weeks, they didn’t rant and rave. They let me make decisions and supported me in selling the house and buying a town home. A dear sister invites me to dinner. My other sister doesn’t even call me. This hurts me. One week later she called to see how I was. I was angry for some time. I hope I can be different for her if it happens to her. The survivor is the one who needs the support. I treat others who’ve gone through this because of what I know now.”*

*“My kids. My daughter had the hardest time and showed it the most. I was caring for her while grieving for myself.”*

*“The first thing in general is my children. That was part of what motivated me to seek help. I needed to be healthy for them. The gifts I’ve received are resilience, self-knowledge, a spiritual connection, and the determination to be healthy and well. The gift is also the commitment to alternative medicine techniques and being a pioneer in that area with skills and abilities that are marketable. My experienced helped me to be compassionate and to teach others in anything remotely like this situation.”*

*“I am grateful that we didn’t pit our kids against one another. My divorce cost me \$175. I used my head, and bit my tongue.”*

**If you could name one need you have in moving into joy and fulfillment, what would that be?**

Taking time for oneself came out as an important move toward joy and fulfillment.

*“More time to work on myself. I need to give myself space without feeling like I am pushing myself. The ultimate goal is forgiveness. I need time to process.”*

*“Time is going to look after it. Time softens everything. I have to build on my positive side. Not let others pull me down. When I get down, I go out and take a long walk in nature and enjoy the birds and trees. I sleep better. I have thrown myself into work at church. I keep busy with helping others, bringing comfort to others. I knew this would help me even when I couldn’t do it.”*

*“Taking time for myself. This is another reason I am not pressed to jump into another relationship. I have been in relationships all my life and didn’t take time between them to be on my own. I like the idea that I can come home and be myself, to be me and grow on that. This is the big deal. I have accepted the fact. I don’t feel lonesome now. I accept myself and being with myself, alone.”*

*A mix of answers follow which include prayer, faith, friendships, professional help, and self-happiness.*

*“There are three things for which I am grateful. 1.) My prayer life. 2.) Friends who have been helpful. 3.) Professional help that I am working with. I belong to a job transition group.”*

*“Support of family and friends. Support of the clergy I encountered. I ran, they pursued.”*

*“Life is what it is and you have to do with it what you can. I am happy and I like myself.”*

*Being needed, companionship, and love are strong needs in moving forward.*

*“I would like to be needed by someone. I know that I don’t need another person to be fulfilled, but I’ve found that I think I would be happiest in another relationship.”*

*“Companionship. I feel like I am to the point where I’d like to meet someone to share time and dinner with. That kind of thing.”*

*“To have someone love me.”*

*“I miss companionship...someone with whom I can talk and share. I miss this the most. There is physical and emotional. I like a variety of interests. A trusting conversation is what I need.”*

Spirituality, a strong faith, and patience are needs others talked about.

*“Developing a better spiritual life.”*

*“If I could mix safety and security together or stability...as I put a new history behind me and start filling in the blanks with a future. Then came new joy. Finding a new identity, I was like a child again and re-growing and re-parenting myself. The other side is that I am going through a season where I feel I am backsliding in my spirituality and I let Him deal with it. He was in charge of my life. I seem to be taking it back. It was working so well for me. I am in an Alfa group. It’s who we are in Christ. It’s through a church.”*

*“Patience and perseverance. The core of that is faith. You don’t have a sense of that at the time. The faith is there that you return to even in your insanity. I had insane anger. Still God was in there. I kept asking why are you letting this happen to me.”*

**If you could give advice to others about how to get unstuck, or how to move to joy, what would it be?**

It was uplifting for me as the listener to hear the advice of these storytellers. They have learned through their grief, healing, faith, and fortitude, what worked for them and they were eager to pass that learning on. Their answers are varied with a couple of similar themes. These are: trust God, you are never alone/join a support group, try new things, do self-discovery, get out with others, and choose joy.

