

Getting to the light at the end of the tunnel

(Recovering from loss, divorce, a broken heart, trauma, loss of employment and chatted dreams)

“Hope is what we need to find, create and embrace”

“Nobody will truly understand your pain, so don't expect it”

1. Introduction:

Getting to the light at the end of the tunnel or to feel at peace and happy again is a process. A process of working through painful emotions, setting goals, doing activities to get to our goals and to find out who we are after the loss or trauma.

2. Group discussion

The heart can only let go when

To get to the light at the end of the tunnel

3. Coping with Loneliness and Heart ache

- We form connections with people, they come to live in the emotional or limbic center of our brains. They actually occupy nerve cell pathways and physically live in the neurons and synapses of the brain.

The loss of a connection with someone will cause confusion and disorientation. Since the person lives in the neuronal connections, we expect to see them, hear them, feel them and touch them. When we can't hold them or talk to them as we usually do, the brain centers where they live become inflamed searching for them.

Overactivity in the limbic system - the brain's emotional centers – has been associated with depression and low serotonin levels, which is why we have trouble sleeping, feeling obsessed, lose our appetite, want to isolate ourselves, and lose the joy we have for life.

A deficit in endorphins, which modulate pain and pleasure pathways in the brain, also occurs, which may be responsible for the physical pain we feel during the loss of a human connection.

- Broken heart syndrome is a heart condition that's often brought on by stressful situations and extreme emotions. One can feel severe chest pain, shortness of breath, weakening of the left ventricle of your heart, irregular heartbeats, low blood pressure, heart palpitations and fainting.

- To cope with loneliness and heart ache we first need to understand above biological changes, accept that our bodies are taking strain and to give our bodies time to heal.
- Patterns need to be unlearned and new patterns need to be formed. This can feel uncomfortable and difficult.
- Find activities that will distract you when feeling lonely.
- Use affirmation such as “I am okay with my own company. I don’t always need people to let me feel good”. “I can catch myself when I feel sad or lonely”. “I am enough”. “I am using the lonely times to heal and find myself”.
- Believe that you will adapt and adjust.

4. Support system and connections

- Relationships can be challenging.
- Focus on meaningful relationships.
- Building a new support system can be good.
- Careful not to lose good friends and family due to a low mood. Don’t add loss.
- Keep a balance between talking about your pain, talking about general things and focusing on the other person’s needs.
- Admit to yourself that you are vulnerable and first work through your grief to prevent falling into a toxic relationship.
- Make a list of goals how you want to portray yourself towards others and how to be a good friend or family member.

5. Thoughts and focus

- Constantly dwelling on thoughts of hurt, grief, guilt, shame, anger and negativity can be damaging to your brain and hold you back from getting to the light at the end of the tunnel.
- Be disciplined and set specific times for journaling and healing.
- When noticing drifting off, bring your thoughts back and focus on the present.
- Keep a gratitude journal and reflect daily on micro moments of happiness.

6. Happy/Healthy activities

- Give yourself permission to do activities you enjoy.
- When doing happy activities stay present and don't let your mind wonder off.

