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How To

FLOURISH

Through Tough Transitions

CREATING HOPE AMIDST
GRIEF, LOSS & TRANSITION



WITH
Laura Toop

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Clarity in Nothingness: An Oxymoron?

How can we find clarity in 'nothingness'?

But how can I get clear on what is not there, I hear you ask.

'I just feel like nothing', 'I have nothing left', you say.

YOU are not nothing, and YOU are always something more than nothing. YOU are a very good place to start.

Clarity is the important 1st step in travelling this journey of grief.

"Would you tell me please, which way
should I go from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where
you want to get to." said the Cat.

"I don't much care where," said
Alice.

"Then it doesn't matter which way
you go." said the Cat.

"— So long as I get somewhere,"
Alice added as an explanation.

"Oh, you're sure to do that." said
the Cat, "if you walk long enough."

Lewis Carroll

Without clarity of where you are now, how can you know where you want to be?

Failing to get clarity, before journeying beyond loss, serves only to ensure you feel more hopeless, helpless, and haphazard in your endeavours.

I often liken loss, to being like a teaspoon of salt, in a teacup of water, unpalatable, abhorrent, repelling. You will do anything not to taste it.

Pretty quickly you realize the salt is not going to go away, you are stuck in your teacup of water and teaspoon of salt.

What choices do you have?



Well, do nothing, it is still a choice after-all but how will your teacup of salty water become more palatable?

Will you wait until someone realises you are stuck in a teacup of salty water?

You will surely wait a long time, no? How will they know?

Or YOU do something, add some 'water' to your teacup, by acting?

What action should YOU take amidst this nothingness?

The first Christmas after I lost my husband, my then 4-year-old nephew said to me 'Auntie Lollipops (a.k.a. Me), now that Uncle Chris is dead, you have nothing' He did however kindly offer he would 'look after me for 100 days', a long time when you're 4, but when you're 42, it was not going to get me much passed March.

Who was I now? what matters now?

Everything I had known and worked hard to 'achieve', my husband, my health, and my career, were gone, my dreams for the future, well what future? I was shattered into millions and millions of pieces. 'Nothingness' was all I could see and feel.

Loss, you see, had created a huge, big whole in me, filled with, well, NOTHING.

And what lay ahead?

Apart from NOTHING?

Where was the joy, the hope, the love I had once known?

In that moment, I had clarity I was not nothing, and it was a very good place to start.

YOU are not nothing, and it is a very good place to start. YOU are the key.

Clarity on Now: The Identity Shift



The UK's national 'treasure' Captain (Sir) Tom Moore did not wait until he was fully healthy to get started on his 'mission'.

He knew what mattered most to him: to thank the nurses who had been generous and kind to him.

He knew who he was: a gentleman, soon to turn 100 years old, who had 2 legs, a 100metre garden, a family, and a Zimmer frame for support.

He aimed only to raise £1,000, the knighthood, number 1 single and £33m all came from taking the first step.



**'I can't go back to
yesterday – because I was a
different person then'**

Lewis Carroll

You must start to get to know yourself, the self who is here now.

“Fighting’ for the ‘old’ you rarely yield results you were a different person then.

