

Haven Herald



Secondary Losses

by Kathleen Sebek

The loss of a loved one is a shattering experience in and of itself. For many of us, however, it may feel as if we will never find a “new normal.” There are always many changes in our lives after a death. Who are we now? What are our roles? Our futures may look completely different than what we had expected. We are experiencing secondary losses.

Secondary losses are all the losses we experience as a result of the first loss, death. Secondary losses can be emotional and concrete. For example, relationships are forever changed. Loss almost always brings a change in role status. You may find that you are no longer a caregiver, a parent, a spouse, a sibling, or a child. Your plans, hopes and dreams have been changed or abandoned. Traditions and milestones are altered. You may experience a loss of your previous faith beliefs. Secondary losses are also concrete. There may be financial losses, loss of property. You may have to play the roles of the deceased; i.e., become the cook, do the taxes, maintain the home, be both mother and father to children, etc. There may also be the sense of having a loss of security - both on a practical and emotional basis. In “Secondary Loss: Different Types of Losses and How to Cope,” Jenny Goldade reminds us that every relationship is unique and has its own losses that come with it when someone dies.

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Letter from the Executive Director

Summer is a season that asks us to take a break from our routine, to relax a bit and take time for less structured days. We may not go easily into this more laid-back state of mind, but it can be good for us if we embrace it. Haven slows down in summer as many of our volunteers take vacations and enjoy get-togethers with family and friends. We do offer a summer workshop, “Journey through Grief,” and take time for evaluating and planning our programs.

Summer can be a melancholy time for those suffering a loss. Memories and traditions can be altered by the death of a loved one and what was so familiar and comfortable will never be the same. This issue of the newsletter focuses on the complicated reality of secondary losses. When a loved one dies, the loss is often far more encompassing than we may initially realize.

We lose things we counted on from our past and looked forward to in our future. Secondary losses can put us in an unfamiliar place with a different purpose. We must adapt once again to a new reality and all the many challenges that can bring.

Jill Bellacicco





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What helps? The Wendt Center for Loss and Healing suggests the following: Acknowledge the losses you are experiencing; deal with them as they come up; let others know how you are feeling; allow yourself to express whatever emotions come up for you and recognize that it is okay to grieve losses other than death; remember the things that have stayed the same; find your own way to honor your loved ones during milestones; and, as always, be gentle with yourself and allow yourself the time you need to fully grieve all of the losses you are experiencing.

What Worked For Me

by Mary Smith



I am one of twenty-two grandchildren on my mother's side. All these grandchildren, except my four siblings and me, grew up in Lancaster, PA on the same country road as my grandparents. My father preferred large cities, so our family, who moved around as my father pursued his medical training, lived in Baltimore, Cincinnati, Boston, New York, Atlanta, and Washington. But every summer, we would travel to Lancaster, by train or by car, where we would stay in the home my grandparents built in 1920, when my mother was three years old.

The home and the surrounding land were a paradise for a child. There were fields, an apple orchard, a creek, a stable, and a rose and vegetable gardens to explore. And not only did I get to explore all this, I got to do it with my cousins! Although my female cousins closest to my age became my best friends, I knew and enjoyed all of my cousins. We shared many dinners (made by a Mennonite cook!) at my grandparents' dining room table and sat together in the living room, where my grandfather enthralled us with stories of family history and lore.

But after my grandparents died and their home and land were sold, my family no longer spent summers in Lancaster and I didn't see my cousins. Not only did I mourn my grandparents, I missed my cousins. It was a sad and harsh jolt to my teenage heart to realize that our summers in that idyllic spot with my large extended family were gone for good.

However, the family bonds created by my grandparents have been strong, and today I see my cousins on a regular basis, not all at once, as when my grandparents were alive, but individually or in small groups; not always in Lancaster, but in cities over the country. And what do we always talk about when we are together? Our wonderful grandparents and how much they and the home they built meant to us. We have them to thank for precious memories and many family friendships.

**It is the image in the mind
that links us to our lost treasures;
but it is the loss that shapes the image,
gathers the flowers, weaves the garland.**

"My Mother's House" by Colette | Review of the Memoir



Recognizing and Grieving Secondary Losses

by Jill LaMorie

"Have you ever thrown a pebble in a still pond and watched its impact? As it settles to the bottom, waves expand outward from the point of entry, disturbing the water in ever growing rings of motion. The one event of a pebble falling in the water affects all that is around it with multiple, vast, extending ripples. Death has that ripple effect as well, setting off a disturbance that moves across time and space.

"The death of someone we care about is a primary event in our lives, the pebble in our pond. But the experience of loss doesn't end with the funeral. Instead, the death sets in motion subsequent losses, called secondary losses, that occur as a result of the primary loss, creating a sense that we are losing everything, and that the pain will go on forever.

"Family and friends also need to recognize secondary losses and the associated grief they bring. In wanting to see their loved ones happy and 'getting on with life,' they can unwittingly deny or disenfranchise real feelings of grief. Awareness, patience, and understanding can allow us to move through our grief.

"The following are some of the losses we may experience after the death of a loved one, friend, or family member. Individuals will not necessarily experience all the losses mentioned here and may experience additional losses not mentioned in this article:

- Loss of family structure
- Loss of a primary relationship
- Loss of familiar way of relating to family and friends
- Loss of chosen lifestyle
- Loss of identity
- Loss of large chunk of self
- Loss of self-confidence
- Loss of trust

"It takes time and patience to heal ... nothing can replace the grieving process. The grief process helps us survive all kinds of losses and challenges, so that we can make the necessary adjustments to new circumstances. Awareness of the many secondary losses that can accompany a death can help the grieving person and those around him or her to be more patient as they learn to navigate their way through a new world, charting a new course as they embark on their pioneer journey to their future life."



Excerpts from *Recognizing and Grieving Secondary Losses*
<https://www.taps.org/articles/19-1/secondaryloss>



HOW HAVEN IS FUNDED

Haven is classified by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. It is funded mainly by donations from individuals in the community who wish to support our work and by those who donate in memory of a loved one. Donations are tax deductible. If you are interested in making a donation, please contact Haven at (703) 941-7000 or at havenofnova@verizon.net

Haven of Northern Virginia, Inc.

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Summer Schedule

Summer Workshop
“Journey through Grief”

Saturday, July 28, 2018

2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Call or email Haven to register for the groups.

Drop-in Suicide Loss Support Group
1st and 3rd Saturdays of each month
11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Haven also offers individual support by phone and in person; please call to schedule an appointment. For immediate support without an appointment, a volunteer is available on a walk-in basis Monday through Friday between 10:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.

Contact Information

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Hours of Operation

Monday through Friday
9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
www.havenofnova.org

Messages may be left on our voicemail after hours