

The background is a watercolor-style illustration. It features a light blue background with a large, irregular splash of green and yellow-green paint. The green is a vibrant, medium-toned color, while the yellow-green is a lighter, more muted shade. The edges of the paint are soft and blended, creating a textured, artistic effect. The word "Resilience" is centered over the green area.

Resilience

Four Steps to Healing After Heartbreak

Van Moody

Have you recently been through a great disappointment, suffered a major setback, faced a daunting situation, or endured a loss or a tragedy?

Then you know each of these things poses challenges—some big, some not-so-big, but all significant. In every one of these situations, people have a choice to make. They can choose to let their hard times get the best of them, or they can deal with their circumstances in such a way that they eventually grow from them and bounce back. This is called resilience.

Resilience is a quality that can make or break you in life. Merriam-Webster's online dictionary says resilience is "the ability to become strong, healthy, or successful again after something bad happens" (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/resilience>). Interestingly, when I looked up the word, it was in the top one percent of lookups on the Merriam-Webster website. That tells me a lot of people are interested in becoming resilient. When people are resilient, they can endure difficulty or tragedy and emerge stronger than ever. But when they lack resilience, their problems overwhelm and defeat them. I believe you want to bounce back from whatever situation in life has sidelined you—and I believe God wants to lead you into brighter days ahead.

I want to share four steps to becoming a resilient person and being able to bounce back after something bad happens. The first is to allow yourself to grieve. The second is to allow yourself to heal. The third is to allow yourself to dream again. And the fourth is to re-engage in life. In other words, get busy pursuing those new hopes and dreams and doing things that will help you move forward. In this article, I will address each step, and I pray that you will find hope and encouragement as you begin to heal from the heartbreak in your life.

1
Accept

2
Adjust

3
Aspire

4
Act

4 Accept *Allow yourself to grieve*

Psalm 62:8 says, “Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us” (NKJV). This verse encourages us to tell God exactly how we feel, holding nothing back. During times of grief, emotions can come in torrents. The best thing we can do is refuse to suppress our emotions, but express them in the presence of God. He is a safe place, and He can be trusted with your deepest feelings.

As we begin to look at ways to become resilient, I want to focus on the importance of fully engaging in the process of grief after you encounter heartbreak. Without a proper grief process, people can get stuck in their tragedies and are never able to move beyond them into the better things that lie ahead. But when grieving takes place in a healthy way, people can get past their pain and go on to be happy again. They will not get their old life back, but in many cases God restores them in such a way that they can live with gratitude for their pasts while also enjoying the present and looking forward to the future.

Perhaps the best-known model of the grieving process is the one developed by Swiss psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross. While I don’t agree with everything Kübler-Ross taught or believed in, this model does summarize five emotions most people go through as they process loss. They are: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, which I prefer to refer to as “deep sadness,” and ultimately, acceptance. I mention this grief model to point out the fact that negative emotions such as anger and profound sadness are normal parts of the grieving process. When people feel angry or deeply saddened, and their faith or their culture tells them these emotions are wrong, they may circumvent the process of grieving and deny themselves the chance to deal with these feelings in healthy ways.

If you have suffered a tremendous loss in some way, let me urge you not to rush the grieving process, but to allow it to thoroughly run its course in your life. Getting through it may not be easy and it may take a while, but it’s the first step toward eventually being able to move on with your life in a positive way.

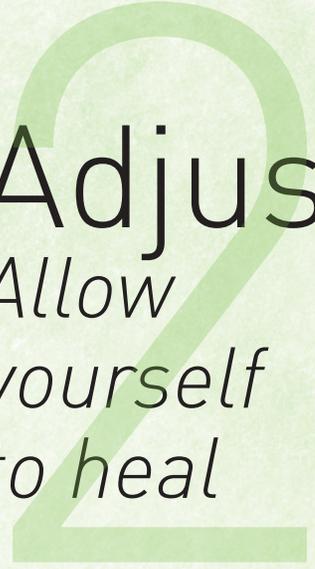
Psalm 147:3 makes a beautiful and powerful statement about God. It says, “He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds” (NIV). If your heart has been broken or you have been wounded in any way, I pray you will experience God’s healing power first-hand, in a deeply personal way.

Sometimes, emotional pain is so severe that it paralyzes people. They can’t step back from it long enough to realize that they can, and should, begin to heal. The pain becomes comfortable because it’s familiar, while at the same time it’s also uncomfortable and hard to bear. They hate it, but they also struggle to let go of it because it binds them in a way to their lost loved one, their lost resources, or their lost abilities.

