

# A LIGHT IN THIS DARK VALLEY



**A GUIDE FOR EMOTIONAL RECOVERY:**

**Fifty Things that You Can Do  
When There Is Nothing Else To Do**

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## PREFACE

*My God, my God,  
why have you forsaken me?  
Why are you so far from helping me,  
So far from the words of my pain?  
O my God, I cry out by day and by night,  
But you do not answer.*

*My strength has drained away like water,  
and all my bones are out of joint.  
My heart has turned to wax  
And has melted away within me.  
My strength has dried up like sun-baked clay  
and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth.  
You have left me lying in the dust of death.*

*Oh Lord, be not far off.  
Oh God, my strength, hasten to my aid.*

**Psalm 22**

# INTRODUCTION to 9<sup>th</sup> Edition

*This is the ninth edition of this manual and its two accompanying manuals (one for children and one for facilitators and caregivers). These manuals have been published in several languages and are available free of charge to non-profit agencies and organizations from Global Facilitators Serving Communities. These manuals are not for re-sale.*

In November of 1985, Colombia suffered one of the worst tragedies in its history: the eruption of the Arenas Volcano and the ensuing avalanche that buried one of the most beautiful towns in the country: Armero. Twenty five thousand people lost their lives on that ill-fated night when tons of rock and mud covered thousands of homes with families asleep inside. Another two hundred thousand people were affected by the human and financial loss of this tragedy.

At that time, we wrote the first edition of this guide to meet the immediate needs of the tens of thousands of homeless and other victims. Since that tragedy, we have trained and mentored close to one thousand professionals in facilitating psychosocial reconstruction throughout Latin America (Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru and Venezuela), as well as in Canada, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Taiwan. Most recently, GFSC has facilitated a dynamic and successful process of community capacity building in New Orleans after the disaster of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Presently we face some tremendous challenges: natural and social disasters hit every social class in every corner of the world. Facilitation techniques are proving to be some of the most effective intervention tools for grief management and psychosocial reconstruction, building the resilience and self-reliance of individuals and communities everywhere.

The success of our support to the institutions and professionals that provide help to the victims and those affected by the tragedy, directly or indirectly, is made possible, in great part, by the hundreds of professionals and other volunteers who have trained to work in this area, and who have donated time and money to train hundreds of facilitators and distribute tens of thousands of manuals.

We wish to thank the following people, without whose dedication and effort this Guide would not have been possible:

- 1) Our colleagues and friends at the International Association of Facilitators and at Global Facilitators Serving Communities
- 2) Rosie Rivera for the translation of the initial texts into English.
- 3) Eileen Ruete (1951-2002) for her proofing of the texts.
- 4) Melba Cosgrove for her genius in grief management.
- 5) The hundreds of disaster survivors who have contributed their experiences and knowledge to each new edition of this Guide.

We dedicate this publication to you, our reader, who will use this Guide to survive, recover and grow from your terrible experience.

*Gilbert Brenson-Lazán  
Global Facilitators Serving Communities  
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia  
3 August 2006*

## HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

This manual can be used individually, studying one or two lessons per day. Each lesson is designed so that you can develop the concepts (doing each exercise and writing down your personal observations) in a sequence, dedicating to each one the time, reflection, and energy necessary to complete each phase. Thus, you can periodically review what you have learned in the previous lessons and make an assessment of your progress towards the future.

If you decide to jump ahead in the without dedicating enough time to the previous exercises and experiences, you will probably lose a lot of the learning experience and some of what you are reading out of context might seem ridiculous.

Our experience, however has been that learning is **greatly** increased when people work through these “Lessons” together in small, facilitated self-help groups. These are not “classes” but rather facilitated peer mentoring. Those interested in learning more about this methodology can get more information, as well as copies of other manuals, without charge, at the Global Facilitators Serving Communities, <http://globalfacilitators.org>, Virtual Library.

**For more information, contact:**  
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# TO SURVIVE

## LESSON 1: Recognizing the Loss

- It was the closest thing to hell on earth.
- It might have been a tremendous roar, followed by shouting, destruction, chaos, screams of agony, and death.
- It might have just been those few words that will change your life forever.
- It was like the world was coming to an end. In reality it was your world that was ending.
- You probably don't want to believe that this tragedy has happened to you.
- And even if you don't want to believe it, day and night it plays in your mind over and over again.
- It did happen! Yes, it's real!
- Accept it. There has been a huge and terrible loss.
- Please list your five most significant losses:
  - 1)
  - 2)
  - 3)
  - 4)
  - 5)
- It's truly a miracle that you haven't lost your mind.
- You have options: you have God, your values, some good friends, and your ability. Most of all, you are alive!
- You will survive!



