

---

## INTRODUCTION

---

Our life on earth is full of ups and downs and for most of us everyday losses have become an integral part of life. Sometimes we expect our losses to be recovered or replaced by something different and better. However, some losses we experience may cause us to suffer unbearable changes in our safety and security as individuals and may strike at the very heart of our existence on earth.

Although death is often regarded as the greatest of these losses, there are many other losses with similar or even more devastating effects on our

lives than death. These losses could come in one or more various forms such as those outlined below:

◆ ***The untimely death of a loved one***

Losing a wife, husband, mother, father, daughter, son, brother, sister, close relative or a very close friend can be heartbreaking. It can turn your life around in a most profound way, resulting in unimaginable pain and anguish.

◆ ***Unexpected redundancy (loss of a job)***

Being employed or owning a business is an essential part of our lives. It gives us a sense of security and optimism. Losing your job, therefore, means the loss of important components of employment i.e. regular income, structured time, highly regulated activities, social contacts, status or sense of identity. Such a situation can affect a person's ego and self-esteem, sapping all confidence and morale.

◆ ***Bad news about your state of health***

Being diagnosed with a terminal or chronic illness like HIV/AIDS, cancer, heart condition, diabetes or genetic conditions like sickle-cell disease (SCD) can really hit a person hard. The sudden realisation of a deadly disease can seriously alter your perception and appreciation of life. Similarly, news that you may need to undergo a surgery that will alter your body image, such as, an amputation, mastectomy, the removal of a womb or even the creation of a visible scar on your body can even be extremely traumatic. These experiences can be very devastating; having to go through such an ordeal can be very difficult, to say the least.

◆ ***Divorce or separation from a spouse***

Divorce or separation from a spouse can significantly affect a person's life. This is particularly heartbreaking when one of the

spouses is not expecting it. After a divorce or separation, you question your failures, u feel betrayed and you start to examine areas where you might have gone wrong. The thought of losing someone you love and adore, and all the years of your lives together is enough to shake the very foundations of your existence.

But such is the grim reality of life. It is replete with unexpected and (sometimes) unexplained events that we have to grapple with on a daily basis whether we are ready for the storm or not. The process of dealing with the situation and bouncing back from it is perhaps the most difficult and nerve-racking moments of an individual's life.

People's reactions to their losses are as diverse as the uniqueness of people and this depends largely on the cultural context within which the loss occurs. What one culture regards as a

maladaptive reaction to a loss may be perfectly reasonable to another culture. This difference in cultural attitudes underlines the fact that there is no single, general or universally accepted way of reacting to losses. While some people stoically ride the tragic storm and emerge from the loss in one piece, many others get so crushed by the situation that they never ever really recover.

This book is aimed at sharing my experience of the loss of a loved one over ten years ago. The aim is to reach out to people who have experienced or are currently experiencing similar losses, and to share with them the pain, grief and all the stages of bereavement I went through at the time of the loss. Most importantly, I will share with you how I was heading towards destruction and what actually stopped me from crossing over. Actually, I was on the *verge of crossing over* until a very good friend intervened.

I can only imagine where I would have ended up, given the state and direction of my life at the time. Thankfully, I had a reservoir of support and solidarity from a friend that went a long way to lift me from the quagmire I had plunged into, and set my feet solidly on the road to recovery and rehabilitation. This is a story of adversity, pain and anguish, but it is also a story of survival, of rebirth, of friendship and of hope. And it is my story!