

## Dealing With Your Feelings After a Gathering

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I often hear from gathering attendees, especially first-timers, that the period right after a gathering is difficult for them. They experience a sadness they were not expecting. So I want to address that in a way that is personal (meaning sharing my own little opinion, not any “official” CMG position) by describing what I’ve experienced, as well as seen and heard from other attendees over the years. I’m going to start with the sad emotion you may be feeling now, work through it a bit and, I am hopeful, end up with you having a better understanding of how it’s all part of the process of growth—which is good. And that the gloomy mood you have now really will improve!

### You’re Normal, Darling

It’s perfectly normal after any kind of peak experience to feel what is often called “top drop.” That’s when you have such an intense natural high sustained over a period of time that, when the event is over, the shock of re-entering the outside world brings on a “drop” – a mild form of temporary depression. A sort of “Damn-I-Miss-That-Wonderful-Feeling” form of the blues. The good news is that it is temporary.

In order to better appreciate what’s happening with you, let’s look at why you may be feeling a bit down immediately after the gathering. Hopefully, your CMG weekend did one or more of these things for you:

- Provided you with deep and intense feelings.
- Called into question things that you might have taken as givens in your life.
- Opened you up to new ideas, perhaps even changing the way you think about some things.
- Helped you come to personal realizations or insights.
- Exposed you to a feeling of community.
- Gave you opportunity to meet and bond with wonderful men.
- Started important new relationships.
- Called you into service through volunteering or even leadership.
- Exposed you to exciting new possibilities.
- Challenged you physically, mentally, spiritually, sexually, socially, or in some other personal way, perhaps even all at the same time!
- Gave you permission to try something “outrageous” you otherwise would never have felt safe to explore.
- Dared you to enter a bigger version of your life.
- Provided you with a vision of how our community and world should interact.
- Brought forth issues large and small that you’ll want to explore further.

Whew! Dealing with any one of those could be exhausting! And that doesn’t even take into account the sheer physical fatigue of sleeping in unfamiliar surroundings, keeping late hours, participating in so many activities, and tramping all over a big ol’ camp. Being physically tired can contribute to a person being in a funk, too.

Additionally, depending on an individual’s background and his experience at the gathering, the items included on that list above can bring on profound personal shifts. And while they can create feelings in any combination of confusing, exhilarating, freeing, frightening, enlightening, or just plain fun, having it happen in such an atmosphere of openness and support is exciting. The deeper, wiser part of us knows that growth is happening, and that excitement creates a “high.” So it’s no wonder that after the closing ceremony on Monday, the hugging and good-byes, and the driving off to our homes, that we experience the change as loss. Hence, the top drop.

## **It Does Get Better**

And we're going to help you make it better. There are specific steps you can take to reclaim some of the "high" you felt at the gathering. Try doing some of these things:

1. Reconnect, reconnect, reconnect. If you do nothing else, do this one. Look at the addresses in your CMG Program Booklet. Find the man who cried with you, played with you, who said just the right words at the perfect time, who made you laugh or think or do something ridiculously silly, who opened your heart, your eyes, your soul. And then call or email him. He's probably feeling that loss of connection right now, too. Trust me, he'll be very glad to hear from you. So do it! Do it now before you talk yourself out of it and miss an opportunity not just for yourself but for him, too. Make a coffee date. Surprise him by sending a card via snail mail. Exchange dirty photos. Whatever. The thing that's making you feel blue right now is the loss of so much human connection you felt at the gathering. Re-establish that bond with the people who touched you while you were there—even if they have no idea they did touch you. (And feel free to define "people who touched you" as you like!)

2. Be kind to yourself. Carve out time to take care of your needs. Give yourself permission to experience your feelings. Have a good laugh. Have a good cry. (Just remember #1 above about reconnecting so you don't have to cry alone!) Allow yourself to be still. Eat right. Rest. It's okay to take the time you need to recharge your battery. The world really will get along just fine while you do that. Did you get sick? It's not unusual to get so involved with exciting events and people and schedules that we come back from a gathering with a cold because we've worn ourselves down physically, so take care of that if it happened to you. (Trying to "power through" only ever made me sicker.) Again: be kind to you.

3. Talk about your gathering experience with friends. Telling your story of the weekend aloud will help you clarify what happened, what you did, what was important, and why. Choose carefully to whom you tell your story, but hearing yourself speak your truth will show you just how much you gained by the experience.

4. Live what you have learned. Integrating your newfound ideas, attitudes, and awareness into your everyday life – at work, at home, at play, in your bedroom, in your house of worship, with friends, with family – will not only make the changes concrete, it will bring the loving community ethos of the weekend into a world that desperately needs it. You can be part of what changes it.

5. Journal. Keep notes on what comes to you as you process the weekend. The Memorial Day gathering may be over, but your CMG experience will continue for weeks and months as you remember things and unpack their meanings. Personally, I find that gatherings are very rich and chewy things!

6. Go to local events. There are five Local Events Committees around the state (San Diego, Desert Cities, Los Angeles, the Bay Area, and Sacramento) and they all put on smaller events, from pool parties to lecture/demonstrations, from pot-lucks to picnics, to puppy piles and more. You'll find upcoming events in these areas listed on the web page ([www.theCMG.org](http://www.theCMG.org)). It's a great way to surround yourself with your CMG brothers and chase the doldrums away. And if there are no events in your area, take the initiative and create them! Your nearest EC will help.

## **And It's Worth It**

And finally, I want to end by telling you there are some wonderful things you should know that come with this feeling.

First, as I mentioned earlier, it does pass. It lasts different amounts of time for different people, but it will be okay. It is my experience that once these temporary blahs pass, I feel my awareness, connectedness, and life is much improved compared to where it was prior to the gathering. It's why I keep going back. Well, that an the opportunity to see people like you again!

Secondly, it can motivate. That rotten "I-Hate-This-Down-In-the-Dumps-Feeling" feeling can impel one to action—to actually pick up the phone and call or email or go to a local CMG event. Some philosophers say that pain is what causes us to change. If things suck badly enough, we'll get off our butts and do something about it! Search for their name on Facebook, or send 'em a message suggesting lunch or dinner or a throw-down in the bedroom. Just do it.

And thirdly, I believe there is a very important and profound gift that lies within that "top drop" feeling. It is the numinous light-filled yearning in your core to continue the joyous, caring, supportive, accepting, and delightfully playful reality right here in the outside world. Please note I do not say "the real world." I feel the CMG weekend experience is the real world, and it is that real world which we need to bring back to those out here starving for it in the outside world. But that's just me.

And if you think I'm full of crap – that's okay. Contact me and tell me what your experience is! Just because I've been to bunches of gatherings doesn't mean I don't feel top-drop, too, and long for your beautiful faces in front of me again. Hell, that's the very reason I got involved with the Local Events Committee in Los Angeles. I wanted to see you guys again and I couldn't bear waiting for another gathering. So I got involved with creating local events for the express purpose of surrounding myself with my CMG brothers as often as possible. And that's you, darling.

That's you and everyone else. It's all of us!



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