

[Toolbox](#) [Training](#) [Library](#)

Library

VIRTUS Forum

[Articles](#)
[Search Articles](#)

[Workplace Resource](#)

[Employment Law Alliance](#)

[Links](#)

[Search All Articles](#)

Healing Involves Acceptance and Reinvestment—Part I

By [Michael J. Bland, Psy.D., D. Min., L.C.P.C.](#)

{Featured October 9, 2006}

Answer when I call, my saving God. In my troubles, you cleared a way; show me favor; hear my prayer. How long will you people mock my honor, love what is worthless, chase after lies? Know that the Lord works wonders for the faithful; the Lord hears when I call out. Offer fitting sacrifice and trust in the Lord. Many say, "May we see better times! Lord, show us the light of your face!" But you have given my heart more joy than they have when grain and wine abound. In peace I shall both lie down and sleep, for you alone, LORD, make me secure.



—Psalm 4:2-4; 5-9

All adults carry feelings that are rooted in their childhood developmental experiences. Some childhood experiences are filled with happy memories while others bring anxiety, fear, anger, sadness, or shame. These feelings can be triggered by circumstances that are somehow reminiscent of the initial experience or trauma. Such an emotional trigger or memory may bring various feelings to the surface “as if” the current experience or relationship is the same as a previous experience or relationship. While this *as if* experience may not be real, it feels real to the one experiencing it, and may trigger various feelings including, but not limited to, anxiety, sadness or grief. Learning to normalize the intensity of these feelings is an important part of anyone’s healing process from a trauma or loss.

It can be important to realize that healing is a process not an event. Healing is not a simple check list of things that are needed to be accomplished and the end of which one can say “I am done” or “I am healed.” It is a process that takes time; a process that needs to be integrated into one’s life, and it may take a life time. Healing is a

Gerard Palermo

Diocese of Palm Beach, FL

Author:

[Michael J. Bland, Psy.D., D. Min., L.C.P.C.](#)

- [View Personal Bio](#)



Print

Other articles by this author:

[Child Abuse Awareness Month](#)

[Expressing Your Concern](#)

[Monitoring Computer Usage](#)

[What Do I Say If an Adult Tells Me They Were Abused Years Ago?](#)

[Early Identification Is Crucial](#)

process that involves emotional, spiritual, interpersonal elements and in some situations physical and sexual components, especially in healing from abuse.

Feelings are a component of virtually all human relationships. It is the process of reacting to or responding to someone in a current relationship or situation *as if* that person has traits, motivations, behaviors, or feelings of an important someone from the past. It is often based on purely subconscious motivations, or can be associated with the important person from the past, a traumatic event, or loss.

In some ways, healing from a traumatic event, a loss, or from sexual abuse may be similar to grief work. While there may be universal stages in the healing process, the healing process is unique and personal. A popular model for grief work that pointed toward acceptance to one's reality was introduced by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross in her 1969 book *On Death and Dying*. The stages have become well known, and are often referred to the Five Stages of Grief.

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross' model describes, in five distinct stages, the process of how people often deal with grief and tragedy. Others have noticed significant personal change or trauma—including sexual abuse—can follow these stages.

The five discrete stages are:

- **Denial and isolation** – The “No, not me” stage.
- **Anger** – The “Why me?” stage.
- **Bargaining** – The “If I do this, you’ll do that stage”
- **Depression** – The “It’s really happening” stage.
- **Acceptance** – The “This is going to happen” or the “This did happen” stage.

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross originally suggested that these stages be applied to the death and dying process. Kübler-Ross also claimed these steps do not necessarily come in order, nor are they all experienced by all people in the same way, though she stated a person will always experience at least two of these stages.

These death and dying stages were quickly transformed into being used for various forms of catastrophic personal loss, such as the death of a loved one, grief, or divorce. Grief professionals often use the concept “Grief Work” to help the bereaved through grief resolution and acceptance of the changes within one's life after such a loss. A common definition of Grief Work is summarized by the acronym TEAR:

- **T** = **To** accept the reality of the loss
- **E** = **E**xperience the reality of the loss
- **A** = **A**ddjust to the new environment without the lost object/person
- **R** = **R**einvest in the new reality

Perhaps a helpful way of looking at grief is to understand that grief is a common experience or response to a change or loss. Simply put: Change = Loss = Grief. This means that *a change of circumstance of any kind produces a loss of some kind (the stage changed from) which will produce a grief reaction.*

The intensity of the grief reaction is a function of how the change-produced loss is perceived. If the loss is not perceived as significant, the grief reaction will be minimal or barely felt. Significant grief responses which go unresolved can lead to mental, physical, and sociological problems and contribute to family dysfunction across generations.

In a similar way, while personal and unique, there are common healing stages for those who have been sexually abuse. Certainly one way to conceptualize the healing process or stages would be to use Elizabeth Kübler-Ross' well known, Five Stages of Grief or even through the Grief Work acronym TEAR as explained above.

It should be noted that any healing process might hold barriers or impediments to an individual's healing process. Some of these obstructions to healing may include additional trauma, unpredictable flare-ups (conflicts), obsessive thoughts about the past, or circular thinking which is often based on impressions and that are not always factual. Recognizing these personal impediments is an important step in the healing process. This requires honest self-reflection and thought which challenges one to be aware of and admit to one's own behaviors. This honest self reflection can be painful as one recognizes that they are not the ideal person that they thought there were or tried to be. Therefore, trying to control or redirect one's own reactions and responses is a difficult part of the healing process, but it can be achieved.

The healing process requires great courage, strength, and a strong spiritual connection—which may take its toll on the body as well. One needs a strong commitment to healing, a strong will, a positive attitude, and a willingness to work with their trusted friends and professionals. In part two of this article I will expand on this healing model and discuss another model reflecting the stages of victim, survivors, and thriver.

The information and opinions provided on The Virtus® Forum are for educational purposes only. No attorney-client privilege or any other privilege granted under law is intended. Users who seek legal or other professional advice do so at their own risk.

Opinions of experts expressed on The Virtus® Forum are not necessarily the opinions of sponsors or The Virtus® Forum. The Virtus® Forum does not guarantee the validity of any expert opinion.

Copyright © 1999 - 2019 by National Catholic Services, LLC. All rights reserved.

[\(Acceptable Use Policy\)](#)

1823712
NE

LV={ts '2019-09-12 16:04:04'}

LO=/virtus/index.cfm