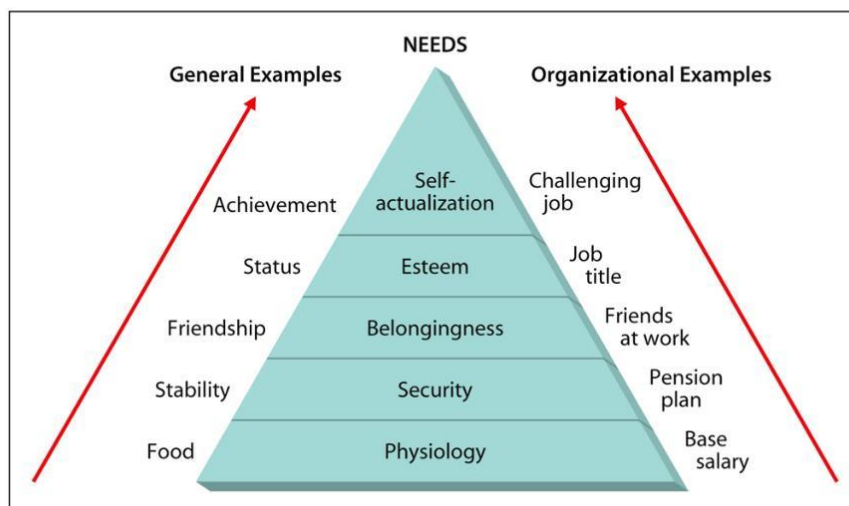
7. Healthy lifestyle

- Stay away from alcohol
- Exercise
- Get enough sleep

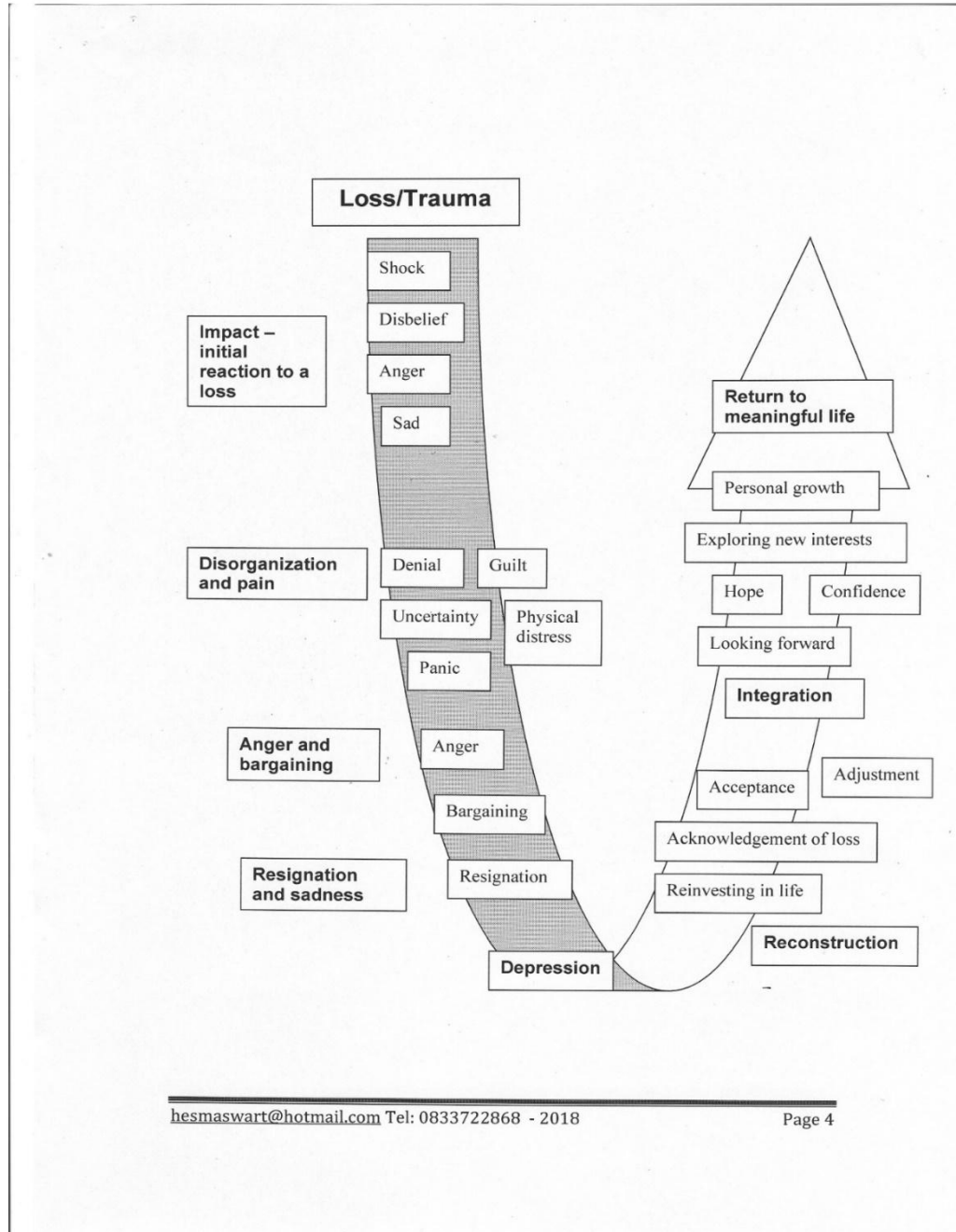
8. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

