

Hello, Friends,

The April meeting had another great turnout. We welcomed a new member, Gillian, and we were happy to see Linda G. back from her rehabilitation and on the mend. Thanks to Linda D. for seeing her through that and for getting her home ready for her return. Helping each other is what this group is about.

We discussed the subject of secondary loss—the loss of lifestyle, things and attitudes that come from the loss of a loved one. It's important to recognize that the loss of your husband or wife has a ripple effect on your life and will require some adjustments as you move forward. The most common secondary loss is that of income. Many are having to make adjustments for a much smaller income, and this impacts your lifestyle. Another secondary loss is that of friendships and social groups. Some of us find that as a now-single person, we aren't being included as much in events that we used to attend as a couple. This can compound the feeling of loss that already exists, leading to sadness and depression. It's important to identify and recognize these secondary losses and try to find a way to deal with them. For some, one way to do this is to focus on what **we** like to do. Now is a time to explore what we might need to help us navigate through the grief process and develop a healthy being on the way. This doesn't mean forgetting our lives with our spouses, it just means we have may have to make a new roadmap to go forward. Otherwise, we get stuck in our grief and self-pity, which is not healthy and not helpful to others. And most likely, not what our loved ones would want for us.

We had a lengthy discussion about the vendor list and several new suggestions were made. I have attached an updated list. It's important to let me know if you have a bad experience with any of the vendors on the list. We are recommending these to each other, and we don't want to pass along any bad apples. If you have someone you'd like to add, let me know and I'll update the list periodically. Please let me know if you've personally used the vendors you are recommending. We now have a section for suggested vendors that haven't been used by Suddenly One members yet. And yes, I know the print is small. I'm working on a different format for this list.

**The next lunch is scheduled for April 28 at 11:30 at Lakis Greek Restaurant in Colours Plaza 3405 SW College Rd.** If you haven't already signed up, please let me know as soon as you can so I can give the restaurant an accurate count. Likewise, if your plans change, let me know so I can take your name off the list.

**The next meeting will be held in Sholom Park on May 12 at 10:30.** Please go directly there and meet at the pavilion at the end of the parking lot. If you need a ride, please contact another Suddenly One member or call Kathylee or me. We'll make arrangements to get you there. We will go from there to **lunch at the Stone Creek Grille about noon.** Please let me know if you plan to go to lunch so I can give the restaurant an accurate count.

The roster is attached. Let me know if you find any errors.

I leave you with this: a tribute to the people of Ukraine, done by Ingrid on a recent cruise. It speaks for itself.



Shelley

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# Secondary Loss

Excerpts from joincake.com blog  
by Dr. Alejandra Vasquez, JD, CT, certified Grief Counselor

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The death of someone you love often results in other losses that are rarely seen or felt until much later in the grieving process. It may be difficult at first to recognize the voids your loved one left behind. You're often deeply enveloped in grief and sorrow and may fail to recognize that there will be many more changes to come as you learn to maneuver your new existence without your loved one. These secondary losses vary and are often overlooked when you grieve the initial loss. Here's what you may need to know.

## What is Secondary Loss?

Secondary loss amounts to all the **smaller losses that result from the death of your loved one or another traumatic event you've suffered**. These secondary losses require coping and adjustment to the unanticipated changes in your life created by the primary loss. You may not immediately register these losses — they often don't show up until much later. As a result, they slowly begin to impact your life in unexpected ways.

There will almost always be secondary losses closely related to the first, such as a loss of companionship, loss of income and financial security, loss of your travel companion, and loss of your identity as it relates to your deceased loved one. These losses are most often experienced when you're getting back into your normal routine. You may notice that now you're eating out alone, receiving mail in your name alone, and maintaining the house all by yourself. These smaller losses accumulate into a different type of pain as you go through the stages of grief. You begin to mourn the loss of the role you played in each other's lives.

## What's the difference between primary and secondary loss?

A primary loss is what you suffer when someone important to you dies. A secondary loss is an accumulation of all the unexpected ways you suffer as a result of this death. For example, after losing a spouse, you start to experience a difference in the way people respond to you. You're no longer someone's husband or wife — you've lost that role.

## How Secondary Loss Works

Secondary loss works in ways that might blindside you unless you are hyper-aware and learn to anticipate them. When one major life-changing event takes place, there's a series of mini-events that take place that have a strong impact on your daily life. They may not be apparent at first, but you'll start to notice them as you ease back into your normal routine. Here are some grief stages you might go through when learning to navigate your new reality.