## **LESSON 2: EXPERIENCING THE PAIN**

- It really, really hurts!
- It's normal to feel pain after a terrible loss. Not feeling it could well signal a mental illness.
- Your pain is a sign that you are alive and capable of dealing with such trials.
- Fear, anger, guilt, and sadness are all part of your pain.
- For now it's okay to just feel them. Later on you will learn how to deal with them.
- It won't be very long before you realize that you won't feel like this forever.
- It is very important to feel the pain, the devastation, and all the physical and emotional scars. It's the only way for the recovery process to begin.
- Once you feel what you are feeling, it is even more important to express how you feel, but without violence against others or against yourself.
- You can write down what you are feeling at this moment:

- It will do you even more harm to deny what you feel.
- Pain is a key starting point for you.

### **OBSERVATIONS:**

### **LESSON 3: SEEKING COMFORT**

- Loss is part of living, of being alive, of being and feeling human.
- It is also part of loving.
- Anyone that has dared to love someone or something in life knows what it feels like to lose that which he or she has loved.
- Your task now is to start the long trip back from the immediate loss to the inevitable recovery process.
- You will accomplish it in the most direct and gradual way possible.
- Your pain can be diminished somewhat by your friendship with others that have suffered a loss or are currently going through the same circumstances.
- List the names of those who can be available to comfort you at this time:

### **OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 4: RECOGNIZING THE VALUE OF BEING**

- It is inevitable that you will feel better sooner or later.
- You cannot avoid it, unless you want to stay just as you are.
- The only doubts are produced by your own fears, a very normal occurrence.
- In every recovery process there is a beginning, a middle, and end.
- How did it begin for you? With the tragedy? Please write a summary:

- You can find comfort thinking about what you have already begun.
- Remember that an end exists and is closer than you realize at this time.
- Tomorrow will come.
- Time is on your side and time and nature are very powerful allies, even though it may not seem like it at this moment.
- God created us to live.

### **OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 5: RECOGNIZING THE VALUE OF BEING YOU**

- Do not deceive yourself with certain phrases:

*"If only I would have said..."*

*" If I wouldn't have done... "*

*"If I had been more..."*

*"If I could have done..."*

*"If it wasn't for..."*

*Etc.*

- Forget everything that begins with "If only I could have..."
- The "would have" doesn't exist, never has, and never will.
- You are so much more than just your wounds and scars.
- Beneath all your sadness, anger, guilt and fear there is a beautiful and valuable human being.
- You may not feel it at this time, but you are very important to many people.
- You are very special. You are very loved.
- Make a list of all the people in this world for whom you are important:

### **OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 6: UNDERSTANDING THAT WHO YOU WERE NOT LOST**

- At times it may be difficult to remember that you are a good and valuable human being: a creation of God.
- You are a beautiful person, even if you don't feel this way at the moment.
- Your self-esteem has suffered a tremendous blow right now.
- You may feel very worried, resentful, insecure, and you are probably being very hard on yourself right now.
- All these intense feelings and thoughts are part of what you are living through right now.
- There is no need to put weight on them because they are not a part of who you are but a reaction to your present set of circumstances.
- Remember all the positive things you have been and have done in your life and that you are and will do again.
- You can list them here:

### **OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 7: GIVING YOURSELF TIME**

- The recovery process requires time.  
The greater the loss, the more time is necessary for recovery.
- Give it time.
- Give yourself and your loved ones time.
- You need time to recover.
- Give this to yourself. You deserve it.
- Recovery will happen because it is happening right now; if it were not so, you wouldn't be reading these words.
- Describe how you have physically and emotionally improved in these last few days and weeks:

## **OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 8: EXPECTING THE UPS & DOWNS**

- The recovery process does not happen in a straight line, as many people would like to believe.
- It is more like a roller coaster ride -- full of ups & downs, jumps and jolts, and exasperating falls.
- What you will notice very soon is that the next “high” is higher than the previous one and the next “low” is not quite as low as the previous ones.
- You are on the right path.
- List some of the things you have already overcome:

### **OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 9: TAKING TIME TO REST**

- Rest as much as you can.
- Sleep more than usual.
- It's not good for your body or your mind to get so tired.
- Your mind and body need energy to recover.
- Meditate and reflect.
- Rest is the keeper of your health.
- Make plans for when you are going to rest and sleep:

### **OBSERVATIONS:**



## **LESSON 10: TAKING TIME FOR OTHER ACTIVITIES**

- In between rests, have some fun!
- The most effective recovery takes place when you alternate between periods of rest, periods of work and periods of enjoyable activities.
- To rest adequately doesn't mean staying in bed all day to escape reality.
- Stay active.
- While you are still in this state of chaos, follow a strict schedule. This will give your life a sense of balance and something you can hold on to.
- Write your schedule here for the next week:

	6 am	8 am	10 am	2 pm	4 pm	6 pm	8 pm
Sun.							
Mon.							
Tues.							
Wed.							
Thurs.							
Fri.							
Sat.							

Other Activities:

**OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 11: AVOIDING UNNECESSARY DECISIONS**

- It's to be expected that at times you will become very sensitive and irritable.
- You probably realize that your head is not always in the right place these days.
- Avoid making unnecessary decisions at this time.
- You are already in pain due to all the recent changes in your life. You don't need more.
- Think twice before making any additional changes that are not necessary.
- Which of these decisions can you and your family postpone for a few days or a few weeks?