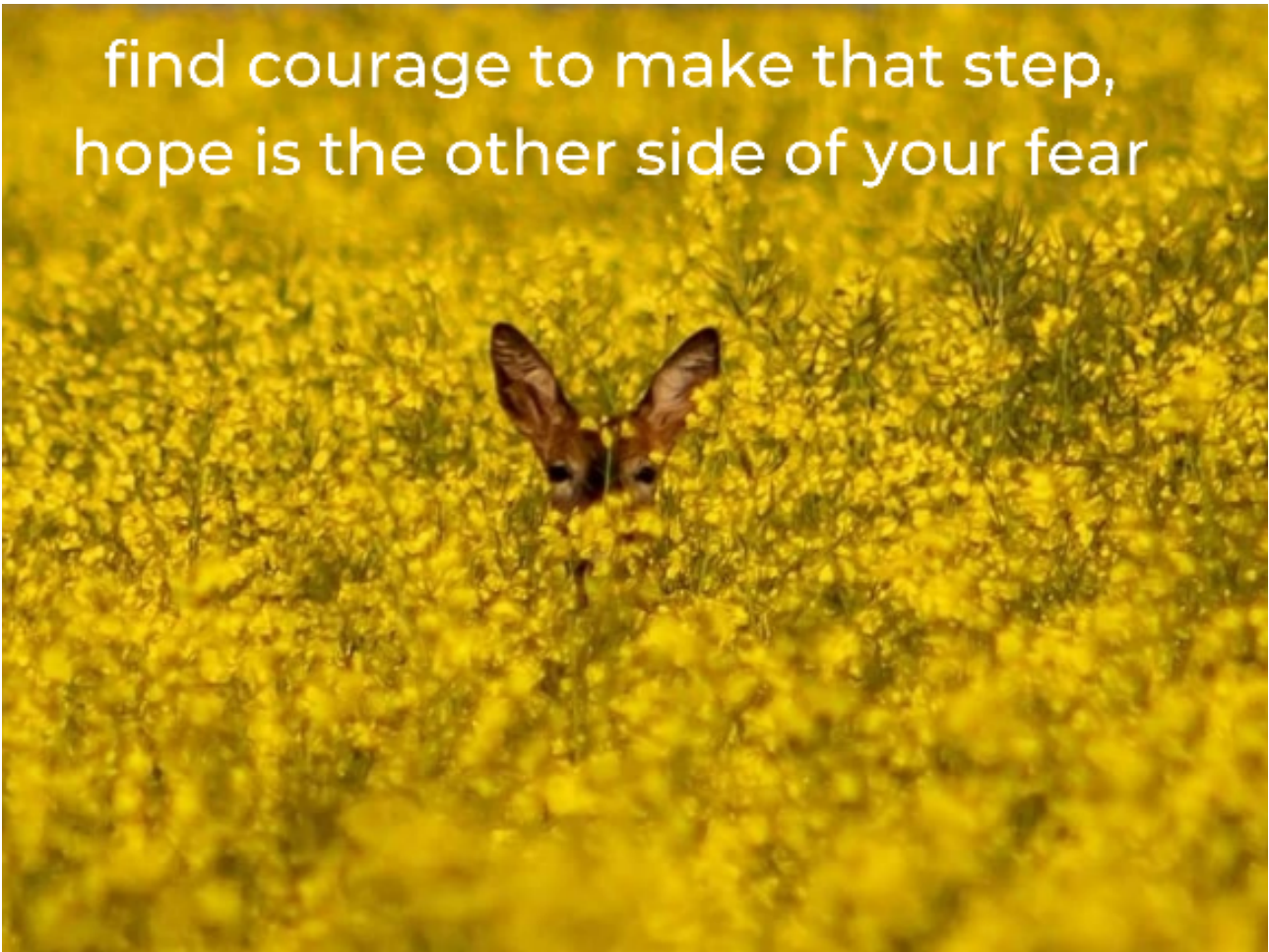
The ‘secret’ is to acknowledge, to understand, the pieces of our shattered lives, to get to know yourself, the self who is here now...

Not the You who was here before your loss, yes of course, parts of you will have ‘survived’ the impact of loss, but where are they, amongst the shattered pieces?

**'The secret of change is to
focus all of your energy not
on fighting the old, but on
building the new'**

Socrates

find courage to make that step,
hope is the other side of your fear



Who are you now?

'The more of me I be, the
clearer I can be.'

Rachel Andrews

What do you want to feel?

