

## **Loss and Change – Transforming the Emotional States**

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At a time of challenge and change, we all experience loss. Understanding the phases of change that we go through helps us cope with the losses.

The four phases are Recognising Loss, trying to Prevent the Loss, Recovering the Loss and Letting Go of the Loss. At each phase, we experience emotions – which are actually the stepping stones to growth in the longer term. We transit the phases of loss frequently in our lives – because every new success starts with loss, as well as the negative events of life.

The emotions are

- Recognising Loss – Shock and Denial
- Preventing Loss – Anger and Guilt
- Recovering Loss – Bargaining and Depression
- Letting Go of Loss – Acceptance

As we transit these, our brains keep asking questions to understand what is happening, questions such as ‘What If?’ and ‘If Only?’

Each of these phases has a meaning (M) and a useful purpose (P):

- Shock – M I doubt my resources, I don't know how to cope; P Stop what you are doing for now, find a safe place to review your resources
- Denial – M I can carry on regardless, if I ignore this it will go away; P Shelve it for now, so I can keep going for what is important right now
- Anger – M I want to prevent the loss of something important to me; P Creative energy to makes changes in the world and self
- Guilt – M I need to question if something I did caused it; P Learning what else I could do that might prevent it happening again
- Bargaining – M I must try to do something to get back what has been lost; P The energy to take risk to deal with the situation in new ways
- Depression – M I seem empty and powerless; P Seeing my limits might let me stop trying for the impossible
- Acceptance – M Recognise that I am powerless over that particular loss, but there are other areas of life which I discover where I am creative and valued; P I can rejoin the human race more maturely using energy to explore life

Dealing with shock is important – to resolve it, we need to find a safe place. Our safe places are either a physical place or a frame of mind. You may wish to think where each of your safe places are.

Calming ourselves with the breath can be very useful. Feet flat on the floor, spine comfortable, and allow yourself to take three slow, regular, rhythmic, abdominal breaths (using your diaphragm) – slow deep breathing calms our animal nervous system down, moving us from fight and flight (adrenaline, and fear based) to rest, digest and repair – the parasympathetic nervous state. Touching thumb to little finger as we breathe in and out can help us slow and deepen the breath.

The What Ifs and If Onlys go round our minds – What if we'd lived in ..., If only we'd moved to..., what if I'd (stopped smoking, eaten more fruit, eaten less sugar), if only the doctors had.., what if the nurses... if only the government..... At a time of high emotion, these thoughts have feelings attached, and can circle around, cycle, pester, fester and turn to poison – which we either hold in as guilt or cast out as blame – neither of which are fair. So if you ever meet the what ifs or the if onlys – please ask them to leave

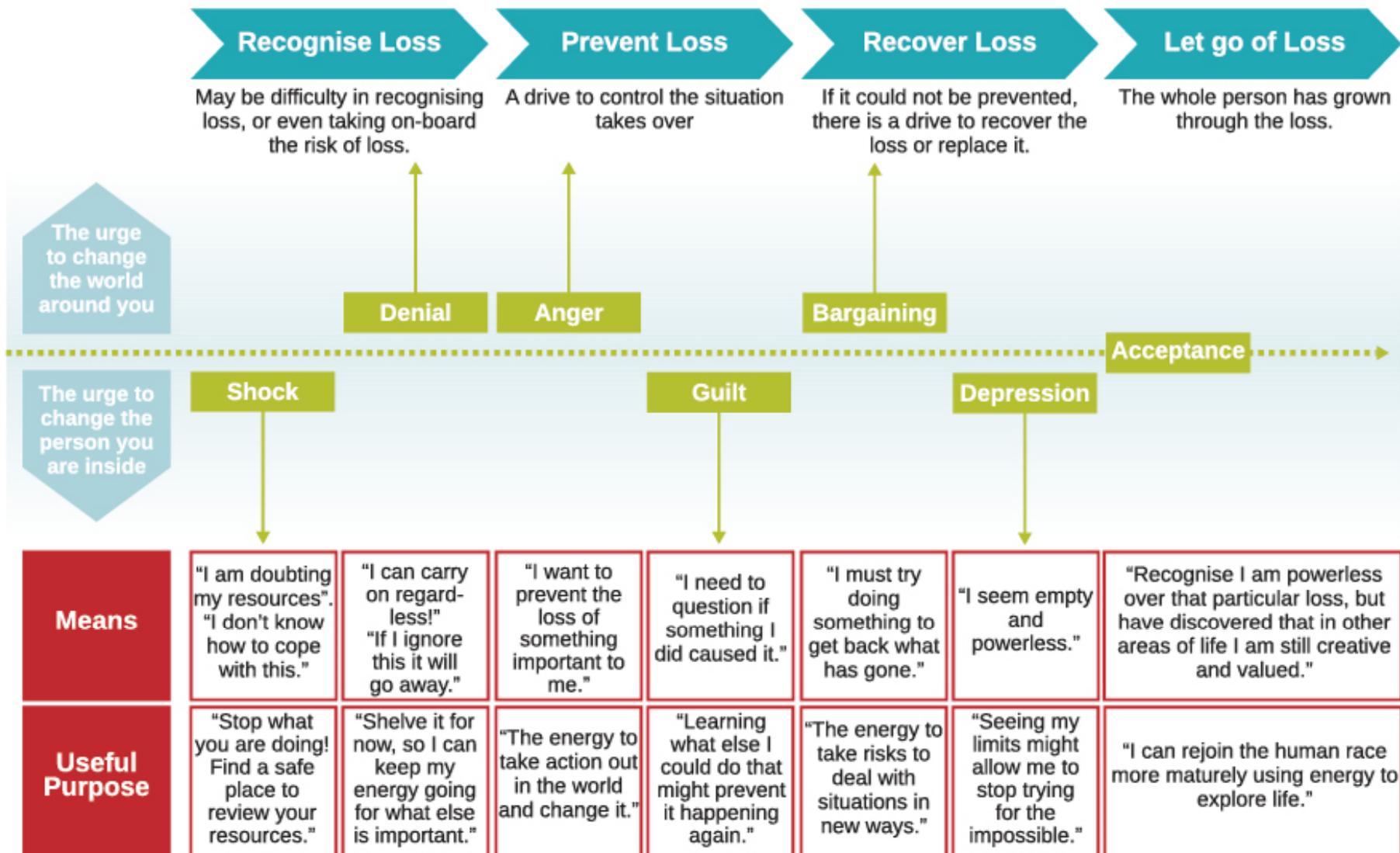
When we understand the phases of change and loss, we can observe ourselves and know where we are. For a full explanation of the Turning Points, please see Health and Self Care, free download from [www.healthandself.care](http://www.healthandself.care), pp115-125 for Dr Trevor Griffiths' excellent explanation of the issues. [www.emotionallogiccentre.org.uk](http://www.emotionallogiccentre.org.uk) has further information

Anything that supports us can help, from talking to a calm friend, to time in nature, to exercise and any hobby or pastime that we find helpful, to faith and any practice that honours our spirituality and connects us to something bigger than ourselves. Mindfulness and other practices can be very useful. Time in nature and connection to the natural world around us help us calm and feel better.

So, times of change are upon us. The most powerful thing we can do is to maintain Inner Calm and balance, and to learn the tools to achieve this. When we are calm within, and free from fear, our health improves, the immune system will work better, and we are more effective in whatever we do.

Keep Calm and Stay Grounded – and sooner or later the silver lining and wisdom will appear. All things move to change. Life *will* return to normal, albeit a new normal.

## Turning Points as you Adjust to Change



**Growth cycle - repeatedly revisiting Bargaining and Acceptance**

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