- Identify your needs and areas in your life that you need to focus on

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Source: Adopted from Abraham H. Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation," *Psychology Review*, 1943, Vol. 50, pp. 370-396.



9. The process/stages of grief and recovery brings hope

- The process means that there are a forward movement which brings hope that we will reach a stage of recovery or where we return to a meaningful life.

10. Reasons to stay alive even when you feel like giving-up (Resource:PsychCentral)

- Milestones – it brings change and challenge. Can also result in purpose and accomplishment.
- The unexplored
- Your undiscovered potential
- The chance to leave your mark
- Love and human connection
- Animal companions
- Spirituality
- Causes you care about
- Your role as a mentor
- The chance to lift others up
- Unfulfilled hopes and dreams
- To prove the naysayers wrong
- The existence of creativity and imagination
- Your life can turn out super amazing in the future
- The chance to find your people
- Your own hero's journey
- Experiences of happiness
- Travel to unknown places
- Nature
- Music

11. Beating the low days with increasing your happiness Chemicals

Resource: psychcentral.com

11.1 Increasing the Dopamine levels

Dopamine is referred to the “pleasure chemical”. It’s a neurotransmitter which influences many areas of the brain, including most of the physiological functions of the central nervous system. Changes in dopamine levels have been linked to neurological and mental health conditions such as”