**DECISION:**

**CAN WAIT UNTIL:**

**OBSERVATIONS:**



## **LESSON 13: ASKING FOR SUPPORT**

- Don't be afraid to ask for what you need.
- It the most human thing you can do.
- Take steps NOW to begin or join a local support group.
- Recruit the rest of your friends and family to join in also.
- Talking with God through prayer and meditation are one of your best sources of support and strength.
- What would you like to for? And from whom?

- At the same time, it is important to recognize that you don't want to go to the extreme of not doing anything for yourself. This would hurt you even more.
- It is harmful to your self-esteem and your mental health to continually ask others to do for you what you are capable of doing for yourself.
- Excessive dependence will impede your recovery.
- What are you asking for right now that you could be getting through your own efforts?

## **OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 14: SURROUNDING YOURSELF WITH LIFE**

- Keep yourself surrounded by things that are alive and that you enjoy.
  - Like you, they are life.
  - You will not accomplish anything by isolating yourself physically or mentally from life.
  - Besides your friends and family, you can also include the following:
    - a new plant
    - a stray puppy or kitten
    - different varieties of fresh flowers
    - a canary
    - fresh fruit
    - etc.
  - As soon as you can, establish your own personal and private space regardless of how small it may be.
  - Take good care of any personal belongings you still may have.
  - At this time, which physical space in your living area can be exclusively yours?
- 
- But be very careful to not fall into the other extreme of being self-centered, overly competitive, monopolizing or dishonest.
  - This is not considerate of others or their personal space and will harm you also.
  - It's a natural instinct to react like this, but behaving that way will hurt you and others in your community and what you most need right now is precisely to feel part of your community.
  - Think about the consequences of your actions.
  - How will you balance your personal interests with those of others?

### **OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 15: REAFFIRMING CERTAIN BELIEFS**

- Think about any spiritual beliefs that were a source of strength in the past and in which you can put your faith.
- Talk to others about these beliefs.
- If you can't think of any, seek out those that could share theirs with you.
- Remember at least one past experience in which you were able to find strength and inner peace from your religious beliefs or practices.
- Think about it over and over again.
- Write it here:

### **OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 16: UNDERSTANDING SUICIDE**

- Sooner or later it may cross your mind to kill yourself.
- These are very natural thoughts considering the pain you are living with.
- If these thoughts increase significantly or you are afraid that they might get out of control, please seek professional help immediately.
- Anger is a very normal and healthy feeling right now but it is neither normal nor healthy to turn this anger on yourself.
- After all, you have just been through an unbearable and horrible experience.
- Above all, committing suicide would be foolish.
- It would be like holding your breath to avoid coughing.
- Or like throwing all your money away because one of the bills was counterfeit.
- In regards to suicide, keep it as an option, the very last option that exists (according to you and any two other people)
- Write down ALL the reasons to justify staying alive for the rest of today:

\* \* \* \* \*

***BEING ALIVE IS THE ONLY JUSTIFICATION  
YOU NEED FOR STAYING ALIVE***

\* \* \* \* \*

---

# TO RECOVER

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## **LESSON 17: DEALING WITH GRIEF**

- Think about what happens during the funeral of a loved one and later during the grieving process.
- The death of a life style, a home, a job, a city, a body part or a relationship can be just as painful as that of the loss of a person.
- To deny, cover up, postpone or run from this pain doesn't help anyone. It only makes it worse for you.
- Everything else can and should wait.
- Your emotional wounds require the same quality of care as your physical wounds.
- Set aside enough time to feel your pain and recover from it.
- Now!
- The sooner you do this, the sooner it will all pass.
- If you resist or pretend to not have any pain, you are interfering with the natural stages of recovery of your mind and body.
- If you postpone it, you are also putting off your recovery.
- Live, feel, and take advantage of your grief. This is a normal stage and the sooner you allow it to happen, the quicker it will end and you will heal.

## **OBSERVATIONS:**



## **LESSON 18: USING YOUR COMPASSION ON YOURSELF**

- Be very gentle and compassionate with yourself.
- Accept the fact that you have a debilitating emotional wound and give yourself some time to recover.
- How would you help a friend that is facing a similar situation?
- Take care of yourself in the same way.
- Accept the help and support offered to you. Never forget that your caring and compassion should begin with yourself.
- Many strange things are happening to you that you don't understand.
- They seem crazy but they are very normal in the situation you are in:
  - aches and pains all over
  - crazy ideas
  - hyperactivity
  - sleeplessness
  - nightmares
  - depression
  - apathy
  - roller-coaster emotions
  - lack of concentration
  - a desire to die
  - constant fatigue
  - irritability
- These are ALL normal, natural and necessary reactions of your mind and body to the situation you are in.
- What are some of the things you can do to be more compassionate with yourself?

