

Coping with Disappointing Change and Moving On

Arlene Rosenberg

Last spring I broke my foot in a very romantic way. Holding hands with my husband, I was walking in one direction and my husband chose to move in another. Almost immediately I found my foot twisting off my platform sandal in the wrong direction. Very quickly a weekend trip to New York canceled itself out. It was very disappointing as I was unable to attend the wedding of a dear friend's daughter and visit with my grandson. This experience which happened in less than a minute changed everything and affected many people.

After some pondering about my accident and letting everyone know what happened, I heard the words of a former boss ring in my head, "there really is nothing constant but change." It dawned on me that my accident is a metaphor for what is happening to many of us in a variety of ways... Daily, we are being bombarded with new information about how to live a structured and balanced life, physically, mentally and spiritually. The impact of the Internet is forcing us to constantly keep up with new methods, changes and knowledge. At work and in our businesses we are being confronted with change on a daily basis. This is forcing us to brand ourselves differently, stay current with tons of new knowledge and cope with constant changes in the way things are being done. YIKES! Everywhere we turn change surrounds us at a very rapid pace and along with it comes constant disappointments, ups and downs.

Two weeks ago my client Sharon shared her great disappointment around a proposal she had done for a major client. She had been working on it for weeks and was very excited about the prospect of tackling a whole new phase of her industry. Much to Sharon's dismay her client at the last minute told her they had decided to go with an agency that had more experience. Well, you can imagine the disappointment she was feeling. No matter how she tried, Sharon just couldn't shake it off. The voices in her head were overwhelming her.

In both of the situations I have just described the first step is to let yourself feel your emotions. In my case, I cried as they were wrapping my foot in a soft cast. Let me tell you I am not a crier but this was a release of pent up emotions. Sharon decided to write down everything she was feeling and those she was not willing to let go of. She then shared her thoughts with her staff. This was something she had never done before. By sharing her emotions Sharon was able to release her feelings in an appropriate way and give her staff a chance to do the same thing. In a short time, Sharon and her staff were able to see what they needed to do differently and create a positive outlook about what they were going to do in the future.

In some cases it's not appropriate to share your emotions with certain people. In these situations, choose a wise friend who can remain detached and work through the things you could do differently next time. The more you can look at what is really bothering you about your disappointment the quicker you can turn it around. Sometimes it takes writing about it several times and re-looking at what is going on deep inside you. Usually it has something to do with fear and shame about you.

Journaling helped me deal with my angers after the realization that I would not be able to drive for six weeks and have to keep fairly immobile for awhile not allowing me to see distant friends

and my grandson, as well as a heck of a lot more. It enabled me to have insights as to the meaning of what happened and see the “gifts” that were hidden in the accident. A long talk with a close friend helped me to see that I needed to learn that it was okay to receive from others and not have to do “everything” and be in control. We discussed some changes that I needed to make like slowing down that might help prevent something like this from happening again.

Three things to remember when moving on from disappointment:

1. Allow yourself to feel the emotion of disappointment without self-judgment.
2. Work on moving to a place of acceptance around the situation or event that caused the disappointment in the first place.
3. Take actions that will help you learn something new to create a different outcome in the future.