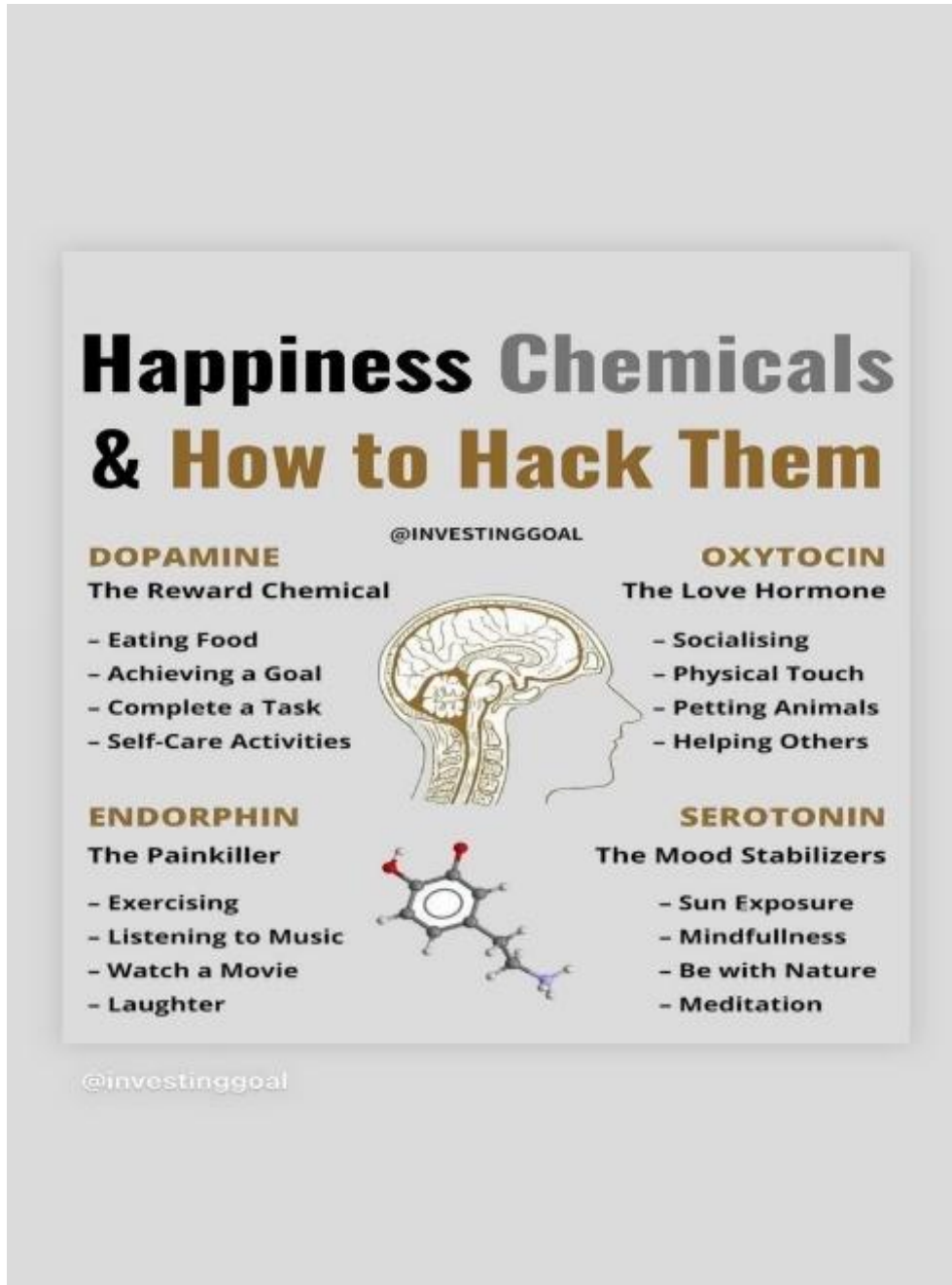
- Schizophrenia
- Attention Deficit hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Various addictions
- Parkinson’s disease

6.2 Signs of low Dopamine:

- Depression symptoms
- Mood swings
- Loss of interest in many activities
- Sleep disturbances and insomnia
- Concentration and memory problems
- Low motivation
- Restless leg syndrome
- Shaking hands and other tremors
- Changes in coordination
- Gastrointestinal issues
- Low libido

6.3 Increase your Dopamine levels by:

1. Eat a diet high in protein, magnesium and tyrosine-rich foods (chicken, beef, fish, peanuts, almonds, avocados, bananas, pumpkin seeds). These are building blocks for dopamine production.
2. Look after your gut health with probiotics (supplement or yogurt). Dopamine receptors are also located in the gut and kidneys.
3. Get enough sleep.
4. Start the day with exercise.
5. Take a cold shower each morning.
6. Spend time outside.
7. Listen to music.
8. Spend some time in the sun.
9. Engage in healthy fun activities.
10. Do meditation
11. Avoid alcohol and drug use
12. Avoid junk food that causes spike and a crash of the blood sugar levels, along with dopamine.
13. Manage stressors



12. Self-study

1. You are stuck on an island. How are you going to get through a 6 month stay on the island focusing on surviving and enjoying your time?
2. Relate your current situation to your island experience. How are you going to get through your difficult time and still enjoy life? Focus on aspects like: Goals, Strategy/Plans, Actions and Obstacles
3. Carefully analyze in your life possible obstacles which make it difficult to get through difficult times such as self-sabotage, resistance, finances, relationship problems, unemployment

Resource [Feeling Hopeless? 7 Ways to Support Yourself \(healthline.com\)](https://www.healthline.com/health/feeling-hopeless), <https://www.verywellmind.com/9-things-to-do-if-you-feel-hopeless-5081877?print>