

## TEN STAGES OF HEALING

Change can often be a daunting process that leaves you feeling out of control. When you are in control, you tend to feel secure and comfortable. Change can destabilize your emotions, triggering feelings of insecurity and a greater loss of control. Change can create chaos, confusion, and even symptoms of depression, but in its presence in your life means that healing is taking place. There are ten stages involved in the process of healing. It/s a universal journey that comes with an easy- to-read map once you recognize the chaos in your life for what it really is. Each stage on the path to healing is necessary and normal.

### 10 Stages of Healing

1. Shock
2. Denial
3. Pain
4. Bargaining
5. Depression
6. Surrender
7. Recovery
8. Rebirth
9. Moving On
10. Philanthropy

A change in you circumstances, large or small, can trigger varying degrees of hurt, pain, loss, grief or deep unhappiness. You can then expect the healing process to follow. A sense of loss, hurt, grief and the healing process can be activated by a conscious decision to let go, forgive or surrender to the reality of losing your job, moving into menopause, getting divorced or losing a relationship, or losing the closeness of a family member, or experiencing betrayal, relocation or death of a loved one. It is also especially important to note that if you have been intensely active in your spiritual growth, or been

involved in those pursuits for many years, grief can also be felt as an existential loss due to an ego or identity crisis. Mystics have referred to this as the “Dark Night of the Soul”. In fact, any form of shock denial, pain, bargaining, depression or surrender may trigger the healing process or will indicate that you are in the midst of a healing crisis. Moreover, any major archetypal event that is physical, emotional, mental or spiritual, which brings about a marked change in your life, be it positive or negative, will trigger varying degrees of grief and its need for healing, as the old identity makes way for the new.

The ten stages of healing can be felt on many levels of your being: Physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. Since everyone is different and so are their coping mechanisms, these stages may not necessarily occur in the sequence outlined below. Some may skip a stage and then return to it later. Regardless of the order, the entire healing process may last for days, months or even years. An important point to note is that you do not need to go through this on your own. It is prudent that you seek professional help from those qualified in the area of counseling or spiritual mentoring or both and if this is not possible, the wise counsel of a supportive friend or understanding relative is recommended.

### **Shock**

This stage occurs first if there has been a sudden crisis, trauma or uncontrollable loss, such as the death of a loved one, news of a terminal illness, a betrayal or breakdown in relationship, or the loss of financial security. Your ability to function as normal may be affected or reduced, your energy levels may drop and emotional numbness, disbelief or the inability to mentally comprehend the situation may be experienced. This is followed closely by denial.

### **Denial**

Not knowing what is happening or what the outcome may be causes people to deny their situation or deny their loss. Life seems unreal and leaves you with a sense of this can't be happening. Human beings tend to assume that bad things don't happen to good people, so denial maintains a pretense that nothing has changed and everything is still okay. Denial is usually brief, but it does give you the opportunity to prepare yourself for the next stage. Denial is a natural part of the healing process. It gives you the time you need to fully

comprehend what's happening to you. It's a safety mechanism designed to stop you from losing control and feeling as though you are going crazy. Once you're ready to face the situation, you will be able to move on from this stage.

## **Pain**

Once you've worked through denial and come to terms with what has happened, you will move on to the next stage of healing which encompasses emotional pain in the form of anger, frustration, resentment and even envy. Why did it have to happen? What did I do to deserve this? Why me? These are questions you find yourself asking out of desperation. You might be angry and even outraged at not being able to change the inevitable or you could be frustrated because you are not in control. Resentment and envy are also common emotions because what you are going through may be perceived as unjust or unfair, which can also lead to thoughts of revenge. This anger is usually randomly displaced in all directions and projected onto any area of life, other people or things around you. When you are going through this stage, those around you will not be good enough, they will be to blame or at fault, or doing everything wrong according to you. (1) These emotions will be felt in varying degrees according to your personality type and how much anger, frustration or resentment you allow yourself to release. It's important to release these negative emotions in a physical manner through art therapy or creative pursuits, sports, exercise, massage or under the guidance of someone qualified to do so, in order to avoid a build-up of stress in your body. Chakra Self-Healing is also a way to support yourself when you are in this type of pain. Emotional and mental stress that has accumulated over time can cause muscle tension, spasms and physical pain. This can also lead to a noticeable decrease in your health and wellbeing. Every person is different but everybody does experience some degree of anger when going through a time of loss, grief, bereavement or change.

## **Bargaining**

Most often due to feelings of guilt, bargaining will follow the pain of anger. Eventually you realize that anger is not making things better, so you try bargaining instead. You give up something, make a sacrifice, or dedicate your life to service hoping that things will right themselves. You might find yourself thinking: 'If I did this or that then

this might not have happened' or 'I should have done so and so,' or 'if I do this then it might make it better'. You may have regrets about what you did or did not do in the past. It's important not to punish yourself, but to realize that this is yet another stage on your healing journey. Bargaining is what you are meant to do. It's a subconscious way of trying to balance the scales. Every stage of the healing process has its place on the road to recovery and that includes the recovering of your true self, soul and spirit.