### **OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 19: USING YOUR UNDERSTANDINGS**

- It doesn't do any good to blame yourself for errors, real or imaginary that you may have committed before, during or after the tragedy.
- Remember that what happened is not a personal punishment against you or those suffering the same fate.
- God doesn't work that way!
- Make a list of some of the principle injustices in the world today:

- You see! Life ISN'T always fair, but we are alive.
- A phase of your life has ended, perhaps prematurely, but it has finished.
- Life is a series of phases connected by crises.

### **OBSERVATIONS:**

## LESSON 20: UNDERSTANDING CRISIS



- This is the Chinese symbol for "crisis."
- It's the combination of two characters, one represents "danger" and the other one represents "opportunity."
- In a crisis, there is a real danger of making the wrong choices and doing something the prejudices your future.
- In a crisis there are also many opportunities for learning, growing, changing.
- The opportunity is in beginning a new phase, in starting again.
- You are a special person, bright, and courageous. You can make the right choices.
- Failure is not the presence of crisis but rather the absence of learnings from that crisis.
- The decision is yours.
- What are some of the main dangers and opportunities before you at this time?

**DANGERS:**

**OPPORTUNITIES:**

**OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 21: BURYING THE ILLUSIONS**

- Efforts to bring back the past can be useless and painful.
- Efforts to construct an impossible future are even more useless and painful.
- To live in the past or to wait for an impossible future, prevents your recovery and it can be a waste of your valuable energy and time.
- One of the most difficult tasks you may have is that of burying your illusions.
- If you bury the illusions, there will be no disillusion.
- Use your time and energy in the here and now on your recovery process.
- Spend them focusing on the new reality that you can and will construct from the best of the past, the opportunities of the present and the hope of the future.
- Use them on life... on yours and that of others.
- Make a contract or agreement with a friend or other member of your support groups to remind each other not to try to resurrect the past or wait for an impossible future.
- What illusions may you still be hanging on to and that are better off buried?

## **OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 22: GETTING EXERCISE**

- One of the most important strategies for emotional recovery is physical exercise.
- Moderate physical exercise generates endorphins that speed the healing process.
- The experts say you need twenty minutes daily of cardiac acceleration and three minutes daily of stretching.
- You can:
  - Take a brisk walk.
  - Go to the gym.
  - Go bicycling.
  - Go dancing.
  - Participate in your favorite sport.
  - Do daily stretching exercises.
  - Walk up and down stairs instead of taking the elevator.
  - Practice Yoga, Tai Chi Chuan or martial arts.
  - Jog with your dog.
  - Lift weights.
  - Play active games with your children or borrow someone else's.
- Which one of these (or another) are you willing to do during the next few weeks?

## **OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 23: DEALING WITH YOUR MEMORIES**

- It's okay to hold on to photographs and other things from the past if you find they help you with the grieving process.

- If on the contrary these memories may recycle and even intensify the pain and it might be better to get rid of them.
- Your memories can be a source of comfort as long as they don't control your present.
- Please write down your three most painful memories and your three most pleasant memories, related to the tragedy:

**THE MOST PAINFUL:**

**THE MOST PLEASANT:**

**OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 24: EXPECTING RESULTS**

- Whatever we devote the most time and effort to is usually what is most important to us and what we achieve.
- Expect one positive result or maybe even two or three.
- Write down the most important positive result you realistically expect in:
  - a week:
  - in a month:
  - in six months:
  - in a year:
  - in five years:
- Take some time to imagine yourself enjoying these positive results.
- On a separate sheet of paper you can describe or, better yet, draw a picture of how each one of them will look..
- Anticipate this moment! Plan for this moment! You are initiating it now.
- And while these positive results arrive, you will still feel some anger, pain, fear, sadness, and all the feelings that are now so familiar.
- Accept them, but don't go looking for them. Pay attention to them, but don't live with them everyday.
- Pain is like some relatives: they can be tolerated and understood during a short visit but are definitely a mental health hazard if they stay for too long.

**Only those that can see the invisible are able to do the impossible.**

### **OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 25: ACCEPTING YOUR SADNESS**

- Many people will try to “cheer you up” or tell you that you shouldn’t feel sad.
- They do so with the best of intentions. They don’t want to see you suffering, and they don’t want to go through the pain of seeing you in pain.
- In spite of what they say, it is normal, natural and necessary to be depressed for a while. You have all the reason in the world to feel this way and no one should tell you otherwise.
- It’s not productive to pretend that you are happy or energetic when you are not.
- Crying is a great outlet to vent and cleanse this sadness.
- Temporary sadness can be very helpful, as long as it doesn’t turn into chronic self-pity or a permanent state of sadness.
- You are entitled to your sadness... and also to your tears. Many of us have cried with you even though we haven’t personally experienced your tragedy.
- What do you think and feel when you get depressed? You can write it down here for a later discussion:

