

Answers from the Readers

What do you wish someone had told you when you were separating/disfellowshipped?

- Don't take it personally. It's really not about you. Isolating you is the way The Watchtower protects its billion-dollar-a-year operation from losses. If their "faithful" knew how ugly the organization really is, they'd lose even more supporting members. Shunning only has power if you're around them. If you are ostracized by every single JW in America, you can still choose friends from among 289,000,000 people!
- Don't hate the Jehovah's Witnesses. When I got out, I was broken and very depressed, even cried for a few days. It was so hard. But I couldn't hate the Watchtower for their wrongdoing, because they are victims of their own theology. They are not all bad people. Also, try to strengthen your emotional health. To this day, I feel that my life is not real, like the emotions and frustration I have comes from nothing, like I'm living in a plastic world. This, of course, comes from the 'truth' about how, why, and what has changed. There are no Armageddon pictures in my mind about getting destroyed anymore or this burden or heavy guilt in my shoulders all the time about if I am saved or not. Life is new, nothing compared to my life one year ago. My personal psychologist has been a lot of help too. And lastly, find a way to your own spirituality. I see my spiritual beliefs (i.e., my belief in God) and the Jehovah's Witnesses as totally different. When I found out through my own research that the Watchtower was not "The Truth," I was angry for all the time, money, faith, heart and energy I gave them. It was hard for me to understand that the Watchtower Society had nothing to do with my spirituality. In conclusion, seek help, talk about this with everyone who is willing to listen, and continue to research your new findings about the Watchtower. And always remember that you are not alone.
- The rejection by loved ones never goes away, so don't expect it to. Even 25 years later, it still hurts sometimes. It does get easier with time. But don't waste years of your life trying to get your family to understand or accept your reasons for leaving. They probably never will, and it will just cause you brain damage. Establish a new life, read a lot of self-help books, get therapy, forge deep friendships, love yourself, and get out there. Don't be a wallflower. Life is just waiting for you to embrace it. Don't fight or be ashamed of who you were. Your past is part of who you are now...and that's OK. *Acceptance is liberating.* There is a wonderful future waiting for you, one that you can't even imagine. For instance, I never thought I'd produce this newsletter someday and get to know so many wonderful people. You never know where life will take you. Enjoy the journey of discovering *you*. ☺ - Brenda Lee, Author, "Out of the Cocoon"