

Finding Meaning in Trauma

Finding meaning in a traumatic event can be along and difficult process, but it's very important. Without putting the event in some sort of perspective it can be difficult or impossible to let the wounds heal and move on with your life. While you may never forget the trauma, you can recover and rebuild your life. The points below are some things to think about.

Remember that you are not a target. When tragedy strikes, it is easy to feel as though you're being punished or singled out by some evil force. But the fact is that bad things can happen randomly—to good people, to bad people, and to everybody in between. Don't add to the pain you are already feeling by trying to lay blame or establish your own "guilt".

Reach out to others. It is very natural to withdraw and to think that no one can understand what you are going through. But human contact can help you heal. People who care about you want to help, although often, they don't know how. They may keep their distance, afraid, they'll upset you more. Now is the time to contact the people who mean the most to you.

Get in touch with spiritual dimension. Spirituality doesn't have to mean religion, although religious beliefs can provide comfort and framework for dealing with traumatic events. A tragedy can cause you to reexamine your values and the basic belief that give meaning to your life. Ask the questions that have no answers: "Why does it always happen to the good guy?" "What's the point of living if we can be struck down so suddenly?" "If there is a God, why does he allow things like this to happen?" Talk it over with people who went through the trauma with you or with others that you trust.

Give it time. It may take some time before you can find any meaning in a traumatic event. First the shock, then the pain may prevent you from being able to think clearly about the event and put it into some sort of perspective. Normally, however, the pain will begin to subside, and you'll find it easier to think about the incident.

Seek professional counseling if necessary. If you're not getting over it on your own, if things seem to be getting worse instead of better, or if you're worried that it's affecting your life and work, then you may want to seek professional help. Some places you can turn for referrals are your company's Employee Assistance Program, the crisis consultant (if any) who has been called into work with your company, your community mental health center, your physician, local hospital, or friends and family who have seen a counselor themselves.

Don't expect to be the same as you were before. "Healing" after a tragedy doesn't necessarily mean going back to exactly the way things were. Circumstances have changed and chances are, you've changed too. While the pain will eventually recede, you probably won't forget about the event. That's why its especially important to find a way to understand the event and make it part of you are.



***Call the EAP for free & confidential
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1-800-526-3485***