### **OBSERVATIONS:**



## **LESSON 26: CHANNELING YOUR ANGER**

- Everyone feels angry when dealing with a loss, or at least should. Everyone!
- It is normal, natural and necessary that you feel your rage and your anger.
- Don't pay attention to those that say you shouldn't feel this way.
- It's okay to be angry with the following:
  - nature
  - whatever or whoever took something or someone from you
  - other people's apathy
  - the lack of understanding from others
  - destiny
  - luck
  - the unfairness of it all
  - your present circumstances
  - even with God.
- Write here what you most feel angry about:

- At the same time, physical and verbal violence towards others might be a way to vent our frustrations, but they can separate us and alienate us from the relationships that can help us heal.
- You have already suffered enough violence. It's not a good idea to give and receive any more.
- If you are experiencing a tremendous feeling of rage, try:
  - hitting a pillow
  - yelling
  - breaking something
  - having a tantrum by yourself
  - kicking a football, hitting a golf ball or batting a baseball.
- When you choose to channel the anger and dissipate its energy in a healthy way, you'll avoid useless arguments, accidents, and illness.
- The best way to deal with your anger is to talk about it in your local support group.
- Your anger will disappear as you heal.

## **OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 27: UNDERSTANDING YOUR FEARS**

- Of course you are scared.
  - It would be crazy behavior if you weren't.
  - You may be afraid of the uncertainty of the future, of another tragedy or of what tomorrow may bring.
  - This is very normal, natural and necessary for the healing process.
  - Fear can also be an effective warning sign against real dangers.
  - Write what you fear the most at this time:
- 
- You may want to pay attention to some of these warning signs when they make sense.
  - You can ignore them when common sense and three people you trust tell you that there is no reason to be afraid.
  - To accomplish this you can:
    - share your fears and your plans with your support group
    - praise the Lord for the strength, talents and abilities that He has blessed you with up until.
    - read an inspirational book
    - frequently repeat positive thoughts to yourself such as:
      - ***“This, too, will pass.”***
      - ***“What can I learn from this?”***
      - ***“I am greater than my fears.”***
  - With time your irrational fears will go away once you realize they are ghosts from the past.

### **OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 28: DEALING WITH YOUR GUILT**

- You quite likely will also be feeling some degree of guilt.
  - This is normal, natural and necessary for the healing process.
  - You may often think:
    - *“Why did he die and not me?”*
    - *“Why didn’t I do...?”*
    - *“Why did I do...?”*
    - *“Why wasn’t I capable of...?”*
    - *“If only I had....”*
    - *“If only I hadn’t....”*
  - When you think about the “What ifs”, you feel awful.
  - Please write what you have felt guilty about:
- 
- Survivor’s guilt is very normal. It is nature’s way to try to make sense of the senseless and it can even facilitate new learnings and behavior changes.
  - Prolonged guilt feelings can be very hurtful and destructive. They don’t allow for the recovery process to occur.
  - There is nothing I know of that anyone can do to change the past.
  - You can get some good perspective talking about your guilty feelings with a friend or in your support group.
  - If you wish to do so and you consider it necessary, you can ask God for forgiveness, and also the people you believe have been hurt by your mistakes.
  - And then leave it at that!

### **OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 29: EATING FOR RECOVERY**

- Your emotional recovery also depends on taking good care of your body.
- Eat the healthiest and most balanced meals you can afford, three times a day.
- Increase your protein intake. Good sources are meat, fish, chicken, eggs, milk, and beans.
- You also need to increase your calcium intake by eating more cheese and other dairy products.
- You also need more potassium, found in potatoes, vegetables and bananas.
- It's a good idea to take supplements for vitamin B, C, and iron.
- When you stop eating or eat unwisely, you only hurt yourself and those that love you.
- Even though your resources may be limited, what can you do right now to improve your nutrition?

## **OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 30: AVOIDING ADDICTIONS**

- At this particular moment in your life, you are very susceptible to any kind of substance abuse or addiction.
- Be careful with anything that you could become addicted to.
- An undesirable reality is only made worse by trying to run away from it.
- What have been your methods of escaping or running from an undesirable reality in the past?

- Face your pain and work through it, instead of trying to run away from it with drugs or alcohol.
- Alcohol and drugs can numb the pain for a while but in very short order make things worse both emotionally (depression) and existentially (financial and social problems).
- If your doctor prescribes an anti-depressant or tranquilizer, use it only when absolutely necessary.
- At the same time, it is worth remembering that you and only you are the one responsible for your recovery, not a medication.
- Many activities can also become an addiction: TV, games, work, social events, etc.
- Constant distraction does not heal anyone.

### **OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 31: SPOILING YOURSELF**

- Your family and friends have probably already spoiled you a bit. Now it is time to spoil yourself.
- What did you used to do when you were very young that you really enjoyed?
  - Take a bubble bath.
  - Eat an ice cream cone.
  - Go to a movie.
  - Finger-paint.
  - Get a massage.
  - Run around the house nude.
  - Other:
  - Other:
  - Other:
  - Other:
  - Other:
- Of them, which ones could you literally or symbolically repeat in these days in order to occasionally spoil yourself?
  - You can indulge yourself with anything you really enjoy.
  - To be sad and depressed for a long time is not a measure of how much you love. Or of how much you lost. It doesn't prove anything.
  - You don't have to hurt beyond reason and forever.
  - True love gives life.
  - True love helps you find fulfillment, happiness and pleasure.