Joy? Happiness? Calm? For example:

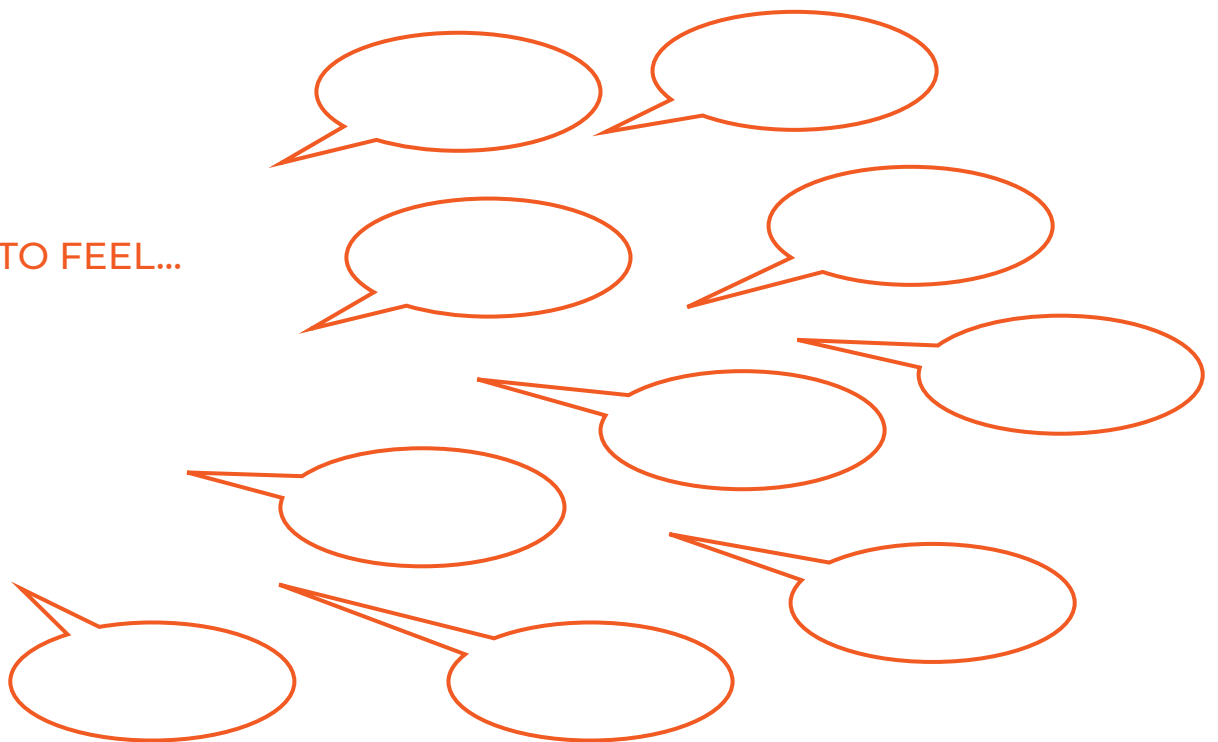
I WANTED TO FEEL...



What about you? What do you want to feel?

Only YOU will know what you want to feel NOW.

I WANT TO FEEL...



And when you feel...

What do you notice?

What happens for you?

These are your 'rays of sunshine' you are putting back into your life, or rather these are the pieces of your shattered lives you wish to nurture moving forward in your life beyond your loss.

If you had an open wound, you would tend to it, nurture it, nourish it, with what it needs to heal. You are simply nurturing your wound of loss.

Uncertain of what you want to feel?

Acknowledge where you are right now....

An unsettled mind will not see with clarity.

By 'grounding your grief', to acknowledge what is – Where are you? What do you feel? It is possible to gain clarity of what you want to feel.

Let me share with you:

Where I was:

- ☀️ Lost my husband to pancreatic cancer, July 2015.
- ☀️ Diagnosis to dying, very rapid, 11 months in all.
- ☀️ Family was very present during the final days of my husband's life.
- ☀️ Limited time to get administration done, complicating process after he died.
- ☀️ Lost my health after the funeral, spent a month in hospital very poorly.
- ☀️ Returned to work, to a new boss, who was difficult behind closed doors.