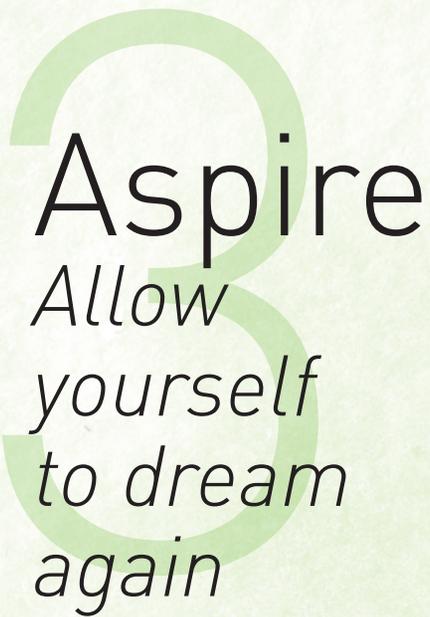
Especially within the context of a relationship with God and a community of faith, opportunities for healing abound. But they do not force themselves on us; we have to choose to accept and embrace them. For example, every believer has access to the Word of God and the presence of God. In times of trouble, we can run to these spiritual resources and take advantage of the comfort and help they offer. Or, we can refuse to open our Bibles or to pray and to worship, but when we do that, we deny ourselves an experience with the healing power of God and the transformative words of Scripture. Part of allowing ourselves to heal is encouraging ourselves to stay connected to the Lord.

In addition to God’s Word and His presence, another tremendous healing resource He offers us is His family, the Body of Christ. I understand that there are times people want to be alone, but I also know that there are times people need to be with compassionate, supportive believers.

If you have suffered a great loss in your life, let me encourage you to make healing choices. I know it takes courage, but I pray you will avail yourself of every chance you have to heal and that you will allow God to do a powerful healing work in your life.



Adjust
Allow
yourself
to heal



Aspire

Allow

yourself

to dream

again

Jeremiah 29:11 says, “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (NIV). This is as true for you as it was for Jeremiah’s original audience centuries ago. I pray that no matter how things appear in your life right now, you will choose to believe that God has good plans for your future. I pray this confidence will give you the desire and ability to dream again.

Sometimes people are reluctant to dream again when they have lost something that represented a great dream in the past, or when they have lost a person with whom they shared their dreams. They may fear something bad will happen if they allow themselves to open their hearts to a new dream, or they may feel they are somehow betraying the memory of the person who was so instrumental in the dreams they once had.

It’s important to understand that one of the most redemptive aspects of suffering is that something beautiful and powerful can come from it. People who experience significant losses often change their values, priorities, and perspectives on life as a result of what they have suffered. Many times, they find themselves wanting to help others or impact the world in ways only they are equipped to do because of what they have endured. For example, sometimes, young people who lose a loved one to cancer become passionate research scientists, dedicating their lives to finding a cure. Or people who lose a teenage child to drug abuse become champions for drug education in high schools. Or those who are impacted by sexual assault work to strengthen laws against offenders. There are lots of good things happening in the world today because people who once endured great pain allowed themselves to dream again.

Let me encourage you today not to feel guilty about dreaming again. When the seeds of dreams begin to take root in your heart, pay attention to them and nurture them. Whether you dream of doing something to benefit humanity, help others afflicted by a loss similar to yours, or take a vacation to restore your soul and enjoy the beauty of this world, let yourself do it. Allowing yourself to dream again is a giant step toward re-establishing a positive, productive life.

Psalm 27:13 says, “I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living” (NIV). This tells us that as long as we are here on earth, God wants to show us His goodness. No matter what you’ve been through, I pray you will be confident today that you will see and experience God’s goodness in your life in the days to come.

Allow yourself to re-engage with life and get busy doing things you enjoy. I said in step 2 that in the wake of a major loss or difficulty, people sometimes feel paralyzed. It’s as though if they are afraid in some way that if they move beyond their problem, they will lose even more than they’ve already lost. Think about it: How many times have you heard of a widow or widower who refused to clean out the closet, and left the deceased spouse’s clothes hanging just as they were when he or she died? It is as if having the clothes in the closet makes the living spouse feel at some level that the person is still there. But what’s really happening is that every time the remaining spouse picks out something to wear, not only is that living person reminded of the spouse’s life, he or she is also reminded afresh of the fact that the spouse is dead. If the one who remains could simply clean out the closet, the clothes might be used to help the needy and he or she would have space for some new things!

I’m not advocating cleaning out a closet as much as I am encouraging those who want to bounce back to begin to do something—anything—that helps them move forward. That may include, at the appropriate time, disposing of certain possessions that belonged to someone now deceased, but it may also mean something like volunteering at church or in the community, traveling, learning a new skill, developing a new hobby, or finding ways to help people in need.

I understand that grief is a process and it takes time. I believe it’s a mistake to get too busy too soon, because that often circumvents the necessary process of proper grieving. But when the time is right, you’ll know you are well on your way to bouncing back and to enjoying all the promise the future holds when you allow yourself to re-engage with life.



Act
Allow
yourself
to re-engage
in life

