

# **Disorientation**

## **When You Can't Find Your Compass**

We've all had those times in life when we just can't figure out where we're at or what we're doing. There are those moments when the best of our efforts result in nothing but further failure, mounting frustration and an ever heightened sense of hopelessness. Those times are terribly difficult at best. But even in the worst of them we seem to have some sort of compass that tells us to set off in one direction or another, or attempt one sort of solution or another. We're frustrated, but at least we can construct options. Even at these times, we yet retain some sort of workable compass that points us in some general direction.

### **The Desperation of No Compass**

Then there are those times when we're struggling, but we have no compass at all. Any natural and familiar sense that a certain course of action or a particular effort would be advisable is entirely absent. We're completely directionless. We find ourselves in life standing completely out of breath in the middle of a starkly barren landscape with all the horizons in all directions looking exactly and entirely the same. Standing in these places, we have no idea how we got here, which way to go from wherever it is we're at, or if we should go anywhere at all. We become lost in being lost because we have no compass.

What's worse, at these times we'll desperately construct various ideas and fitfully play out potential scenarios to find some sort of way out of where we're at, only to have each and every one fizzle out and entirely evaporate right in front of us. We find that nothing provides any direction at all. In fact, in time we wonder if there is any direction in the first place, or should we simply stand in the barrenness and allow ourselves to fall victim to the whimsy of time and fickleness of fate? Should we just park it right where we are and see if something shows up? Should we just wait around and hope that something changes, or the landscape shifts, or a trail now hidden becomes mysteriously exposed, or someone recognizes that we're lost and comes out in the middle of all of this nothingness to find us?

If indeed that is our choice at times like these, as it too often is, we see life as a journey dictated by forces other than ourselves who seem to have no real investment in us, or are indifferent to us altogether. Such a life situation moves us from desperation, to hopelessness, to eventual numbness and total disengagement. Such a life suggests that we are not the captains of our fates, but mere survivors hoping for the winds of fate to blow positively across our bows. It is then we are hopelessly disoriented.

This kind of disorientation can happen right in the middle of our relationships, in our attempts to possess a sense of who we are, in our employment situations, in our finances, in our relationships with our children, in our attempts to understand what our purpose is, in wrestling with our own emotions or facing grievous loss . . . or any number of life events. This kind of disorientation can happen in one place, or in many places simultaneously.

### **The Causes of a Lost Compass - Forgetting the Basics**

Often this type of disorientation arises in part from the fact that we've forgot the basics. When life gets busy or demanding, we lose sight of the fundamentals; the things that keep us grounded, directed and steady. These can be things as simple as sleep, diet or exercise; or as complex as a continued focus upon a certain goal or adherence to a belief or value system. Frequently, we become focused totally on the "doing" rather than the goals that drive the "doing" and the value systems that keep the "doing" in check and

2 - Craig D. Lounsbrough, LPC

balanced. We go full-bore and see nothing but achieving the goal and lose sight of the things that create balance and maintain direction in achieving the goal. When we forget the basics, we then lose our compass.

### **The Causes of a Lost Compass - Losing Our Identity in the Pursuit**

Disorientation can also arise when the goals in life become the things that define us. Far too often our goals become our identity. What we do consumes us to the point that we become the thing that we're doing. What we do comes to define the sum total of who we are. We take on the characteristics, qualities and attributes of the goal, or we become whatever it is we need to become to achieve the goal. Either way, we lose ourselves. We must remember that we are not what we do. Rather, what we do is a manifestation of who we are. When our goals and the achieving of those goals become the object of our affection and the idols that we prostrate ourselves in front of, we are certain to lose ourselves in them. We completely lose our objectivity and our ability to accurately discern and analyze what we're doing. We lose ourselves and then we lose our compass.

### **The Causes of a Lost Compass - Self-Centered Motives**

We might ask what our motives are in the things we do and the goals that we pursue? At the point that our motives become self-serving and self-centered, they become imbalanced as they develop a single focus . . . us. If our vision becomes so myopic that all we see is ourselves and our selfish gains, we then build everything on that one point. Our orientation then becomes fixed on the single, small goal of self-serving interests. Having the significantly larger and more broadly grounded perspective of a greater good and the welfare of others shrinks to the single, teetering point of self. When that happens, the broader perspective and enhanced balance that multiple points of interest provides is entirely lost. We are then certain to lose our compass.

### **The Causes of a Lost Compass - Forgetting the Brevity of Life**

Too often we forget that this life does not go on forever. When we build something temporal, we build something foundationally weak. With that fact clearly in mind we need to do something that outlasts us and is outside of us. We need to keep in mind the concept of legacy, or what kind of footprint do we wish to leave for those we will eventually leave behind? We need to focus on things less temporal and things more long-lasting or eternal. In doing that we build for others and we build to construct something truly timeless. That orientation broadens us, gives us balance and provides a sturdy compass.

### **A Time for Re-Evaluation**

Look at what you're doing and why you're doing it. It may well be that the disorientation that you have, or are experiencing is a natural result of a misguided orientation. Rethink what you're doing and why. It could be transformational.