- ☀️ Lost my job due to 'lack of leadership' ability, December 2015.
- ☀️ Had major surgery to resolve the issue which led to the hospital stay.
- ☀️ Turning into 2016 I had no husband, no career and limited health.

What I felt:










- ☀️ Disconnected from myself and others
- ☀️ Everyone had an opinion of what I should 'do'.
- ☀️ Stuck, like whole life had completely stopped.
- ☀️ Often resentful of having to put others 1st.
- ☀️ Pulled in multiple directions.
- ☀️ Guilty if we're to be happy.
- ☀️ Conflicted, my husband would want me to carry on.
- ☀️ Overwhelmed and out of control.
- ☀️ Just going through the motions.
- ☀️ Desire to return to my 'old' life.

What I did NOT want:

- ☀️ Disconnection
- ☀️ Uncertainty of not knowing.
- ☀️ Lack of 'normality'
- ☀️ Being stuck
- ☀️ Resentment
- ☀️ Guilt

-  Overwhelm
-  Lack of control
-  To just go through the motions

Therefore...what I DID want was:

-  Connection
-  Certainty
-  Normality
-  Freedom
-  Peace
-  Control
-  Balance
-  Happiness
-  Joy

What about You...

Where are YOU?



What do you feel?



What do you NOT want?



Therefore... What you DO want is...



3. Finding Focus: Mountains, Meaning, Musings



But how do we create this into a life we might want to live beyond loss?

'If you can dream it you can do it.'

Walt Disney

Consider the areas of your life, YOUR MOUNTAINS – home, work, enjoying life, family, friendships, holiday for example.

- ☀️ What do you want?
- ☀️ What will be happening?
- ☀️ What will you notice? See? Hear? Feel?

YOUR MEANING

- ☀️ What feeling does it give you?
- ☀️ What role or purpose does it have for you?

YOUR MUSINGS

- ☀️ What more do you need to know?
- ☀️ What actions do you need to take to get you 1 step closer?

You are creating your MAP to living beyond the nothingness of now.

Here is an example to help you get started.

MOUNTAINS Where do you want to be?		MEANING What does it give you?	MUSINGS What action do you need?
HOME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀️ Calm oasis away from the busy-ness of the outside world, filled with friends, family, and flowers, with an entertaining space just waiting to be used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀️ Calm ☀️ Safety ☀️ Comfort ☀️ Warmth ☀️ Connection ☀️ Community ☀️ Balance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀️ Render the extension outside walls ☀️ Sort out garden ☀️ Side path to be done ☀️
ENJOYING LIFE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀️ My life is full of friends, holidays, meals, drinks out, coffees, weekends away, and plenty of self-care and nurturing where I am continuing my personal development & growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀️ Balance ☀️ Happiness ☀️ Progression ☀️ Fulfilment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀️ Organize a holiday ☀️ Identify my inner circle of friends
WORK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀️ My career is flexible so I have a well-balanced lifestyle so I can 'give back' as well as add value to others or other organisations. I am working those who have / are experiencing what I have done / overcome 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀️ Purpose ☀️ Inspiration ☀️ Fulfilment ☀️ Natural 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀️ Create a Face to Face meet up group ☀️ Re-establish a FB group

What about you?

Where do you want to be? What feeling will it give you? What action can you take?

MOUNTAINS Where do you want to be?	MEANING What does it give you?	MUSINGS What action do you

4. Finding Focus: Maintaining Motivation & Momentum

Consider your pace.

Recognizing the need to adopt a 'snail's pace', is crucial for your ongoing mental and physical wealth. It is too easy to 'push on through' and ignore what is really going on, propelled by the need to get out of the deep void loss has presented.

Rarely does this approach get you long term, sustainable outcomes.

Consider your priorities.

