

# *Losing Everything... Continuously*

## **The Intangibles**

By

Raymond M. Fox GC-C, SMC-C

I've written thus far about losing the tangibles in life after becoming a quadriplegic. Those are hard but manageable, a new way of thinking if you will. The tangibles are altogether different though than intangibles. They are marked and defined by physical attributes, abilities and the whole interaction with the world through the five senses. The intangibles are more ethereal. Ethereal you ask. I shall explain.

So, what are the intangibles? The intangibles are all the things that you do, you experience, you love even about life. For most of those reading this that's not such an obvious thing. Let me explain here. It is an intangible thing that one experiences what it's like to scratch an itch. One doesn't even give it a thought, they just scratch. Absent minded movements.

Now, don't think for one second that that represents the whole of intangibles. It does not. What else? What do you feel when you hug someone who is hurting? There are many things that are felt, thought and discovered in such a small act. When I say "Felt" I'm not talking about a tangible feeling but rather an emotion. The same with a hand shake, a friendly nudge, a pat on the back and even a punch to the gut. Yes, even through violent and malicious action one is a part of their world, experiencing whatever is felt in the psyche.

I haven't had those types of interaction. Unfortunate, to say the least. My world is somewhat like looking at yourself in a mirror, or any reflected image on a given surface. You can see it with perfect clarity, with pristine detail but you can never interact. If touched it's odd and not what it's supposed to feel like. Human interaction, even its most social and day-to-day touching, such as hand shake or hug, is a foreign thing to me. People right in front of me seem as portraits, pictures that have no more substance than the paper they exist upon. Sometimes it's a terror from a "Twilight Zone" episode.

This doesn't make me strange or odd, just different. Sometimes sad, sometimes scared, sometimes overwhelmingly insightful and many times very lonely. I'm routinely asked about the sexual aspects. I'm a man, healthy and given to the desires we all feel. I'm not a stranger to those endeavors but I must say that they are, again, different. Don't get me wrong, it's not freakish or anything deviant. Just different. How so? Being a quadriplegic limits ones sense of touch, the ability to feel and reciprocate. As pertains to the raw sexual aspect, it's the same as it is with any male. It's the touching, feeling, intimacy aspects that are hindered. Again, these intimate actions can be articulated into words but are altogether different when experienced and felt in the heart. Intangible aspects that few really consider.

That aspect of sex, as good as it is on one level, is somewhat destroyed on others. Especially the ones that matter. It's when one considers these aspects in this particular light that they begin to understand the true meaning of intimacy and monogamy. How it's important, but more something to aspire to. When it's intimate on a true level, there is no desire for others.

With that intimacy creates deeper and more meaningful aspects to your interaction with the world through your relationship. Having children is one important aspect. Now let's face it, children are as tangible as they are intangible. What are the intangibles? Picking up your child when she is crying, noticing her relax because you're there, you're close. These are tangible for her but for you it's an altogether emotional impact that is everlasting. For fathers and mothers, this is an awesome feeling that they tend to forget or never notice at all.

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I'll never feel those things. I do know that there are wondrous women out there that would be with someone like myself but it would always be limited. I've had various relationships in my life and understand that this is the way it will always be. With my most recent debacle with a relationship, I'm certainly glad it didn't turn out. That's a silver lining. She's a water sign, I'm an earth sign... together we made mud! But I digress. Children? That will never happen for me because of thinking things through. I can't be the father I should be. I just can't. Being a father is so much more than paying the bills. And children are certainly physical in their approach to the world.

What's another prominent intangible? They are numerous and too much to write about here. I suspect you know what they are already though. They are all the things that you do and never think about, you just do. Passing through life without ever realizing what they truly mean to you. What do you love? How would you feel if it existed but you could never interact with it fully, never truly experience what it is or means. You know what the intangibles are.

So, I've identified some of the things I'll lose throughout life. I've accepted I'll lose those things. I've acknowledged there will be other losses also, anticipated and unanticipated. How do I move on? I must direct my grief energy into something else, something positive and meaningful to me. I have to interact with this world in a meaningful way, a way that will give me purpose. How does one do that? I tell myself one thing over and over again.

*To feel, one has only to touch.*

That's what I tell myself everyday. I ask myself also, what does that mean? It means so much really. How can I feel and touch the world around me. The only way I know is to touch people's hearts. Touch a heart, feel an explosion of love, understanding, acceptance and peace. I'm a part of the world around me through the very thing I lose continuously... an intangible thing. Touching a heart.

It's come full circle. My grief and loss has done its trek and come full circle from loss to gain. How? I chose a positive energy cycle to my grief, directed those grieving energies into positive life affirming ones. Those portraits, those pictures of no substance around me become so much more. Relationships with family, friends, lovers all become these three dimensional objects of immense value. More precious than anything. More real than anything.

It's truly a circle of life... losing to gaining. Will you let your grief become negative or will you turn it into something positive? Positive is really the way to go, as grieving is intended as temporary release of loss energy. Is it really a loss if you grow something wonderful from it. Ask yourself this question and your loss will answer the question. Remember the loss, mourn the loss, grieve the loss but give it meaning in whatever form it takes. Give it a positive life. And always remember...

*To feel, one has only to touch.*