

## STAGE - RE-BUILDING ONE

### DENIAL This Could Never Happen to Me!

In ending a relationship and exploring rebuilding their lives people are drawn from all backgrounds, some are male some female, some are older some are younger and some wealthy and I mention this because often people think that only those who are losers cannot maintain a relationship.

Some people are ready for this first step whilst others are still shocked by what has happened and cannot think beyond the day before them. Many people in my groups told me how they were waiting for their ex-partner to wake up, knock on the door and tell them that it had all been a nasty dream.

It is natural for you to feel confused and disorientated with even the simplest issue taking on untold demands and you are feeling so unlike the person you used to be. Many people tell me during this stage that

'I feel dumfounded. I honestly thought this would never happen to me.'

In this initial stage you may be punishing yourself with statements like

'If only I had listened more; if only I hadn't been so angry' if only...if only and the list goes on.

Through this relationship you have learned a great deal about life and about yourself and such insights are a tangible part of who you are now and your awareness. Better to say 'I did the best I could with what I knew and what I had to work with' and such a statement you are starting to be who you really are.

For example it is common in my work to see how for many people they have not freed themselves from their early life experiences with adults and the long term influence so they do not have identities of their own and in ending a relationship they are rebelling against such experiences and in doing so beginning to embrace their own identity and reality of how their world can be.

Often we have an idealised image of what a relationship provides and for many it can be that it was to overcome loneliness; to escape an unhappy parental home; because we were expected to enter a relationship given the belief that single people are failures or out of the need to parent or be parented by another, and the old standby because 'we fell in love'.

I talk of love later in another section of our virtual online sessions but I just want to point out that there are many levels of love and not all are mature enough to provide a sound basis for a long term relationship. Quite frequently we have an idealized image of the other person and so we fell in love with an image rather than the person. As the initial excitement passes we are disillusioned because that person is not living up the image we have projected on to them. Perhaps 'falling in love' is an attempt to fill some emptiness rather than creating a sound basis on which to build a long term relationship. For many people they trying to become a whole person and find happiness based on the false belief of how 'two people are becoming one'.

When you are ready to face living alone and have found happiness as a single person, then you are ready to face life together with another person.

Take a look at your former relationship

Where you and your partner friends?

Did you confide in each other?

What interests did you share? Hobbies? Attitudes towards life? Politics? Religious or spiritual belief? Views about children and parenting?

Were your goals - for yourself, each other, the relationship and where they similar/compatible?

Did you agree on ways of solving problems between you (and here I mean not necessarily the solutions but the methods)?

When you were angry with each other, did you deal with it directly, or hide it, or simply try to hurt each other like immature frightened children?

Did you share friendships?

Did you go out together socially? Where you also engaged socially when your partner didn't have to be present or did you assume that you had to go out together, as a couple, or not at all?

Did you share responsibilities such as earning money and looking after the home together in a mutually agreed upon way?

Did you make major decisions jointly?

Did you allow each other time alone?

Did you trust each other?

Was the relationship important enough for each of you to make some personal sacrifices for it when necessary?

It is difficult to recognise shortcomings in the relationship and it is even more difficult and painful now to see that you were part of the problem given for many it is so easy to blame their partner or society, or.... but accepting such elements at this stage is the positive side to moving through the first rebuilding phase called denial.

At this initial stage you need to work on improving your self concept and as you come closer to standing alone and realising how, for a whole host of reasons, the very real fact that your relationship has come to an end and you feel very real pain.

Relationship separation and as in the death of a partner are probably the two most painful experiences you will feel in your life. We need to use our pain, to flow with the pain rather than deny it and to use it as motivation to grow and make fundamental changes rather than stop this experience which will result in our having wounds that may never heal. Some use the pain as an excuse to remain bitter, angry, unhappy where others use the pain to grow and expand at so many levels at this point in their life. Which do you choose?

At this stage the goal is to learn to be happy as a single person before you look to becoming coupled again.

**CHECKLIST** which we shall be working with in our discussion sessions.

1. I am able to accept that my relationship is ending or had ended.
2. I am comfortable telling my friends and family that my relationship is ending or had ended.
3. I have begun to understand some of the reasons why my relationship did not work out, and this has helped me to overcome my feelings of denial.
4. I believe that even though relationship ending process is painful it can be a positive and creative experience for my future life.
5. I am ready to invest emotionally in my own personal growth in order to become the person I would like to be.
6. I want to learn to become happy as a single person before committing myself to another future relationship.
7. I will continue to invest in my own personal growth even if my former partner and I plan to get back together with each other?