It is important to prioritize what matters most to you first, as this will help you move more readily beyond the pain and encourage you to take more steps forward.

Consider what you can control.

Your emotions, behaviours, feelings, responses, choices, words spoken, and what is not (others' emotions, behaviours, feelings, choices, responses, words spoken).

Consider what might stop you.

Keeping on taking steps forward can be hard, especially when meeting with something new, or which pushes you beyond your comfort zone, recognize what things may prevent you taking a step forward, and put in a plan of action to support you taking a step forward, whether it is to engage a friend for support, or simply recognizing tomorrow is a new day, and today is only today.

It is these which will determine your journey from nothingness, to hope and living life beyond loss and grief.

5. Enabling, Encouraging You Beyond Today

As 'The Tough Transitions Coach' I enable, empower, and encourage, you live life again after loss.

Together we create clarity, find focus, and manage motivation, whether on a 121 basis or in small groups.

Becoming a widow, before time, is one of the most overwhelming, isolating & angst-ridden experiences one can go through.

The world, as you know it, no longer exists. Your feelings of safety & security are gone. Your future, your dreams, are in pieces.

Losing your health and career, as well, as I did, only heightens those feelings.

7 years on, I have created a space in which I wishes to belong, feels safe, and offers joy once again, and am now passionate about enabling others to live life again after loss with confidence.

My work uses my professional training (NLP, CBT, Person-Centered Therapy, Hypnotherapy for health and healing), coupled with my lived experience of grief, loss, and trauma from within both the personal and corporate environments, and hence offer a unique insight into living life again after loss.

You are never alone, together is always better.


What others say about working with me:

"Before talking with Laura, I felt completely lost in my grief, didn't know where to begin with trying to make this new life work. I just kept getting hit by waves of such sadness and despair.

I now feel more positive about moving forward, I feel I have the starting blocks on which to build my new life upon.

Also feel so grateful to of found Laura, who continues to be an amazing support and friend."

Kerry P.



"Before we spoke, my mind was so full of questions and I could not make any clear decisions.


Laura has the ability, to ground you, and help take yourself out of the picture so that you can see clearly which path to take.

Once we had worked through all my worries, questions plus some additional questions that Laura threw in, I knew which direction I needed to go.

I sometimes wonder, where I would be without those conversations?

We all need a Laura in our lives!"

Becky S.




"Before working with Laura, I was incredibly stressed about what I should be doing with my life. The pandemic has heightened it, but in reality, this is something I have struggled with for many years.

I struggled to see how I could transition, and I genuinely felt feelings of helplessness. Laura has helped me with clarity...on both my mindset and on how I connect with others.

She has been a constant help over the past few months, and I thoroughly recommend her to anyone who feels stuck and cannot see the wood for the trees."


Simon H.



"You care, understand, and encourage.

You are 100% committed to help people through their journey and stay with them through the good and bad times"

Kerry O'B.



"I felt cared for and listened to. I felt like I wasn't judged but, respected at all times. Despite being in a mess a lot of the time when we talked. "


Elizabeth M.



"My coaching with Laura started in what only can be described as a personal turmoil. My discussions with Laura enabled me to re-prioritize my views at the time and realize the steps I needed to take in order to solve and achieve what I wanted to.

The coaching made me feel confident and reassured me that I knew what I needed to do to achieve the goals I wanted to achieve. Laura made me realize that I have all the answers for where I want to be in my life and discussing them with someone who has no real, what I would say, personal attachment to life, made me realize this."

Charlotte W.



Reach out today, for a free clarity call.

It is never too soon to start living life again.

Sending love.

Laura ❤️



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TEDx: <https://www.ted.com/talks/>

[laura_toop_what_the_board_room_taught_me_about_living_life_again_after_loss](https://www.ted.com/talks/laura_toop_what_the_board_room_taught_me_about_living_life_again_after_loss)

Acknowledgements:

Linda Robertson - Photography - <https://www.lindarobertsonphotography.com/>