**It is not God's will that we be happy; it is His will that we learn to make ourselves happy. Immanuel Kant**

### **OBSERVATIONS :**

## **LESSON 32: KEEPING A JOURNAL**

- Another very useful strategy is to keep a daily journal of your thoughts and feelings.
- This is an excellent way for your feelings to come out and organize your thoughts.
- You don't necessarily need to do it everyday. Write in your journal when you feel like it or when you are not feeling well.
- Review your journal entries often so you can see your progress in the recovery process.
- If you are comfortable in doing so, it is often helpful to share your journal with your support group or other friends. It could also be very, very helpful to them.
- Here is a sample format:

**DATE:**

**TIME:**

**WHAT HAPPENED AND WHAT I DID TODAY:**

**WHAT I THINK ABOUT IT:**

**HOW I FEEL ABOUT IT:**

**WHAT I LEARNED FROM IT:**

**WHAT I'VE DECIDED:**

**OBSERVATIONS:**



## **LESSON 33: PROGRESSING AT YOUR OWN PACE**

- Obviously, everyone wants you to recover instantly, especially you.
- Unfortunately, there is no world standard of recovery and it does take time.
- Each person, has his or her own rhythm. You do not have to give in to pressure from others to recover according to some preconceived notion of time.
- Recovery is a pilgrimage through four stages:

<b>BASIC NEED:</b>	<b>PROCESS:</b>	<b>SKILLS NEEDED:</b>
<b>SURVIVAL</b>	Accommodate: Get Through	Physical, mental, social and spiritual survival.
<b>SECURITY</b>	Assimilate: Get Along	awareness, persistence, reflection, compliance, analysis, observation, flexibility, adaptation,
<b>AUTONOMY</b>	Activate: Get Going	assertiveness, validation, authenticity, personal growth, empowerment, achievement, creativity, accountability
<b>TRANSCENDENCE</b>	Associate: Get Together	affiliation, sharing, advocacy, solidarity, alliances, win-win, cooperation

- Where are you now in your pilgrimage?
- You have a right to handle this process in your own way.
- You have a right to work it out at your own pace.

### **OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 34: RECOGNIZE YOUR IMPROVEMENT**

- As you go through these lessons you have probably noticed the following:
  - you can think with more clarity
  - you have more realistic ideas
  - you are able to focus better
  - your feelings are more genuine
  - you are physically healthier
  - you are more trustworthy
- Describe how you have improved since you have started to work on this manual:
  
- Now review it and decide how you are going to celebrate your progress.
  
- You feel stronger and more independent.
- You feel like a whole person.
- You are starting to like yourself more.
- Congratulations! You have successfully gone through the worst of the process and are now on your way down the other side of the mountain.

### **OBSERVATIONS:**

# TO GROW

## LESSON 35: PRESSING FORWARD

- You have learned many, many things.
- You have learned that you can survive, that the pain will diminish and that recovery is possible, that you have progressed in the journey.
- You have lived through a real ordeal and you have survived.
- You have suffered tremendously and you are recovering.
- It is not enough to settle for just surviving and recovering.
- This tragic experience can help you grow as a person.
- What have been your five most important learning during this process?

**The door to growth is locked from within. No one can develop anyone except himself.**

**Chris Argyris**

## **OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 36: FOCUSING ON THE POSITIVE:**

- As your pain diminishes you will have a better understanding of your situation.
- You will begin to realize that in spite of all the negative aspects of the tragedy, change and separation are a very natural part of life and are necessary for healing to take place.
- Your life before the tragedy had many positive aspects. That's why you miss it so much.
- Make a list of the best of your life before the tragedy (activities, possessions, people, etc.):
  - Check the ones that are still with you or can be reconstructed.
  - You can think about how your life today is richer because of your previous life experiences, even though you have gone through a lot of painful moments?
  - You have suffered many losses and are better for living through them.
  - Life didn't turn out as you had hoped for, but you are wiser and stronger for it.
  - Be proud of having had the strength and the courage to move on.

**The three pillars of happiness are: having something to do, having someone to love and having something to hope for. Alexander Chalmers**

## **OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 37: PRACTICING A NEW LIFE**

- Get ready to make an adjustment ... maybe even two or three.
- A new phase of your life has begun.
- Today is the first day of the rest of your life.
- Your new life will require some changes.
- Today could be a great day to start rehearsing for your new life.
- Or maybe you would prefer to wait until tomorrow.
- It's going to require courage.
- It will be very emotional.
- What are some of the key changes you will face in the next year?

