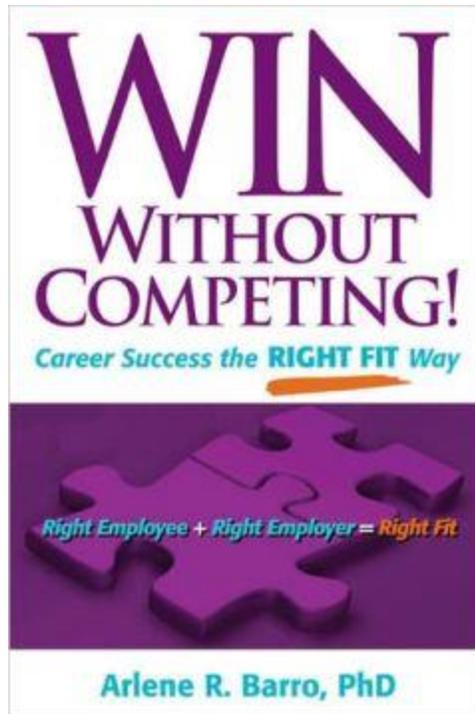


Conquering Stress! With Dr. Arlene—Personal Loss Causes Stress



Posted: Tuesday, December 5, 2017 - 11:32 AM

By Dr. Arlene Barro

What personal losses did you experience in 2017? Each of us responds differently, depending on the type of loss, its significance, and impact on our lives. Are you ready to greet 2018 with a happy heart or a heavy heart? Managing your stress associated with loss, whether singular or multiple losses, will ease the pain and enable you to lift yourself up.

Death and Divorce

Death: Permanent Loss?

We think of death as a permanent loss. Take another perspective on the event. Focus on the treasure trove of positive memories that you shared with that person. If you lost a pet, think of the joy you felt when your pet greeted you when the sound of the key announced your arrival.

Parental loss has a special place in our lives. If you had a good relationship and retained their advice, you will remember what they told you. Consciously, you will use it to make decisions. When I speak to clients

about parental loss, those who have their inner voice, mother, father or both, are able to manage their loss with less stress. If the parental inner voice does not exist, dealing with death is extremely difficult because they feel a strong permanent loss.

For those raising children, it is important to enable them to make their own decisions with your guiding advice. Otherwise, they will not retain your inner voice, if you make all their decisions.

Divorce: Always connected?

If there are no children, the divorce could result in just walking away, staying in touch or remaining friends. I know a childless couple who got divorced because the husband wanted to live with a man. The wife, even though she was devastated, would have dinner with her ex-husband weekly. Before he died, he wanted her to meet his partner. She refused. He left her out of his will.

The partner wrote her ex-husband's obituary naming himself as the surviving partner. She was mortified and furious. I believe this could have been avoided, if she had met the partner. Ignoring reality does not delete it. If you want to reduce stress, step out of your comfort zone and deal with the situation.

If there are children involved in the divorce, a permanent connection exists. For the sake of the children, a cordial, respectful relationship is ideal. The children should not be the victims of the divorce.

If divorce occurs when the children are adults, even if one spouse selects another, work with the situation to keep the family intact. Your body will appreciate minimal stress and your health will reflect it.

Retirement & Downsizing

Retirement: Twilight of Life?

When you retire and you are in good health, you are marking the end of a career. There is a sense of loss. However, if you plan how you will spend your time and are eager to step into a new routine, your loss will disappear because you are active. On the other hand, if you wake up in the morning and have no plans, you will invite aging to take over. It is critical to remain physically and mentally active. Verbal communication is mandatory or you will forget the words.

If you have health issues, build pleasure into your daily routine and communicate regularly with others. It may be tempting to retreat. Avoid it. It is difficult and frustrating to restore lost capabilities. Practice prevention not treatment.

Downsizing: Personal or Professional?

At this time of year, employers frequently downsize, even in a strong economy. Think: “It’s not personal, it’s only business.” Too many people take this event personally. Depending on their age and financial situation, some may never work again. Others, stop working for a year or more. One of my clients, who was in a leadership position, refused to work at all for two years. He saw the downsizing as personal rejection. The truth of the matter is that the position was the wrong fit, but he took it because he wanted the title. This is not uncommon. Recognizing that he held the title for a year, he achieved his goal. If he had looked at it from that perspective, he would not have had difficulty returning to the world and eliminating undue stress. Separate the personal from the professional.

Managing the Business of Loss

Whatever type of loss you experience, be sure to manage the devil’s details and tie up the loose ends, as quickly as possible. You will heal faster and significantly reduce your stress, if you manage the business of loss efficiently and effectively.

Questions? Email drbarro@barroglobal.com. Responses could appear in her next column.

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