

The Three Musts

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Three Musts when you're newly single

I've been a single parent most of my adult life. You can say that I've dipped into short-term marriages and one common law relationship and have been single much longer than any of my marriages and other relationship put together. I prefer being single than 'tied down', with someone incompatible. I wish I would have known what to expect when I became single and how to work it through. It certainly would have saved me a lot of pain. This short booklet will introduce you to the three 'must have' to improve your sanity level when you're newly single. It's part of my booklet "Guide to Being Newly Single". Consider this booklet is as a first step toward adjusting to your new beginning. Some of you may require additional help or support when you've completed reading this short paper. This may be in form of talking to your friend, counselor, spiritual leader or a single's coach. Whatever works for you is what you need to do and if it doesn't work, keep on trying, even when it feels uncomfortable. That 'uncomfortable' feeling is an indication that something good is happening. So hang in there.

Must # 1 Accept your current situation and allow yourself to go through the feelings and emotions

Do you remember when you were a child and your parent would say to you "Now, come on, don't cry, it's going to be ok", or "Don't be sad", or "Don't get angry"?

What did your parents say to you, in regards to expressing your emotions when you were a child? Write it down in this section.

Some of us were not taught as children to express our emotions, when all along, it is what makes us human. Some of us don't understand emotions or where they come from. When we're sad, angry or any other uncomfortable emotion, we may avoid them, or replace them with other emotions, which won't allow us to go through the process to eventually transform into a new you. Some people eat their worries away. Some drink or use drugs to avoid the unpleasant emotions and still feel the same way the next day. I am not saying cry for the next two weeks, or carry your anger with you. What I'm saying is to allow yourself to cry, to get angry or to express any other emotion. It's a very real and normal reaction to the presenting circumstances. It's in the **how** we express our anger and in the **how** we re-channel it, that's important. Here's a personal example. A few years ago, I experienced extreme anger during a situation with an ex-boyfriend. I was hurt and I wouldn't express it. Anger came out instead and it wasn't nice. My reaction would be considered abnormal if we took it out of context. However considering the circumstances, my reaction was considered absolutely normal. I knew that my anger and hurt were fueled by the current circumstances. I knew that I did not have a history of angry outburst, so that this anger must be normal. I called a friend to help me deal with it and to understand it better. It took many conversations, many tears and expressions of anger to help me move on. In time, I did. Although it resurfaced on occasion for a few months afterwards, it is not taking anymore head space nor time anymore.

When assessing your current situation, keep history in mind.

I don't have a history of violence nor have I witnessed violence as a child. I am usually in good spirits and easy to get along with. However, just like TNT when I was lit, I exploded. When assessing your situation ask yourself some of these questions: Have I witnessed someone express

emotions in a repetitive and consistent pattern? Do I have a history of the same repetitive and consistent behavior patterns? Your childhood experiences may influence your present day behavior and emotions.

Write down some of the words that you may have **heard** repeatedly in the past and what you **say** that sounds like it?

Write down some of behaviors that you may have **seen** or sensed repeatedly in the past and what you **do and feel** that resembles it?

Remember, you may be your parent's child but you are not your parent. You are you, with a completely different set of rules, expectations and assumptions. You may have learned to be, to do, and to say from prior experience. Explore your beliefs a bit further before going on to the next section. You will require this reflection for Must # 2.

Were there some needs, on your part, that weren't being met in your relationship? Did you have expectations of how you wanted things to turn out? Please write some of these down and how you think it affected you.

I remember a few years ago at the beginning of my ‘heightened awareness’ and ‘learning phase’, I went through a hell of a grieving period. I didn’t realize then, that I was depressed. My work and personal life were affected and at the time, I was too proud to accept medication to help me go through the process. My beliefs were “ I can cure and help myself”. A lesson learned. Pride can hurt you and so can denial. (Some times, medication may be required to help you get passed a situation. Talk to your doctor if you feel that you need help.) Truth is that, at that time, I had masked the feeling of extreme hurt with alcohol and drugs. Did it help? Yes, in the short term. In the long run, I still had to grieve and it took longer to get over it. On the bright side, the learning that occurred has affected me in a positive way.

Bottom line, cry if you feel a need. Yell if you have to. Don’t hurt yourself and any body else while you’re going through it. Don’t use drugs or alcohol to numb your pain or anger. It doesn’t work and you’re wasting precious time. Please note, as with anything else, if the outbursts or crying persists it’s best to get help be it professional or with a self-help group. It isn’t fun for you or for anyone to experience those types of extreme emotions. It’s just not healthy. There are many underlying causes and you may need to see a specialist.