**If we don't have the time to do something well, how are we going to have the time to fix it?**

**Tom Peters**

**OBSERVATIONS :**

## **LESSON 38: STARTING TO LIVE**

- Give yourself the opportunity to meet new people, do new things, go to new places, have new ideas and live new experiences.
- You have managed well those initial emotional reactions and you well know that only in soap operas do you hear "I will never love again... love only brings pain."
- In real life you can be emotionally whole and physically healthy.
- The time has come to:
  - find a new place to live
  - buy or make a new wardrobe for yourself
  - go back to school
  - find a new job
  - make new friends
  - learn how to have fun again
  - reach for your dreams
- Frank Lloyd Wright reminded us that each one is the architect of his or her own destiny.
- What do you want to be? To do? Describe here in detail how and where you want to be in a year:

**We can never become what we are able to become, staying as we are.**

**Max de Pree**

### **OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 39: LEARN SOMETHING NEW**

- The time has come to have faith and hope.
- What new sport do you wish to practice?
- What book do you want to read?
- What kind of courses do you want to take at school?
- Learn something new!
- Do something different!
- List five new things you would like to do in the next few months:
  - 1)
  - 2)
  - 3)
  - 4)
  - 5)

**Dance as if no one was watching, work as if you didn't need the pay and love as if you had never been hurt.**

### **OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 40: REDISCOVERING YOUR CREATIVITY**

- How did you express your creativity before the tragedy:
  - writing
  - singing
  - dancing
  - cooking
  - painting
  - knitting
  - taking photos
  - decorating
  - playing a musical instrument
  - sculpting
  - inventing
  - sewing
  - carpentry
  - telling stories
  - drawing
  - other:
  - other:
  - other:
  - other:
  
- When choosing new and old interests, be sure to balance between activities that require participation from others and with those you do all on your own better.
  
- What do you propose to do to express your creativity?

### **OBSERVATIONS:**



## **LESSON 41: GROWING AS A PERSON**

This is an excellent time to make changes in your life.

- Now is the best time to make things better and to improve your quality of life.
- **YOUR PHYSICAL DIMENSION:** This is a GREAT time to lose or gain those needed pounds, to stop killing yourself with cigarettes, to moderate your use of alcohol, to exercise regularly, etc.
- **YOUR MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL DIMENSION:** This is a GREAT time to study more, to deal with emotions that are still bothering you, to get to know yourself better, etc..
- **YOUR SOCIAL DIMENSION:** This is a GREAT time to make new friends, share new social activities, improve your relationship with your partner, get closer to your family, etc.
- **YOUR SPIRITUAL DIMENSION:** This is a GREAT time to renew your personal relationship with God, spent some time in prayer, get outdoors more often and enjoy nature, etc.
- You might want to seek help from your support group or even from a professional to accomplish these goals.
- What are you willing to start doing this month?:

**PHYSICAL DIMENSION:**

**MENTAL-EMOTIONAL DIMENSION:**

**SOCIAL DIMENSION:**

**SPIRITUAL DIMENSION:**

**OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 42: BECOMING WHOMEVER YOU WISH**

- You can do it with an effective method. Just be patient with yourself.
- First, set goals that are simple, specific, and clear.
- Please write down one specific a goal that you have for the near future:
  
- Now make a list of all the steps you need to accomplish this goal:

<b><u>Step</u></b>	<b><u>By When?</u></b>	<b><u>How will I know I have reached this point?</u></b>
--------------------	------------------------	--

- You are not a predetermined being.
- You are who you are being right now.
- Do what is correct and do it correctly.
- You can reach your dream and be all that you can and want to be, as soon as you decide to and learn how to get there.

### **OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 43: SHARING WITH OTHERS**

- Every time you begin to feel sorry for yourself, the best strategy is to do something for someone else.
  - To give to others and to share with others can be very satisfying and is a great source of endorphins which speed your own recovery.
  - Being loved is very comforting. Showing your love for others is very fulfilling.
  - With whom would you be willing to share more time this week?
- 
- To whom would you be willing to express your affection this week?
- 
- 
- Who would you be willing to help with his or her recovery this week?

**People generally know what they are doing and why they are doing it. What they usually don't know is the impact on others of doing what they are doing.**

**M. Foucault**

### **OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 44: GETTING READY TO REMEMBER**

- If you continue on your journey of recovery, every now and then those unpleasant memories from the past will come back:
  - one of these days
  - when you see a certain place or thing
  - when you perceive a certain scent
  - at Christmas
  - when you hear a certain sound
  - when someone mentions the tragedy or those that died
  - just because.
- Expect this... it's normal.
- This doesn't mean that you are relapsing. It's normal, and you are well.
- It's just a low point in this roller coaster ride you're on. The next high point will be higher than the previous one.
- Accept these feelings. They are temporary and you have worked through others that are much worse.
- What are you going to do the next time "those" memories come back?