*“The first thing I would say is that you are not alone. You are never alone. When I first got into this I thought I was an island. You are a peninsula. You may get overwhelmed by the*

*storms, but you are connected to land, to others who want to be helpful. I would tell them to call me or someone else to get help. Second, developing a relationship with God made a big difference. That happened through prayer. My prayers were answered, yet they were not. I wanted it to be over and to be happy again. That didn't happen, but something else did. I think it made me a better person. I am alive. I was like the walking dead. I've learned that nothing is impossible with God. He will do it in His own time frame, but that doesn't mean it won't happen. You've got to trust in Him. He may have a completely different plan for me. God expects us to do what we are capable of doing and leave the rest to Him. I can't change my ex-wife, or my kids. I can work on me and I'm determined to do that. God knows what my weaknesses are."*

*"I think my faith has been a terrific gift from God. Pray and put it in God's hands and smile. But everyone is so different. The divorce could have been avoided. All that pain was unnecessary. I thought I could help him then I realized he doesn't want it."*

*"Join a support group. Talk it out over and over to get through your feelings. This opens the door to going deeper. Don't feel embarrassed to share your story with others experiencing the same thing. I believe in 'Where two or more are gathered in My name, there is God.' "*

*"Get involved in a group. Try it and if you are not ready, go again in 6 months. If after two sessions you feel stuck – go to a professional."*

*"Being stuck is temporary, it is not right or wrong, and it is a fact. You know the things you enjoy, get out of the house and do at least one of them, put away a little mad money and spend it frivolously. And by the way, that closet you were going to clean out, you might as well do it. You can't do anything wrong, you own your grief, and earned it."*

*“Challenge yourself. If you don’t like where you are at, look in the mirror and start asking yourself the questions. 30 years ago I took a canoe trip with 9 people I didn’t know. I got to know and rely on them for all things...life and death. We were confined and people told one another what they like and don’t about you. If you don’t like what you see, you have the ability to change. People that don’t do that limp along and look for others to make them happy, but this starts in you. Sister asks if I challenge others. She called to tell me that was a good thing to try and get them to look at things in new ways. Support group makes me see that my situation isn’t as bad as someone else’s. It gets me off the self-pity thing.”*

*“We need to go through our transition. We can avoid it, but we need to allow the time it takes to go through the uncomfortable feelings in an uncomfortable place. To help with this, learn mediation or artwork to help you get to the present. It will help let go of the past and focus on the future. I found that books would come along at the right time from friends. Some of my favorites are, Transitions by Jeff Bridges, The Road Less Traveled, and Let Your Life Speak, by Parker Palmer. A faith life is really important too. Find the inner source. A lot of outer things are changing. Find the calm inside. Stories and books about myths and journey of the hero have helped. Stories from the past help you relate, writing memoirs to look back on your life to see where you are now, to know where you’ve been.”*

*“We have to be willing to do the work of self-discovery. Get to know who we are and honestly admit to our part in the demise of the relationship. We have to be to get over the anger and forgive the spouse. This means to let it go. Don’t get into another relationship too soon. This becomes a “fix” rather than work.”*

*“Find your true self. It takes a lot of work. Go through self-help books. It is finding healthy people to reflect back the Christ in you, the real person you were created to be. Okay, you are feeling ugly now, but that is not the person God created in you. Find a healthy friend or*

*source to reflect that source. In 1991 I went to a college class reunion. I met up with roommates. It was healing because it got me connected with who I was then. Then life changes, but remember that person was good. Try and remember the person you were when you were your best. Find yourself in all the mess. So often in marriage you compromise. In unhealthy marriage you give up too much of yourself and you are no longer the person you once were.”*

*“You have to push yourself to try new things. Start out with something small. Like going to a movie alone. Set goals. Go beyond the box, as they say. There is comfort in the box, but in order to start a new life, one that wasn’t what was chosen, but decide to want to make the most of it. It takes time to arrive at this. Each year does get better in a loss like that. You have to keep going beyond yourself.”*

*“Think positively, get out and be with people. Help if you can. I read a lot and walking is a big thing. I have the feeling that my husband’s spirit has been with me. So close...two weeks after he died I was alone for the first time in my life. The thought came to me, ‘clean the front closet’. I didn’t understand why...it was clean. I wrote that in my journal, and then read in past writing, that my husband had lost his glasses before dying and we couldn’t find them. The thought came again to clean the closet. I opened the closet door and found a jacket hanging there. I figured I would have it cleaned and ask my son if he wants it. I began to see if anything was in the pocket. There were my husband’s glasses.”*

*“Denying the pain doesn’t help. You have to go into the pain and look for the lesson of what grief and loss are telling us. We all experience loss and pain. It is up to us to find the lesson in it. What does it want to teach us? Be open to it. Don’t shut it down. Conventional religion doesn’t teach that. It comes from inner spirituality and how we make meaning of our losses.”*

*“Joy is a choice. You can choose to stay stuck or move. Take action to get there. You don’t have to go fast.”*

*“I heard the definition of joy. Now I can’t remember... Everything is overcome-able. There is a solution. God will make a way where there seems to be no way. There are things greater than us out there. Working with others gets us out of ourselves. There is a Bible quote that I like. It is, ‘We will arrive at a place where we are filled and wanting nothing.’ ”*

### **What else would you like me to know?**

Here, people were able to give their last words of positive encouragement for others. While there was a lot of pain and suffering, most have said they have come through it. I think of it as the Resurrection.

