

Mourning Our Losses

Make Space for Something New To Arise

“We don’t let go of anything important until we have exhausted all the possible ways that we might keep holding on to it.”

– William Bridges

Traveling down the path towards sufficiency is a process of letting go of our entrenchment and attachments to scarcity thinking (e.g. “I never get it right”) and behaving (e.g. “I need ‘x’ to be happy”). To live in flow, ease, honesty, and grace, we must let go of our addictions to hoarding, distraction, comparison, and shame (or any other scarcity weapon that you are hooked on). Letting go of anything in our lives—habits, things, people, our past—engages us in the universal principals associated with mourning.

Broadly speaking, mourning is the internal action of rewiring our brain (our thinking and feeling patterns) from the way things were to the way things are emerging, and will become. The stages of mourning as defined by Kubler-Ross (On Death and Dying, 1969) and adopted by William Bridges (The Way of Transitions, 2001) include spending some time—though not necessarily in a linear fashion—in denial, isolation, anger, bargaining, sadness, and acceptance. There are many sensations that come along during times of mourning and letting go. We may feel disorientated and confused, disenchanting, and dis-identified, and experience the physical sensations of pain, frustration, anxiety, surprise, irritation, sadness, and more.

Mourning our losses—whatever they are—is an act of sufficiency because it is attending to what is true and real

for us while accepting and allowing what is constantly emerging in the moment, the constancy of change, whether we’ve chosen it or not. The actual act of allowing the process of mourning to occur in us even when it feels murky—especially when it feels murky or otherwise difficult—brings us to a profound sense of acceptance. From this place of acceptance, we make room for something new to grow:

- Space for discovery, creativity, learning, integration, adventures of the heart, solutions previously unseen, and much more may be generated.
- Letting go with awareness and support helps us make sense of our loss, helps us understand what the transition calls us to experience, and helps us make meaning.
- We honor what we used to have, do, believe, rely on, and cope with, and we are better prepared to move on with greater clarity of purpose.
- Even the weapons and experiences of scarcity are not exempt as candidates for the mourning process.

By the way, mourning is distinct from grieving, though they are of course linked. Grieving has a more feeling-based association, the sadness and possibly depression that come with loss. It has the root word heavy, like an emotion; whereas mourning has the root remembering and works in the way the mind handles the broken connection of what was and what is now. Mourning undoubtedly includes the sensations of grieving for many of us.

Letting go to make space for something new has a common deterrent. In dealing with the uncertainty we



feel as we pass through both the discomfort of mourning and the emptiness resulting from letting go, we might be likely to distract ourselves by making immediate and short-term changes in our lives. Robert Hall (one of our teachers) describes this time as the “fertile void.” During this time of not knowing what is arising, what to do, or how to feel, we often find ourselves making a change simply to fill the void. Or, we may even return to something familiar—the way things were.

Inquiry: Outwit the Deterrent

We can pause our fall back into old habits or quick fixes—that we mostly do unconsciously—by acknowledging this pattern, and then discerning the associations we have clustered with the loss we’ve experienced. When we have moments of noticing this, we invite ourselves to re-imagine and to remember the context or the dream in which we know something new is possible. This requires us to first inquire and reflect on what we have lost and what we will have to let go of.

Get comfortable and use your journal to reflect on the following questions:

- What have you lost in the past two years?
Consider anything you miss, from a person(s), a place or home, a job, a part of your identity, a physical capability, youth, innocence, etc.
- What are the hopes, fears and dreams associated with this loss?
- How are you connected to this loss? How is the loss connected to others?
- How have these times of uncertainty impacted your ability to attend to yourself? How do you nurture yourself when you are feeling stress and uncertainty?
- What changes are you experiencing that you did not ask for? How do you feel about them?
- How do you know when it is time to let go and move on? What holds you back?
- What do you have to let go of to make room for something new?
- What is arising from the space created from investigating finitude and letting go?
- How will you let go? What you are learning about this art of surrender and release? What possibilities are available to you today?
- What insights or discoveries do you have about your loss?
- How was it to let go? Was it easy, hard, impossible?
- Is there anything left to let go of about it? If so, what steps would you like to take to do so?
- What surprised you about this process?
- What stories about trust from the past do you keep alive today?
- What would become available if you allowed yourself to trust?

ABOUT SEVEN STONES

Seven Stones is a leadership journeys company founded by Gina LaRoche and Jennifer Cohen in 2009. Our learning programs, coaching practice, organizational consulting engagements and groundbreaking thought leadership work are all designed to help bring about a world that is loving, courageous and just. We pursue this vision primarily by shifting the paradigm from one of scarcity to one of Sustainable Abundance® in the individuals, organizations and communities with whom we work.

