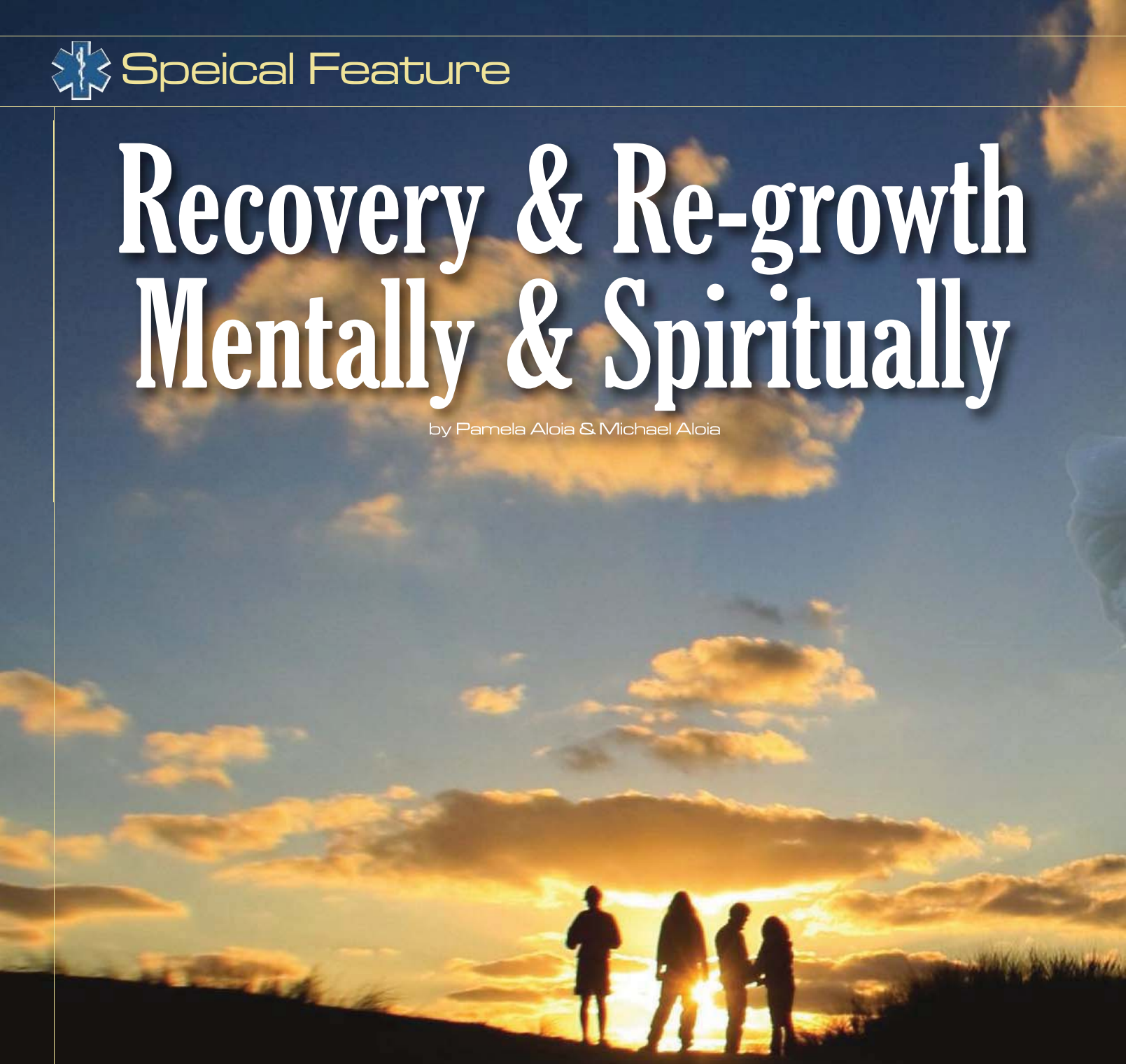


Recovery & Re-growth Mentally & Spiritually

by Pamela Aloia & Michael Aloia



Catastrophe, to some degree or another, happens to us all, often and usually, at the most inopportune times. These unannounced moments of mishap tend to place life, as we know it presently, in a state of chaos and disruption. Though the moments of initial impact from the upheaval dissolve with time, it is the aftermath and how it affects the mental and spiritual states of the individual that have the potential to take a major toll on anyone if not properly addressed or adequately han-

dled.

Catastrophe can be caused by an abrupt event or a series of events leading up to a final blowout. After the event, an individual may consistently attempt to cope with the aftermath. In some cases this individual may seem as though they are adjusting fine on the surface, despite an undercurrent of unresolved emotions. The individual(s) realizes that things will not ever be the same again, and a partial or total redefinition of self, priorities, and life pur-

pose may occur.

With any life disturbance, modification and adaptation may be required to achieve the status quo that was known prior to the catastrophic incident. This adjustment should be expected but may often be neglected as we attempt to recover. Many of us are completely capable of regaining that status quo depending on many psychological, emotional, and mental factors. However, there exists the percentage of individuals who struggle for the nor-



malcy they once knew. The stress of the event alters not just their lives, but more importantly, how they feel about themselves, how they feel about life and even how they choose to live life – their mental and spiritual outlook becomes compromised. What they had once known and once believed is temporarily or permanently distorted. Regardless of the incident’s size or specifics, and regardless how others may interpret or judge the severity of the situation and the individual, the

affected person’s state of balance has been broken.

