

8 The Effects of Loss and Life Changes

Each person's response to loss and life changes depends on a number of influences at the time. Factors that affect our ability to cope include the following:

- > early life experiences;
- > current lifestyle;
- > support network;
- > willingness to find and accept support;
- > temperament;
- > ability to respond to change;
- > availability of resources.

How we respond to loss and life changes

Some people become very anxious or depressed in response to the shock and loss of a close friend, relative or partner as opposed to being able to grieve over the loss. Others may find losing their job affects their sense of self, self-esteem and usefulness. The effect is that the person finds coping with day-to-day tasks and responsibilities increasingly difficult. Early childhood experience of damaging, destructive relationships may also affect adult relationships. Some people recreate familiar patterns of relationships while others can change early patterns of relationships. Individual responses will be different. There is no right or wrong way to respond to loss or life changes, providing your response will enable you to come to terms with things in the long run.

Responses that cause difficulty if continued over time include despair, suicidal feelings, dependence on drugs and alcohol, over-working, and over-eating.

Change and re-adjustment

All change involves loss. Each person and loss is unique. Consider the factors that might influence the intensity of the experience.

- > the strength of the attachment;
- > the stage in someone's life when it happened;
- > how unexpected the event was;
- > how prepared / unprepared the person was.

In some circumstances there are even benefits to some losses e.g. losing a job that caused you anxiety and stress may allow you to try something different when you have had time to re-adjust.

We experience many losses and changes in the course of our life and although it is emotionally painful, loss, grief and re-adjustment is part of life. With adequate support most people work through this process in time.

Mediation and Loss/Life Changes

Change is a challenge for all of us, but where the nature of the change is profound or far-reaching, responding constructively can be particularly challenging. For mediation to be successful, though, some change on the part of all participants is essential, and this can make the mediation process particularly challenging for people who have suffered loss.

Part of the mediator's job is to help identify and overcome barriers to change, so a sensitive private discussion with someone (usually in a preparatory or pre-mediation meeting) can be invaluable.

Loss and Life Changes: <https://tinyurl.com/2hvxzray>

Support: <https://tinyurl.com/bdcv9szy>

This is one in a series of briefing papers on Community Mediation for practising and trainee mediators.

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