

On adapting to change in life

by Rev. Avery Kempton,
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Change and adapting to change is a way of life for us in our society. We are constantly having to adapt our lives to new situations. When we move to a new address; or when a friend moves away; a broken love affair; a marriage; a divorce; illness and death; all require an adjustment on our part.

I have become increasingly aware of how devastating change can be for some people. Depending upon the intensity of the event, the reaction can range all the way from anxiety and hostility (sometimes in senseless violence) to physical illness and depression.

Moving from hospital chaplaincy into university ministry, I have been impressed with the number of people whom I have met who seem to be suffering with a condition which Victor Frankl has referred to as "existential anxiety", which seems to come from this constant pressure to adapt to change. We are uncertain about the future, but we are frightened by the kind of changes it might hold for us. This can also be seen as a spiritual anxiety.

Researchers such as Dr. Harold G. Wolff, of Cornell Medical Centre, have seen it to be vital to the future of our society that we investigate the impact that change has on people. He has developed a means by which we can now measure the degree to which people are affected by the change-events in their lives. This is particularly related to the potential health hazard of such events in our lives.

The most startling discovery was that those who suffer more significant loss are likely to become emotionally or physically ill within a short time of the change-event. This is especially true when the change occurs as a result of a loss related to death. If a friend or family member dies, the impact of that change is great enough to cause a significant pressure on us to adapt to bring about illness.

Something is missing from our lives following a loss and we need to fill that gap to get our lives back to normal as best we can. When a relationship with a person terminates, either with death, separation or divorce, or a geographical move, this is a special kind of loss. This is especially true if the relationship was one from which we received a lot of personal support. Our own understanding of ourselves and the meaning of our lives may be threatened. This attempt to adapt to the loss and recover the personal esteem is what we commonly refer to as "grief-work". It is important to remember that this grief-work needs to be done, not only after the death of a person but after any significant loss.

There is a definite series of tasks that must be accomplished before we can rebuild our lives. First, we need to acknowledge that a loss has occurred. This is reality, the relationship has terminated for whatever reason. Our lives must be re-organized in light of that fact. Naturally, life takes on a new focus when we attempt to live without that person. Unfortunately, for most of us at that time life seems devoid of meaning and therefore we question the

possibility of continuing. The way out of this is to develop new patterns for our relationships, not to replace the lost person but to strengthen our own sense of belonging.

We also need to live with the memory of the person. Too often we are not allowed to do this because it is too painful, or those around us are uncomfortable with it. Our memories are important to us and we need to remember the good and the bad things about the relationship. This enables us to move forward in rebuilding our ability to relate to other people. We are restored to wholeness when we recall what we have received from that person.

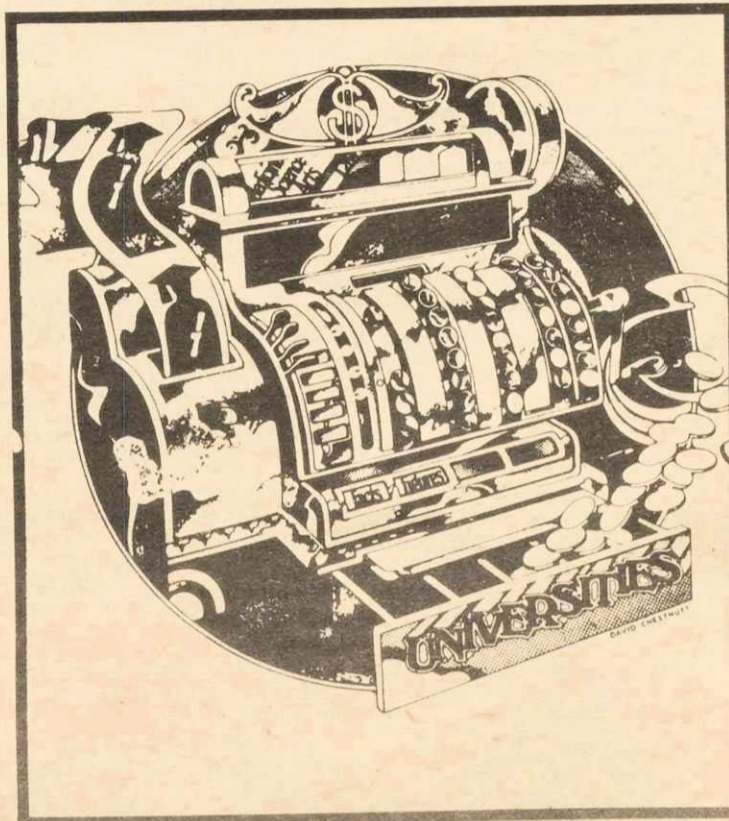
It is also important that we deal with our feelings. We acknowledge that guilt and fear and anger and self pity and anxiety are part of our grief reaction. If such feelings can be shared with someone who can allow us to express them they will decrease in intensity. Maybe just saying that you feel anger, won't be enough so you may need to spend time with someone who will let you act it out. This can also help us to understand why we are feeling as we do.

This requires a very special friend or counselor who will stay with us through the struggle. Ministers are often called upon to be with people at such a time, especially in the situation of a person who has lost a significant person through death. Death leaves us feeling so alone, but there are little deaths that can leave us feeling equally deserted. We cannot take the burden from another person; we can however indicate ways in which we are still caring for them. This helps to restore

the hope that we can find meaning and purpose in our lives. Turning to another person at a time like this can reassure us. Just as the pain we are feeling comes through the loss of a relationship so the health and comfort of friendship can strengthen us.

A final thought—we often refer to mourning as if it were

a painful process in which we are helpless until it passes. When we see it as active grief-work we can see it as a way in which we are able to once again experience life in a healthy way. We recognize that life can never be the same, but it can and does go on. Our responsibility is to do what we can to make it a healthy experience.



Working part-time ...taxi tuition

by Pam Berman

Financial considerations have made going to university on a full-time basis impossible for some people. Part-time attendance has become more and more popular every year. Full-time students are also finding that the earnings that they have saved over the summer are just not enough and more and more are forced to obtain a part-time income.

One form of employment that seems to lend itself easily to a part-time or full-time student's schedule is the taxi driver business. Mert Dickey, a part-time student taking accounting classes at Dalhousie who drives for Casino Taxi, was asked to explain the combination of studying and driving a cab.

A great deal of students do just that, not only working the weekends but driving on the week nights as well. When asked about keeping up with the reading and the assignments for classes, Dickey said he did his readings in the cab waiting for calls and then went home to do his assignments whenever he finished the readings.

"Working your own hours is the biggest advantage of driving a cab. One friend of mine drove a taxi through two degrees," Dickey said.

Full-time studies would not be financially possible at this time, Dickey said, and that probably goes for the majority of part-time students. Driving a cab isn't the best way to make a living, but in these

... sometimes 80 hours a week is needed to make enough"

The flexibility and freedom of this type of employment, as well as the wide range of hours that are available for a person to work, make it an excellent way for a student to make money.

"There's no real expenses besides gas and the office and car rental fees," said Dickey, "so if a student got a car on a Friday night and worked from supper time rush to the next morning he could pay for the car and the gas and clear a real good profit besides."

times of "tough bucks", don't knock it until you've tried it.

Why did he choose to drive a taxi in the first place? Dickey said it was "basically the only job I could get at the time, there was nothing else available."

The job is not particularly lucrative unless you're willing to put in a great deal of hours.

"It's not a 40 hour week, sometimes 80 hours is needed to make enough," Dickey said.

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