### Depression

When denial, pain and bargaining do not work, you may find yourself in a period of depression. You begin to feel that you can't do this anymore, or you can't go on anymore. Your spirit is low, so your physical, emotional and mental energy is often under par too. You often lose hope of ever getting your life back to normal again. You might feel sad but will not want to express it. You go into a dark and gloomy state where you don't want to interact with others. Feelings are suppressed and this stops your energy from flowing. This then blocks up your energy field, causing a sense of hopelessness or despair, accompanied by a lack of motivation or enthusiasm. You may feel lifeless and unhappy. This is why depression will sometimes indicate that you are actually in this fifth stage of the healing process, or that you are possibly in the midst of a spiritual crisis that is typical of the Dark Night of the Soul. You will need to take good care of yourself to stay healthy at this time.

### Surrender

In such an unhappy state, you eventually surrender yourself to the reality of the situation. You've reached your limit and had enough, so eventually you say, 'I give up'. If forgiveness is in order, then you may be ready to do that by now. Another way to help understand the concept of surrender is to use the word 'resignation'. Resigning yourself to the situation as it is here and now helps you to move on to the next stage of acceptance. It means letting go of perfectionism and entering into wholeness of being, where you learn to accept the good, the bad and the ugly in your life. Does surrender mean losing control, or is it about taking control by agreeing to go with surrender as the best option available right now? If there is a better option available, perhaps you should take it, but if you have tried everything and no other choice is left, then resigning yourself to the situation will be

your only option. To help you surrender practices letting go of the smaller things in your life, so that when it comes to the larger or more complex things, your ability to let go and surrender will be relatively familiar to you. When you realize that you cannot change the situation or your perspective on it, then the way to surrender is to stop resisting the situation and accept the reality of it as it is now. Your resistance creates enormous stress, so surrendering will release it and pave the way for you to experience a sense of relief. Once you have done all there is to do that is humanly possible on your part, you have to stop and let go of the things you can't have, and appreciate what you do have by turning your attention to all the good things in your life.

### Recovery

Surrender opens the door to acceptance and recovery. When you accept your situation, it means you've come to terms with what has happened and you're ready to take responsibility for your life and how you feel once again. You reach the point where you are able to express your previous feelings of anger, frustration or hopelessness. You are getting to know yourself all over again, and you are beginning to like what you see. You may find you still want to be left alone to do this as you prepare yourself for rebirth.

### Rebirth

Once you've reached acceptance, you know you are in recovery, where you will naturally move on to the stage of rebirth. You are getting ready to change your life so that you can start again. You've come a long, long way and you're doing well, but you will need even more quiet time to yourself at this stage. You might feel the need to go on a retreat to get to know yourself again. This helps you to move on and create a new beginning for yourself.

### Moving On

You will have changed many areas of your life in order to reach this point. You may have scrutinized your career, friendships, relationships, money, health and more in order to do some major clearing out of what is no longer useful. As you come out of your time of loss, change or bereavement, and after grieving for what you have had to leave behind, you may find that you've attracted new friends and relationships into your life and may even take on a new job or

move to a new location. You can be quietly pleased with your efforts. You are moving on to create a new life.

### **Philanthropy**

For some, one of the final stages of healing may include a desire to be of active service to others during their healing process. After experiencing your own healing, you may find yourself called to support, inspire and empower others through their healing journey, in a professionally paid capacity, or in a less formal helping manner. Your own experience of healing and recovery can often be a valuable source of wisdom, insight and guidance for others during their times of change and loss.

You will always regain a degree of control and reassurance when you know what is happening to you. This is possible when you are aware of the stages in the healing process. That way, instead of remaining stuck, or left without passion, joy or enthusiasm long after experiencing loss or change, you realize there is a good life waiting for you beyond your current difficulties. Each stage is a normal, natural step towards healing. Attempting to deny your body, soul and spirit's natural urge to heal will simply slow down, or worse, pause, stop and even reverse your healing process. The hard truth is that unless you allow yourself to heal, by giving yourself permission to do so, you may grow resentful and bitter instead of getting better.

Once you have identified the symptom experienced when coping with your loss, then you can learn to deal with change, grief for bereavement in a more conscious and pro-active way. You now have a map after being lost in the desert for so long. You can find your way back home, but you are different. Your difficult experiences and the subsequent strengths and resources you've developed have transformed you.

**Gail Goodwin A question of Balance-Colour, Energy and Healing with Chakras' pgs 173-17**