*“In hindsight, as much pain as I went through, and I still struggle with things I am not happy with, I would not want anyone to take away my pain. Not because I enjoyed it, but if it wasn’t for that pain, I wouldn’t have had so much change in my life. It’s not about my former, that I loath her, but I am thankful she did what she did because of the growth and change and my new beliefs. I despise her for the change as well because of the ripping of the flesh of the family. I am only responsible for half of it. I am grateful for the change. I am looking forward to a better life and choosing better down the road. I would rather not go through it again, once was enough.”*

*“Forgiveness lifted the burden and weight. It is an interior calm that I’ve never felt before. It was not easy. But I was determined and I willed it. There is a serenity. It took about a year to get to once I made the decision to forgive. Forgive others as often as you want them to forgive you. You must make this choice before you can move on. It will help you be at peace with yourself. Dealing with the loneliness. I had 7 people in my family and now they are gone. I depended on them for certain things. This is difficult. I’ve also realized that this is the way my*

*life is now. I can complain, but I have to accept that this is the way it is. I have resolved to get out more, to beat the unemployment, to participate in Lenten liturgies, and to help others. I have much to be thankful for. My pets have been very important to filling in the loneliness.”*

*“I am odd because I have moved so quickly through the grief. I didn’t bypass things. My faith base is a good part of it. A lot of people run from the church. I chose to turn to God for comfort and that has been a big part of my recovery. The Lord is my Shepard, a book by Herald Kushner, was a great resource. I am positive and I would like to have another marriage and children. Meanwhile, I am having a ton of fun now!”*

*“I was cautious and leery moving into another relationship. Then early in my second marriage I had trust issues. It was me. There was no reason, just a feeling of fear of betrayal. I married a divorced, non-catholic, 11 years older. We worked through things from previous marriages. I didn’t go through an annulment so we married outside of the church. I did continue to go to my church every week. He became Catholic. Our annulment went through two days before the first communion of our first son. I Remarried 4 years after the divorce.”*

*“I am not afraid of dying. I used to be scared of what is going to happen to me, my family? I am no longer afraid of dying. I get to see my wife, and what is wrong with that? The more I embrace my grief the healthier I feel. When I avoid it is when I need to be very concerned about what I am doing. I don’t want to be stuck in my dying habits. I want to decide to change the little things.”*

*“The power of prayer is awesome. It got me through rough times. Journaling also helped ...I wrote a page of anger. Later I could see how far I’d come. Now when I read those pages, I can let go and have a new perspective. I don’t think I have been this happy in years. Now it time to move on.”*

*“One thing...no matter how old your children are, it is devastating for them. My son still has a shaky relationship with his dad. It all boils down to doing the hard work. The only person who hurts is you. The other one has moved on.”*

*“That your grief will change and everyone is going to tell you about the steps and they are a bumpy road, it goes back and forth. The bumps get smaller from mountains to molehills. First you learn you are not alone and these feelings have happened to most people who have suffered loss. This is comforting even though it is sometimes hard to concentrate.”*

*“I know that getting back to the whole issue of spirituality has helped me a lot. It has helped a lot in healing and going forward. It has been positive. In going through all of this I started going through an annulment. It stirred things up from the past, and it clarified a lot. Understanding and applying Boundaries in Dating, was very helpful. It is a book by Townsend and Cloud. It helps to see things better in going forward. When you look at it, it shows what the red flags are in relationships. It clears up the confusion. I read about family of origin issues, forgiveness, and going to a certain level and not moving.”*

*“I was on antidepressants. Now I am off of them.”*

It has been my honor and privilege to share these stories of loss to fulfillment. My hope is that others who are in the process of grieving will find hope, strength, encouragement, and joy in reading how after the death of marriage, or death of a spouse, there is the promise of Resurrection.