Must # 2 Take care of your self, your inner self and your outer shell.

So far, we’ve looked at accepting our own feelings and emotions and allowing ourselves to go through the grieving process. Now we’ll address must # 2, taking care of ourselves.

Another word for this is “Extreme self-care”. Self-care could mean something different to everyone. To me, taking care of me, means a few things. It means taking care of my outer shell and taking care of my inner self. Most recently I started looking at myself and others in that way. My outer shell being my body, what other people see. My inner self, being my spirit, one component of what drives my outer shell to be, to do, to sense.

Taking care of your outer shell

Taking care of your physical being can take on many forms. For me, it includes walking regularly and drinking plenty of water. I enjoy walking and it helps me to keep fit. I’ve walked with a partner, which is nice and I’ve walked by myself, which is ok too. It’s whatever you need to do get you being physical.

I also try to eat properly, a lot of green vegetables and as much fruit as I can. It’s challenging to eat properly when your income is low, but it’s possible. For example, I’ve had a great garden for a few years now, and eat fresh vegetables daily during summer time. Even if you don’t have a big yard, you can do some creative gardening or a community garden. It’s a great way to know your neighbors, to share with your friends or members of a group.

I also consider dressing up, as opposed to dressing down taking care of my outer shell. It’s like anything else, if you look good, you’ll feel good, or at least you can be fooled to believe that you feel good. So, I try to get out of my track pants and sweat shirt, as much as possible especially when I go outdoors to run errands. I also make sure, my hair is combed properly or up, if I’m having a bad hair day. Makeup has never been one of my things, but I do apply lipstick and mascara on a daily basis. Every little touch goes a long way and your outer shell will look better, which, in turn this will affect your inner self. Although I don’t dye my hair

anymore, it did help to feel better about my circumstances. The outer shell, however, didn't reflect what the inner self was feeling.

Lastly, I try not to rush. You'll wonder, how does that fit in under the outer shell section. Well, for me rushing means that I think I have many things to do, and think that I need to do them all at once. Since my mind is thinking fast, I figure that my body has to follow. If I slow down my inner shell, my outer shell will follow. Slowing down my outer shell, may prevent accidents from occurring, may prevent me from forgetting things, from getting overtired and exhausted. There's no use for rushing except to burn yourself out. So if you want to experience burnout, go ahead, rush all the time. That's why Type A's get heart attacks. They rush, run and are hostile. I used to be a rusher before. It seemed that my job was a rush shift, never a moment to breath. Needless to say, it didn't do me any good after a while and I decided to leave that job. I haven't regretted it since. Ok, not completely true. I missed the regular income and benefits. However that wasn't a good enough reason to stay in an unsatisfying job. I had also noticed that my partner liked to rush. Now that we're no longer together, I can feel the difference. Although I still find myself rushing at times, most of the time I am relaxed and peaceful.

I've given you some examples of taking care of your outer shell. How do you take care of your outer shell?

Taking care of your inner self

Taking care of my inner self means many things, too. For example, taking care of my inner self means, setting some very clear boundaries. A few years ago, I discovered, for example, that my good friend stole some money from her ex-husband to purchase my car. She also took in my boyfriend and his children when we separated. I was upset, angry and hurt. I am no longer this woman's friend. That is a boundary which I have stuck with. Setting boundaries, also means not doing something when I don't feel like it. This took me some time to get used to it, because I wanted people to like me. Now, if I need or want to say no to someone, I feel good about my decision because it's what I truly want. Lately, I've had to set a boundary with my X husband, the father of my children. He recently separated and wanted to make up for lost time. He invited my brother and his family out to his place over the Christmas holidays and I accepted. It had been over 20 years since my brother had seen him and we accepted the opportunity to spend the night together. I soon discovered that putting myself in those type of circumstances weren't good for **me**, so I needed to set some boundaries. He doesn't know that I did this, and he doesn't need to know. They are part of my code of conduct, not his. Start small setting some boundaries and see how it feels. It will get easier as you become more confident and as you trust **YOU** more.

I have also learned to follow my heart instead of my head. By following my heart, I am true to myself and my inner self and this keeps my spirit happy. By being true to myself, no matter what, I have become stronger. This is difficult at times since we all have prior experiences which dictates how we act and think on a day to day basis, so the head does get in the way. As a dear friend of mine said "Tell you head, to mind it's own business" and listen to your heart.