So how is order restored? How does one regain control of what was and is most important – one’s self. Steady stream of support from those around the individual is essential. A coalition of support from those brothers-in-arms in related fields of profession is not only helpful but also completely necessary. Who would better understand? Those within similar vocations face many of the same circumstances, fears, frustra-

tions and aftermaths. Related experience offers comfort and peace. It offers a sense of oneness and provides a haven as the individual finds refuge in a mutual relationship of common experience. Within the common experience -the familiar familiarity -resolve and absolution can be found.

How an individual chooses to approach their new wheelchair status or emotional well being after witnessing and/or taking part in a horrible accident, crime or event will certainly vary

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person to person. Our thoughts truly do create our reality – what we think and what we say has a large affect on the outcome of that specific scenario. Some of our basic beliefs may be altered drastically, or drastically reinforced. Any fears about ourselves or about our world come rushing to the surface. Through our experiences, traumatic or not, we are constantly realigning our beliefs based on our experiences.

Mental and spiritual restoration is the cornerstone in any recovery. Physical injury, whether permanent or not, can be overcome in record time when one or both –mental or spiritual components –are in alignment. The time needed to regain the balance lost from a personal or community disaster depends on a series of factors beginning with the “before the incident” status. The stronger the mental and spiritual realm, the more resilient any one individual can be at times of great stress and those that may follow.

For those in close proximity to the mentally and/or spiritually injured individual, the role is substantial. These individuals have a responsibility and a vested interest to be understanding, compassionate and most of all patient. Time may heal all wounds but patience and love can bring a cure that lasts a lifetime. Though it may seem difficult to fully grasp the magnitude that a loved one who has experienced trauma is going through, it is crucial that continuous support and assurance be given and maintained during and throughout the full length of recovery. Thinking of another can be cure enough.

Many people will tend to not want to relive the event or series of events since it brings up such intense emotions. In these cases, it's best to allow the person to discuss event aspects at their own rate based on their hopefully increased comfort level over time. Having support from the right people is essential. Individuals recovering from a traumatic event must surround themselves with people who are willing to spend time listening or simply being with them possibly without saying anything. These supporting folks must also

be willing to allow the individual to talk about the situation and their associated emotions – often repeatedly -without judging their progress. Everyone moves at their own pace when processing emotions and digesting a traumatic event.

There may come a time where seeking the assistance of a professional is warranted and incredibly helpful. Various types of professionals offer a valid sounding board for recovering individuals, helping to define a “normal” process of recovery for the individual. People going through a rough recovery need to know what they are feeling -fear, frustration, lack of confidence, etc. -are completely normal – and in most cases temporary. Their changed behaviors as a result of the incident are also normal – that means they have learned from their experience and are looking for ways to ensure the experience doesn't happen again, or that they are prepared if, for some reason, it does.

What tends to grip folks after a traumatic event is dealing with a different reality. We all have a specific belief of how our day is going to unfold, or how our lives will evolve; we have specific beliefs on aspects of the world in general, and we have specific beliefs of our own capability and responsibility. Experiencing a personal catastrophe questions, negates, or enforces each of those previously accepted beliefs. After an event, we tend to continuously replay the scenario in our minds focusing on the contradiction of our previously held belief – whether we didn't act a certain way, or something wasn't supposed to happen this way, etc. This type of response enables us to redefine those said beliefs and letting go of them initially can be quite trying in and of itself.

Allowing each person to walk their own path to recovery is essential while providing continuous, ongoing support and responsibility as appropriate. Although it is quite common to wait until such a need arises to pay attention to our overall health and well being, we can curtail the overall impact as well as the recovery time of a catastrophic event if we already have a

rudimentary baseline of a healthy mindset and existing inner abstract strength.

Spending time educating ourselves in the best way possible given our line of work, exposure to dangerous situations, and overall state of the world and our community is crucial to providing an accurate, well-equipped mindset for every day and not so every day occurrences. Having a positive, yet realistic, happy attitude for life, truly promotes quicker recovery times and better life perspectives. Learning what makes us happy, and participating in such happy developing activities changes the way our minds work and react.

Taking advantage of our social network in regular daily activities usually presents an active, vast, caring support system when recovering from a catastrophic event. This means taking the time to spend with family and friends and creating trusting, open relation-

ships throughout our lives.

Finally, we can bridge the education and social network together with exploring our own inner dialog of what we accept or do not accept spiritually. Whether we belong to a church or meditation circle; whether we read spiritually uplifting subjects or go canoeing on a lake – knowing what rejuvenates and nourishes our spirits can be vital facets to draw upon during incredibly challenging times.

Recovering from a catastrophe is taking one step at a time and allowing others to do the same. There is no rushing the process or judging it – it simply is what it is each day. Through continually nourishing ourselves before such an event occurs, in the way of knowledge, relationships, and self-improvement, we can carry with us a toolkit to draw upon when needed. Simply better knowing ourselves – inside and out – creates balance and allows each of us to be mentally and spiritually sound. **EMS**

Authors

Pamela Aloia is an instructor and practitioner of alternate methods of self-healing, including meditation and Reiki. She conducts regular workshops to assist in changing individual lives through topics such as leadership and energy awareness. Pamela currently works in the hospice and bereavement fields, and has authored the book, 52 Pick Me Up and has co-authored Rescuer Mindset. For more information visit www.solangel.com.

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