

Now What: Dealing With The Things You Just Don't "Get Over"

By Tanya Tiger

As someone who has experienced one of the worst traumas I believe anyone can face, the death of a child, I know that there are some things you simply don't just "get over".

That being said, when trauma happens you are presented with a choice:

You can choose to remain stuck, a victim of the event; or, you can choose to be a survivor, and move forward, continuing this journey called life.

For me personally, this realisation occurred after the proverbial dust of my daughter's death settled. My youngest daughter had passed away unexpectedly at the age of 16-months. My heart had been shattered and the very foundation of my existence felt as though it had been rocked to the core.

It has taken a long time to feel steady on my feet again, and I know that the pain will never go away completely.

[There will always be a hole in my heart and I do the best I can to fill it with love and my memories of her.](#)

Before I arrived at a place of clarity I spent many days in bed, in tears and unable to move, knowing how easy it would be to remain there... stuck, a victim of this tragedy.

Life continued on around me and I realised that it would continue to do so, whether I joined in or not. And so, I chose to be a survivor, to get up and to find a way to bring purpose

to what had happened to me and my family.

The question "*now what?*" became a catalyst for positive change and the motivator I needed to get myself back on track.

When I stopped and said, "My daughter is gone, nothing can bring her back, and it was a horrible tragedy that never should have happened... now what?" I released myself and was able to begin moving forward.

It seems like such a simple question but it has a profound effect.

As a Licensed Social Worker, counselor and clinician, I have worked for many years to help people overcome their own demons and difficulties.

I remember one particular client I had worked with who was continually caught in a cycle of blame, emotional terrorism toward others, and self-destruction.

She had latched on to an event which had occurred many years ago, and which left her wounded and angry. She was unable or unwilling to release the past and so it ruled her every waking moment.

[Everything in her life was perceived through this filter of mistrust and abandonment.](#)

She blamed everyone and everything around her for the way her life had turned out and she refused to accept any responsibility, whatsoever, for her circumstances. She reported that she felt a great deal of anger toward the people in her life who she believed abandoned her, and who had wounded her self-esteem.

She would talk about how powerless she felt because "nothing she ever did seemed to work out."

When I asked what steps she had taken to make her life better

she launched into a tirade about how her parents are to blame for all of her failed relationships and how her partners never seem to “get” her.

I brought up how we, in essence, surrender our power to others when we place all responsibility for our wellbeing in their hands, and how we can reclaim our power by fully accepting responsibility for where we are right now, despite how we got here.

My words fell on deaf ears and she went directly into defensive mode.

She took what I said and twisted it into me blaming her for the bad things that happened to her in the past. I made numerous attempts to help guide her and reframe her perceptions but nothing seemed to get through.

As time went on I realised that this client was quite comfortable in her role as victim. From there she didn't have to accept responsibility for anything and she didn't need to “do the work” or make any changes because in her mind the problem was “them” and not with her.

She was blind to the fact that she was causing her own unhappiness and that the solution was within her.

One day, when she came to my office and began retelling the same story for the umpteenth time I gently stopped her. I said, “Ok, let's say that everything that has gone wrong and continues to go wrong in your life is their fault... *now what?*”

She stared blankly ahead until I repeated the question, “All the bad stuff in your life is their fault... now what? What has to happen NOW for your life to get better?”

She played with the rings on her hands and picked at her nail polish before she said, “I don't know.” That was the entry point I needed... the breakthrough.

Asking her “*now what?*” was enough to break the cycle of blaming and bring her back to the present moment.

From there she began to accept that the past is done and gone, it can't be changed. We focused the rest of her sessions on the present moment, and setting realistic goals for her future. With each baby step she took she reclaimed some of her power.

After a while, [she realised that she had kept the wound from healing by bringing the pain from her past forward into her present relationships.](#)

She had clung so tightly to her anger and suffering that she maintained her agony far past its expiration date. Once she realised that letting go of the past wasn't the same as condoning what had happened, and once she realised that she was ultimately responsible for making necessary changes, that no one else was going to “fix” her life, she was able to move past victim and become a survivor.

The next time you are stuck, try asking “*now what?*” Accept the situation for what, and how, it is and then choose to take action.

For more self-study, [The Urban Howl](#) recommends [The Fifth Agreement: A Practical Guide to Self-Mastery \(Toltec Wisdom\)](#).

#NOWWHAT