

H.O.P.E.

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Helping Overcome and Provide Encouragement

MAKING THE CHOICE TO OVERCOME

The loss of someone we love plunges us into grieving that loss. And grief is a difficult and often discouraging journey. There are times when we feel as though we have fallen and just can't get up again. Yet, when those times come, we do have a choice and it is this: *Choose to rise up after falling down.* Here are two contrasting quotes to seriously consider.

Legendary football coach Paul "Bear" Bryant observed: "The first time you quit, it's hard. The second time, it gets easier. The third time you don't even have to think about it."

On the other hand, writer Minna Thomas Antrim makes this observation: "Three failures denote uncommon strength. A weakling has not enough grit to fail thrice."

After experiencing a failure or falling, ask yourself these kinds of questions:

- Do I want to be a quitter or a conqueror?
- Do I want to be defeated or victorious?
- Do I want to descend or ascend?
- Do I want to be a victim or a victor?
- Ultimately, do I want to be tragic or triumphant?

The way to be one who overcomes, to be one who is victorious, to be one who ascends and, ultimately, to be one who is triumphant lies in your power of choice. Choose to rise up after *every* falling down. Reflect on this wisdom from writer James Allen: *You will become as small as your controlling desire; as great as your dominant aspiration.*

Dear friends,

Author Sandy Boucher was diagnosed with cancer and required chemotherapy. One month after starting the treatment, she began writing a book. Each morning for three to four hours she sat at her desk and wrote. No matter how she felt, she went into her study and began where she had left off the day before.

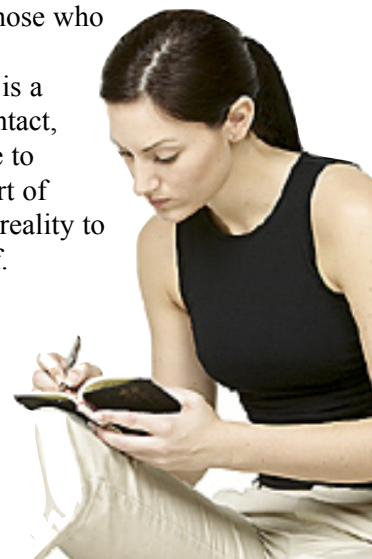
"The writing became a time of healing for me," she says. "Sitting at my desk, I was not a cancer patient, a sick person, a disempowered and gravely threatened person. I left that behind and entered the task fully; I became my action, and in this I was empowered."

Looking back on that time, Boucher says she learned an important lesson: "No matter how sick we may be, there is always a dimension of us that is intact and healthy. Whether through creative work, through sensitive contact with others, through spiritual practice, or through appreciation of music or art, we can at moments access that other reality."

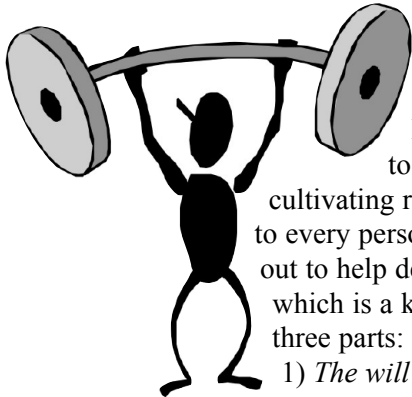
Her lesson is applicable to those who grieve. In spite of the pain, confusion, depression; there is a dimension of you which is intact, healthy, courageous and able to carry on. Today, find that part of yourself. Tap into that other reality to help you move through grief.

"Change and growth take place when a person has risked himself and dares to become involved with his own life," notes author Herbert Otto.

In spite of the pain, confusion, depression; there is a dimension of you which is intact, healthy, courageous and able to carry on.



GRIEF RECOVERY AND THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTIVATING RESILIENCE



Dealing with a death demands a great deal of us physically, emotionally and mentally. Bereavement is not an easy journey. One way to better manage a time of grief lies in cultivating resilience. Although it is something common to every person, resilience must be cultivated and brought out to help deal with life's challenging issues. Resilience, which is a key factor in grief recovery, is made up of three parts:

- 1) *The will to recover* from a loss or other setback and not get stuck in anger, regret or despair.
- 2) *The will to fight* for recovery even when facing a deeply difficult issue.
- 3) *The will to maintain mental, emotional and spiritual toughness.* That means making the commitment to overcoming no matter how great the loss.

Cultivating this resilience is always a matter of choice. One chooses not to succumb and give up in despair. One chooses to do whatever it takes (e.g. join a support group, read widely about grieving to gain greater knowledge, meet with a counselor, etc.) to better manage life. One chooses not to get bogged down in remorse, anger or frustration.

What you can do to help yourself through grief

- 1) **Eat properly.** Consume only nourishing meals. Avoid junk foods. If you can't eat three regular meals, try to eat smaller portions four or five times a day.
- 2) **Rest.** While some sleep disorder is common among grievers, try to develop regular bedtime routines. Go to bed at the same time and rise at the same time.
- 3) **Exercise.** This strengthens the body while simultaneously releasing stress.
- 4) **Join a support group.** Be with others who are on the same journey. You will learn from them and be inspired by them.
- 5) **Remain faithful to your spiritual tradition.** Continue attending religious services and stay in contact with your "spiritual family."
- 6) **Inform family and friends** as to what your emotional and physical needs are. When they know what you need, they will be better supporters.
- 7) **Share your feelings** with those whom you identify as good listeners and people who keep confidences.
- 8) **Pray or meditate.** Find time for silence. This will be emotionally and spiritually renewing.
- 9) **Look for a lecture or seminar** dealing with grief and recovery. The knowledge you gain will be empowering and encouraging for you.
- 10) **Develop new interests.** Perhaps you could return to school, take a personal enrichment class, begin a new hobby.
- 11) **Help someone else.** Doing so will take some of the focus off yourself and your pain.
- 12) **Identify small ways to be kind to yourself** such as a manicure, a new hair style, a massage, a weekend away.
- 13) **Be patient with yourself.** Don't expect too much, too soon.
- 14) **Seek professional guidance** if you feel depression is unending or if the loss is interfering with your relationships.



How long will my grief last?

That is a question most grievers ask. A good answer is offered by Mary White, whose adult son was murdered. In her book, *Harsh Grief, Gentle Hope*, she writes: "No one can predict or prescribe healing for another. Each healing is as unique as the person going through it. Each day is unpredictable. Each night brings the oblivion of troubled sleep, and each awakening brings renewed pain and sorrow."

"Body, mind and spirit - all are severely wounded through grief. All need healing. Each part of the human body and soul needs restoration and renewal. It takes time, a very long, painful time."

The fact is that mourning cannot be rushed. There is no "quick fix" for the pain of loss. Time, combined with grief work, is the key to recovery. Be patient with yourself and your grief. Do not rush yourself. Remind yourself that you are healing from a deep wound and that healing takes a longer time than we wish. Your hurting will cease eventually.