

Seven Lessons of Loss  
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When Justin's father died, a good friend gave Justin a journal, believing it might be helpful for him to write out his thoughts. "For nearly two years I wrote about my dad about the close relationship we had and about the wonderful father he was to me."

One of the lessons Justin learned from his loss concerned the healing power of friendship. While we are grieving, it is difficult to recognize the lessons that are present in every painful life experience. Only after we have gained some space from the event can we see and appreciate the profound teachings that the encounter with grief provided to us. Here are seven lessons of loss. Knowing that such lessons emerge from loss can give you greater strength, deeper resolve and abundant hope when dealing with future struggles.

1. We re-evaluate our priorities. A devastating loss creates a realignment of our priorities. The pain forces us to look closely at our lives and causes us to make healthy changes and adjustments. Heightened is the ability to separate the significant from the insignificant.
2. We develop stronger beliefs. "It is virtually impossible to experience the death of a significant person in our lives without stirring up spiritual struggles. These struggles might involve not only our beliefs about the afterlife but also our beliefs about life in the present." Says social worker and bereavement counselor, Kathlyn S. Baldwin. Loss presents the challenge of defining and refining what we believe, how we should live in the present and what attitudes to adopt for facing the future. Those who feel the pain of loss and retain hopeful beliefs for the future are the ones who make a healthy grief adjustment.
3. We discover the kindness of others. When there is a loss, comforters emerge. Sensitive women and men find creative ways to ease the pain and soften the blow.
4. We ask the better questions. Those who experience a successful grief recovery are the ones who ask better questions. Rather than focus on "why" questions, they quickly move on to "how," "what" and "where" questions. Rather than continually asking "Why did this happen?" or "Why me?" they ask questions that will propel them forward, such as: "How do I rebuild my life?" "What do I do with what is left?" and "Where do I turn for help and guidance?"
5. We become more grateful. Often, our gratitude level rises when loss enters our life.
6. We become a light for others.
7. We learn to love again. The death of a loved one leaves us feeling vulnerable. The temptation to resist living again becomes great because we do not want to be wounded by another loss. Yet, we learn to trust and love again. As a result, the boundaries of the heart are expended.