## **OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 45: APPRECIATING EVERYTHING AROUND YOU**

- As you continue on your journey, you'll begin to have a renewed appreciation for everything around you.
- Enjoy it!
- Everything is part of the wonder of life:
  - a glorious sunset
- the scent after a rainfall
  - a child's laughter
  - the sounds of a forest
  - the colors of a brisk fall afternoon
  - the delicate aroma of a spring flower
  - the babbling of a creek
  - the freshly fallen snow on the trees
- What do you most enjoy about your surroundings?

- You are alive and one with the universe once again.
- For having overcoming this crisis you are now:
  - stronger
  - wiser
  - more confident
  - more active
- Because of your personal growth you are now:
  - more responsible
  - happier
  - more independent
  - more joyful

### **OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 46: BEING GRATEFUL**

- You are responsible for your survival, your recovery, and your personal growth.
- Along the way you had the help of many people.
- You can give thanks to:
  - a loving God that has given you a new chance to live.
  - the friends and family that helped you through this crisis
  - your support group.
  - those that gave something directly or indirectly to facilitate your journey.
  - yourself for having the strength and will to survive, recover and grow.
- Write the names of five people that were important in helping you along the way:
  - 1)
  - 2)
  - 3)
  - 4)
  - 5)
- Have you thanked all of them?

## **OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 47: CHOOSING YOUR OWN THING**

- Enjoy your freedom of choice.
- Now you are in control of your life again.
- You can take advantage of the opportunity you have to be able to decide the where, when, how and why for today... and for the rest of your life.
- Now you can make decisions to organize, clean, repair, get rid of, and acquire.
- Your world is back in order.
- You may create the world you wish to be surrounded by.
- That freedom also brings with it new responsibilities.
- What will your next step be?

**Everything can be taken from you except one thing: your freedom to choose an attitude when confronted by adversity. Viktor Frankl**

### **OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 48: RECOGNIZING YOUR SUCCESS**

- Now everything is just a past memory.
- You have lost, you have survived, you have recovered, and you have grown.
- It's time to recognize your success.
- Describe how you did it. It will help you put everything in perspective and will probably help others:

- Congratulations!

### **OBSERVATIONS:**



## **LESSON 49: CELEBRATING YOUR SUCCESS**

- Now everything is in the past.
- Reaffirm to yourself and to the world your ability to overcome and succeed, to grow, to be yourself, to love, to enjoy, to understand and to be successful.
- The time has come to celebrate your success and your life.
- You should have a celebration, a sort of “graduation” ceremony, with others that have been your companions on this pilgrimage.
- How are you going to celebrate your success?

### **OBSERVATIONS:**

## **LESSON 50: CELEBRATING LIFE**

- Everything is in the past.
- You discovered that life goes on with or without you, and this time it's with you.
- The time has come to celebrate life.
- The best way to celebrate it is to live fully and to help others to do the same.
- Christ said: "*I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*" John 10:10
- Accept this gift!

## **EPILOGUE**

The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want.  
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:  
    he leadeth me beside the still waters.  
He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in  
    the paths of righteousness  
        for his name's sake.  
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the  
    shadow of death, I will fear no evil:  
        for thou art with me;  
thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.  
    Thou preparest a table before me  
    in the presence of mine enemies:  
    thou anointest my head with oil;  
        my cup runneth over.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall  
follow me in all the days of my life:  
    and I will dwell in the house  
    of the Lord forever.

### **PSALM 23**

"These things I have spoken unto to you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world."

### **JOHN 16:33**

**DR. GILBERT BRENSON LAZAN**  
**DR. MARÍA MERCEDES SARMIENTO DÍAZ**

Dr. Gilbert Brenson-Lazan, a North American living in Colombia since 1972, is Founder and Executive President of Amauta International, LLC, dedicated to the training and mentoring of facilitators of social and organizational change. He is a social psychologist, organizational consultant, educator and author of 28 books. He has been recognized internationally for his pioneering work in Latin America in the field of facilitation, organizational development, brief systemic therapy, crisis intervention, and stress management.

In 1986, as a result of his work with the victims of the tragedy in Armero, Colombia, Dr. Brenson and his then colleague-wife, Dr. María Mercedes Sarmiento Díaz (1947-2003), became interested in the field of psychosocial reconstruction after natural and social disasters. That was the beginning of a twenty-year journey to many parts of the world, developing the model and materials as well as training facilitators in disaster intervention processes focusing on the psychological and social reconstruction of individuals and their communities.

Dr. Brenson was International Vice-Chair of the International Association of Facilitators (IAF), a founding Board member of Global Facilitators Serving Communities and past president, as well as an active member of several other professional groups and organizations.

Dr. Sarmiento was a clinical psychologist and educator, with post-graduate studies in facilitation, brief systemic therapy, education and theology. She was Co-Founder of Amauta International, a teaching member of Eirene International, co-founder of the IAF Community Outreach Task Force, a founding Board member of Global Facilitators Serving Communities, and a pioneer in Latin America in the field of virtual education and mentoring.

Gil is an avid outdoor photographer, enjoys classical music, training his Rottweilers, playing Colombian folk music, and studying social theology. He has five sons, three grandchildren and is married to Parcia Sansary Gómez.

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