

# Rebuilding your life after the loss of a partner

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Over the 18 years I've been a matchmaker and relationship coach I've come across many people, who, after losing a partner have felt a need to move forward and find a new partner within a matter of a few months. The reasons usually given; they feel such a void, lonely, or friends and family encouraging them to move on, even if they may not feel ready. When a relationship ends due to a death, it is not the same as a relationship ending amicably or when it's run its natural course.

The death of a loved one can engulf you in a deep and hopeless fog of despair. Maybe the death was sudden, an accident, heart attack or where you nursed, loved, and watched your loved one pass, no one should ever underestimate the pain and grief this causes. These feelings of grief must be felt and gone through, if you shut those emotions down and attempt to bypass them, it's very likely at some point in the future they will resurface with a vengeance. As human beings, it is normal to mourn, grieve a loved one, and as difficult and painful that may be, it forms part of the healing process.




We have learnt a lot over the years about processing grief, but in the past, it was thought a year was enough time to grieve, where it was time to put it behind you and move on with your life. But in reality, most people have barely begun their journey to being sufficiently healed to love again. I have witnessed this several times, where one situation led me to re-write my terms for accepting widowers under 18 months. I know society generally does not allow enough time for people to go through their grief, it's as though, it must not be spoken about, expressed or shared after a specific time. After a few weeks society expects you to have moved on, to talk about anything but

your loss, which only makes you feel more isolated with your feelings. Sadly, there is no magic quick fix for "getting over the death of a loved one" but I do know you must go through all the natural stages of grief. We all move through grief in our own way and time, but 12 months after a long and happy marriage, is only the beginning, there is no formula of what you should do and when. However, speaking to others in the same situation or who have experienced similar can be a huge comfort.

Here is the brief story of "Frances" her name has been changed. Frances came to me some years ago after losing her husband only 10 months previously, she was lonely, missed the comfort and security of the relationship she had nurtured for so many years. At times she felt enveloped in despair, even little everyday things stretched her beyond the point of wanting to carry on. She told me she had been online dating, and knew she had made the wrong decision, but said the grief and the loneliness she felt, she hoped it would somehow make her feel happy again with someone new. However, it was soon obvious she was attracting men who had no interest in what Frances wanted to replicate, but the types who were emotionally unavailable, serial daters, men who in fact mirrored her own emotional lack of readiness to be able to love freely. More over, men who had failed relationships only recently, or men who were unavailable as they were already in a relationship.

None of her connections led to what she hankered for, to find someone to love, they were merely sticking plasters over her grief, a moment of short lived surface pleasantries. Gradually, through these fleeting experiences she knew she had to take the time to let her grief subside as it would in a time that was right for her. She didn't want to be with someone just to have someone in her life, she felt the memory of her husband and what they had shared together, deserved more than someone to fill a void. On reflection she felt she had attracted men who were not dissimilar to herself, confused, in turmoil, not emotionally open or revenge dating, where neither parties were fully in a position to have a loving committed relationship.

Among the middle-aged, more than half of men are in a romantic relationship a year after losing their spouse, compared with only 7% of women

  
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Gradually, Frances realized she needed to stop pretending she was ready to move on, and instead embrace her grief, as grief is one of the most human of feelings we have been blessed with, even though modern society tries bypass it, as no one must ever be sad, everyone must be happy at all times, and any suggestion of not being happy, often we are avoided or just tolerated

I spent time with Frances and eventually advised her to go home and take all the time she needed and when the time was right, she would instinctively know. It was just over two years before I met with Frances once more, but this time she was ready to meet someone new, who, like herself, was ready to enjoy a loving and committed relationship. Finally a happy ending, I introduced Frances to a gentleman who had also lost a partner in the past, and to this day, they are still together.

Take your time...don't plan a time you must be ready to move on again, let it happen naturally!