I also try, be it challenging at best of times, to live in the here and now. This is a challenge for me, cause I tend to think of my prior experiences and compare 'notes', then I get scared and want to run. I need to tell my head to stay away, so that my spirit can be free to be happy.

Finally, journaling has been very useful for me. I started off by writing my thoughts and feelings daily and now I write when I need to. I just started to write articles and booklets and have found that quite useful to keep me on track. I don't use the content of my journals for anything but to get in touch with my spiritual side. It helps me to process things, so does talking to some friends or being part of a self-help group for newly divorced or widowed people. Letter writing is another way of doing this. Write a letter (this could be to a x boyfriend, spouse wether the lost occurred by death or separation) while expressing yourself fully. Don't send it, don't mail it, don't do anything but throw it out once completed. You may consider making a ceremony out of it. Light some candles, burn some incense, and ask your higher self to take care of this for you. **You will feel better.**

Now it's your turn. How do you take care of your inner self?

How do you propose to take care of yourself in the future, like tomorrow, for instance?

Must # 3 Change your outlook to a positive one.

It is not easy to see the good side of a separation, especially when it is your partner that has left you, however, changing your perception will help you through the difficult times. Changing one's outlook takes time to do and sometimes it requires talking to someone who will help you see the other side of the coin. Your belief system is affected by many things including your upbringing. Let's address that for a moment. Refer to must # 1 to help you comment on the following. What if there were another way at looking at your situation. What could it be? Allow yourself to brainstorm all possibilities in a creative way.

Here's an example of how I've had to change my attitude towards a poor situation to a more positive attitude. I remember looking in the fridge a few years ago, and seeing nothing. I decided (once I was over feeling sorry for myself) to consider it as fasting for the day. What an opportunity I had to fast, even if it's wasn't for a specified length of time. Once I changed my attitude about the lack of food in my fridge, I felt relieved for that time being. I had changed my self-pity outlook towards a more optimistic outlook. Had I continued to dwell in the anger and hurt I felt when my X first left and moved in with my X-girlfriend, I'd be doomed for a long

time. While wearing a life jacket may help you stay afloat, unless you swim ashore to get out of the water, you will remain cold and possibly freeze to death. A negative frame of mind will keep you stuck while acceptance and incorporating a positive frame of mind will help you to move on.

Spiritual beliefs have also helped me a lot. I believe that everything happens for a reason and that everyone that enters my life has entered it for a purpose. For example, when I was 21, I married a troubled and abusive young man. He was 21 as well, and had led a delinquent life. He needed help and I felt capable of helping him. Actually, I was convinced, I could help him. Of course, I couldn't. This young man had attempted to injure himself so many times that when he died of natural causes, 2 months after we were married, I automatically thought that he had been successful this time. It was a relief to me and a sign that I was meant to be spared when I found out he had died of natural causes. Of course, I didn't know why I had been spared, right away, but as time moved on, I realized that this experience was to prepare me for what I would face next in my life. The big guy or big gal up there had a plan for me.

My spirituality didn't happen overnight. It took years to develop, let alone understand what spirituality was, and it continues to grow. My faith has helped me pass through some very difficult moments. Trust that 'this too shall pass', and that the Devine, has a bigger picture and better picture for you.

I just gave you two examples of how I've changed my outlook to a more positive one to help me adjust to being single. Now, if you wish, and are ready, it is your turn to do the same.

Describe a negative thought or situation:

Now rewrite the situation from a positive frame of mind or as a lesson learned:

Continue to challenge yourself to find the positive, to find the lesson learned and your life will start taking a turn.

In this section, I've introduced you to three musts, which will help you to accept your new single life and help you to move on. They are:

Must # 1 Allow yourself to go through the feelings and emotions

Must # 2 Take care of your self, your inner self and your outer shell.

Must # 3 Change your outlook to a positive one.

Write down what else you must do to adjust to your new circumstances and how you will past through the process.

This period of singleness will last as little as a few months, to a few years. By following the three musts you will feel better about your self and your current situation. Your outer shell will lead a much healthier life style and your inner self will be rewarded. Sooner or later at one point in your new single life, you'll get lonely and need or want other adult company. This is further addressed in my booklet "Guide to being Newly Single" . If you would like to be among the first to read the booklet, please email me. I will send you a copy, so long as you send me your comments for revision.

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