

Introduction: "Life is fair. Ultimately it breaks everybody's heart."

1. **Naming the Loss.** There are many kinds of losses in life; most are multi-layered and take time to recognize. What are some losses you have experienced?

Good companions here are people who can let us be the way we are, those good listeners who can help us sort through our loss over time.

2. **Feeling Pain** gives us strength; helps us face the truth that a loss has occurred; helps us notice the present; and is a sign that we have indeed loved. Pain is sometimes hard to let go.

Good companions here are often old friends who can simply be present, hold our hand, hear the pain and not try to perform a 'quick fix' on us.

3. **Anger** is a natural response to a threat to our self-identity; its energy can help build a new identity. Fear and/or anxiety often accompany anger.

Good companions here are those unafraid of the anger, and can help us name our fears and overcome them.

4. **Remembering** helps our body come to terms with the loss. It is a way of slowing down and finding rest in the familiar. It is a way of creating a memorial that will help us take control of our life again. There is a danger of getting stuck here, but it isn't as great as most think.

Good companions here are those who have 'porch swing' time to listen to us tell our stories over and over again, and who can help us create a memorial to what/who was lost.

5. **Guilt** is experienced by any responsible person. We need to realistically focus on our real responsibilities and what we can't control to deal with guilt.

Good companions here are folks who have experienced both guilt and grace. Clergy who affirm God's grace and mercy can be helpful. Faith stories of God's grace are also helpful.

6. **Forgiving** gives us freedom from the power of what happened in the past. To forgive we may need to examine our relationship with God and others. Forgiving often is an issue along with the other dimensions of loss listed here.

Good companions "are persons who can mirror back to you your own humanity in a loving way"—who can help us find the humor in your humanity.

7. **Gratitude** tends to follow forgiveness. It does not diminish the value of what was lost.

Good companions are people we can share our gratitude with, who have discovered their own 'gifts under the garbage' and can delight in ours.

8. **Play** happens as you move into the world of your new self, and need to find out new ways of living. Like children we try out new experiences, learning what works and what doesn't.

Good companions are folks who can let us try new experiences without condemning us. Often these are new friends who don't know what we were like before. Books can help, also.

9. **Practice** occurs as we chose which of our new ways of living we like and want to keep doing. It requires slowing down, paying attention to life as it is now, and making decisions based on what we are experiencing.

Good companions are those who can help us practice our new life. Counselors can be good at this, as well as coaches and support group members.

10. **Becoming New** is something that happens; it is a gift, something beyond our control. It is a feeling of wholeness; in many ways it is a birth into new life.

Good companions here are people with whom we feel at home; people who enjoy us and our new life.