

Emotional Support for Bereaved Families

Individuals and cultures mourn in different ways. Usually mourning includes a sense of loss expressed as a feeling of absence and longing for the deceased. Each person expresses mourning in her or his own way: there is no ‘normal’ or ‘correct’ way to mourn. It is a spiritual, personal, natural process after experiencing loss.

The loss of someone who was close to you causes a broad spectrum of emotions to surface, from sadness to emptiness, anger or loneliness, from guilt to helplessness or life seeming devoid of meaning. Many people experience physical symptoms such as pain, insomnia, loss of appetite, and more.

Keep in mind that every emotion is legitimate and has a place in the mourning process. Mourning is a natural process that allows relatives to part emotionally, promotes overcoming existential distress that accompanies the sense of emptiness, and enables taking time out from the regular activities of life to replenish and accrue energy towards carrying on afterwards.

Often a mourner needs support from her or his family, friends, or a professional therapist. The mourner may require initial short term help or ongoing assistance.

Supporting people who experience loss begins with a simple statement: “I’m with you.” Some want to describe, talk, or share about the deceased and / or



Out of the Depths

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their personal feelings of loss. They need someone to listen to them, helping them through the mourning period.

A therapist can provide the mourner with information about the mourning process, loss and adaptation. Therapists may encourage the mourner to feel self-compassion and learn techniques for regulating emotions, encourage supportive connections with close family and friends, provide opportunities to share stories about the deceased, and perpetuate the deceased's memory. Therapy allows providing the mourner with the chance to learn coping and rehabilitation methods through empathy, normalization and emotional containment, orientation and encouragement. These tools assist the mourner in finding meaning and hope.

During the current Corona crisis, when everyone is either in self-isolation or medically required quarantine, and the natural frameworks of family and community support are absent, emotional support by a professional is all the more important.

As we approach the festival of Passover, which normally brings families and friends together, the bereaved family's pain is even greater.

We recommend being assisted by one of our volunteer counselors.

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