**1. Acceptance.** The first step in healing your grief is taking account of and accepting all the losses you've suffered. This includes every loss beginning with the primary loss up to the secondary losses you may now be experiencing. Acceptance is ordinarily the last step in the stages of grief model. However, in working through loss, it becomes the first step in the healing process.

**2. Loss resolution (grieving).** You must first accept that the loss is real and that the accompanying pain and suffering is a result of it. The grieving process for secondary loss is not the same as when you work through your initial grief. Unfortunately, almost every grief therapy model ignores the seriousness of secondary losses and makes no account for them in the stages of grief.

**3. Initial shock, disbelief and denial.** The initial shock is almost always followed by a strong sense of denial that your loved one is actually gone and that you'll never see him or her again during your lifetime. Grief Expert J. William Worden introduced the Four Tasks of Mourning in his book *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy*. They include:

- Accepting the reality of the loss
- Experiencing the pain of the loss
- Adjusting to a new life
- Reinvestment in the new reality

**4. Intermediate period of acute discomfort.** If you were part of a couple, many people won't know how to act. They may be confused as to whether they should include you in their couple's dinners or couple's nights out. It will take some time for others to adjust.

**5. Restitution and reorganization.** This final phase includes the acceptance of your loss and the reorganization of your new life without your loved one. You can put closure behind you once you've had adequate time and opportunity to grieve a loved one's death. Grief rituals related to secondary losses might include continuing with holiday traditions as before or finding closure through shared grief with others who may be experiencing similar setbacks in their grief journey.

### **How to Cope With Secondary Loss**

Everyone deals with loss in their own way. Getting through the compound losses that result from a significant traumatic event will take patience, self-realization, and understanding. Coming to terms with your losses is possible, although it may take time to make sense of it all.

**Give yourself time.** Allowing yourself significant time to heal is an essential factor in coping with secondary loss. Losses that compound one on top of another make healing more challenging. You'll need time to process every loss on its own before realizing complete healing from your grief.

**Build a strong support system.** Creating robust support systems within your community can help to ease some of the feelings of loss and the accompanying sadness. Although these new connections won't replace what you once had, they'll help you feel a sense of security in your new environment. Having someone to call on for help when needed is like adding a layer of protection to your wounded soul. Support communities become an extension of your friends and family after some time.

**Go out there and find yourself.** Losing your identity as it relates to your spouse can be heart-wrenching. You'll likely feel lost and without any direction or motivation to go on for quite some time. After the initial stages of grief have come and gone, try to get yourself out there and forge a new sense of identity for yourself. Start small and build yourself into the person you see yourself as becoming. This is the time to let your dreams shine through. Maybe this is the time to go back to school, change careers, or realize your wildest fantasies on how you have always wanted to live your life.

**Seize new opportunities.** When you suffer through the loss of a loved one, it can feel depressing. Give yourself time to mourn your loss, then figure out where you want to go next. When you see things from a different perspective, this can be one of the most extraordinary things to ever happen in your life.

### **How to Help Others with Secondary Loss**

**Remember** that not everyone is receptive to receiving help from others. Men and women tend to suffer through their losses differently. Where one person may want the added attention of friends and families as they mourn, others may want to be left alone with their grief. Understand the effect of compounded grief on others and try not to take rejection personally.

**Lend your support.** Regardless of another's grieving style, always let them know that you are there for them. You can support someone who's coping with loss in ways that fit their grieving style. Take some cues from their behavior. Let them know that you're there for them by showing up and being present.

**Acknowledge their suffering.** Grief has the potential to make some people feel as if they're a burden on others. Individuals who are having a tough time coping with their loss might feel like crying all the time or may feel such profound despair that they lose all hope in life. When friends and families fail to acknowledge their grief, they tend to withdraw even more into themselves. Express your concern over their wellbeing and listen to them.

**Help them in creating a legacy.** Secondary losses significantly impact our lives. You can help someone cope in healthy ways by encouraging them to preserve their loved one's memory in ways that honor them and capture the essence of who they were, such as creating scrapbooks and photo albums.

**Encourage self-care.** Help your grieving friend take care of themselves and look after their overall well-being as they suffer through their loss. Health, exercise, nutrition, and getting adequate sleep and rest all impact health and healing. Daily check-ins by phone or text help stay on track with remembering to eat or take needed breaks.

### **Acknowledge Secondary Loss**

You can begin to heal from secondary loss by acknowledging its impact on your life. The grief healing process doesn't begin until you recognize and accept those losses.