

New activities can help to bring back sense of purpose, direction, after loss

Q. All of my children are grown and my husband died three years ago. I still go to work every day and keep up my house, but I just don't have any desire to do anything else. People tell me I'm missing a lot, but I just can't get myself to care. Is this normal for a 50ish woman?

A. It is very normal to feel directionless after major changes in one's life. According to psychological scales, the loss of one's spouse is considered one of the most devastating life-changing events one can go through, surpassed only by the death of a child. It often takes people a significant amount of time to readjust to this new, single status in life, especially if the marriage was a good one.

Have you considered bereavement counseling? Three years is an awfully long time to have your life on hold. A good therapist can help you deal with the loss of a spouse, explore feelings of guilt and help ease into being active in the community again.

One of the biggest problems widows and widowers face is a lack of purpose. People need a reason to be and many times after the loss of a spouse, and with our children are grown, we lack a reason to get out of bed in the morning. It sounds

as if you feel you have no purpose in life. We are creatures of habit and enjoy belonging and feeling useful. Without a purpose or a goal, we often lack ambition, are directionless, become ill and die early. This happens to people who retire without any plans for what they will do after they no longer have to go to work. It's good that you are continuing to work. Aside from the obvious income, employment provides self-esteem and contact with others and a reason to get up and get going.

You're wondering if you're missing something; well, yes, you probably are. There are all kinds of possibilities for making your life fuller. If you're ready to start dating again, let family, friends and coworkers know it. Check the paper for singles groups in your area; they often have activities that allow people to mingle in a relaxed atmosphere without feeling the pressure of being "fixed-up." Check your church bulletin for singles activities.

Find a singles ad, looking for the man of your dreams. Consider a dating service. Most importantly, get out! It's for certain the new beau you're looking for is not waiting in your living room! If dating doesn't interest you currently, consider group activities with friends, like traveling. Group tours offer great low-fare ways to have fun, see new sights and break out of your regular routine. It also gives something to plan for and look forward to. Locally, there are tours to places of interest, like art museums and unique shopping experiences, sporting events. Take a class. Adult education programs offer a wide variety of interests, from a new hobby to changing careers. It's a great way to make friends with similar interests too.

Have you considered volunteering for your favorite charity? Volunteering helps us step outside ourselves and focus on someone else, forgetting our own troubles in the process. Hospitals, school programs and animal shelters are begging for help. It's a great feeling, and helpful too.

Do you have any pets? Research has shown people with pets are healthier and happier. Pets ease our stress, keep us company, ease the loneliness of living alone and sometimes provide us with a reason to take a walk. And pets

make a great conversation piece. One of our neighbors regularly takes their parrot for a walk. What a sight that is! There are so many directions to go in. You are much too young to throw in the towel and consider your life "over." Women in their 50s can live another 30 plus years and that is a whole lot of future to fill. Good luck embarking on the second exciting stage of your life.

Lake Orion resident Karen Water is a psychotherapist in Bloomfield Hills, specializing in relationship conflicts. Questions for her can be sent to: Karen Water, Suburban Life, The Eccentric, 803 E. Maple, Birmingham, 48009.

RELATIONSHIP



KAREN WATER

Here's how to submit your special day announcement

Local engagement, wedding, anniversary and birth announcements run in the Thursday and Sunday editions of The Observer & Eccentric.

Residents of the Birmingham-Bloomfield, West Bloomfield and Southfield areas should send their engagement, wedding, anniversary or birth information, with or without photograph, to: Attn: Brides, The Eccentric, 803 E. Maple, Birmingham 48009.

Residents of the Troy and Rochester areas should send information to The Eccentric, 400 Water Street, Suite 203, Rochester 48067.

Residents of the Farmington area should send information to

the Farmington Observer, 33411 Grand River, Farmington 48335. Preprinted forms that outline the information needed for your engagement or wedding announcement are available at Observer & Eccentric offices.

For engagement announcements, please submit at least 46 days before the wedding.

Black and white, 5 x 7 photos are preferred, but color photos and other sizes will be accepted.

If you have questions regarding your announcement, call Sue Willis in Birmingham at (248) 901-2560; Debbie Douglas in Rochester at (248) 651-7575, or Katie McNamara in Farmington at (248) 477-5450.

BIRTHS

Sharra Marie Manke

Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Manke of Pontiac announce the birth of their daughter, Sharra Marie,

Nec. 11, at Crittenton Hospital. Her grandparents are Mr. and Mrs. Fred Manke of Troy and Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Wagner of Edwardsburg, Mich.

Childbirth refresher class set

Do you breathe or do you blow through a contraction? And what was that relaxation exercise that was so helpful in easing the tension of labor? Those techniques you learned in childbirth classes can fade from your memory and be difficult to recall in subsequent pregnancies.

William Beaumont Hospital offers the "Childbirth Education Refresher Class" for expectant parents to review relaxation and breathing techniques, anesthesia options and the stages of labor and delivery.

Class is scheduled for 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 5, at Beaumont Medical Building, Conference Rooms A & B, 6900 Orchard Lake Road, West Bloomfield; and 7-9 p.m. Mondays, Dec. 7 and 14, at William Beaumont Hospital, Classroom G, 44201 Dequindre Road, Troy.

Class fee is \$25 and you must register in advance. For more information on the class or to register call toll-free 1-800-633-7377.

1998 Christmas Tree Guide

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