



**NYC**  
Mayor's Office of  
Community  
Mental Health

# **Coping with Grief and Loss in the Muslim Community: Strategies and Resources to Promote Mental Health**

*A Khalil Center Workshop in partnership with The Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health*

## About Us

**The Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health oversees strategies to close critical gaps in mental healthcare so every New Yorker, in every neighborhood, has the support they need.**

In partnership with 13 City agencies and nearly 200 non-profits, the office supports over 20 innovative mental health programs that serve hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers every year, regardless of insurance or immigration status.



## About Us

**Khalil Center is a psychological and spiritual community wellness center advancing the professional practice of psychology rooted in Islamic theology.**

Khalil Center's approach emphasizes: psychological reconstruction, behavioral reformation and spiritual elevation. Khalil Center utilizes faith-based approaches rooted in Islamic theological concepts while integrating the science of psychology towards addressing psychological, spiritual and communal health.



# Objectives

01

Build knowledge about the grieving process highlight the relationship between grief & mental health

02

Share psycho-spiritual coping strategies for adaptive grieving

03

Share the importance of social support in the grieving process

04

Present free and confidential mental health resources



## Impact of COVID-19 on New Yorkers

**During COVID-19, emotional distress was further aggravated by disconnection from typical sources of support such as schools, senior centers, libraries, and houses of worship.**

**In a given year:**

- **20%** of New Yorkers experience mental health challenges
- **10%** of New Yorkers experiences depression

**During COVID-19:**

- **90%** reported experiencing emotional distress

## Pre-Workshop Activity



What has been helpful for you in coping with grief so far?  
(therapy, rituals, reaching out to loved ones, social gatherings etc.)

How have you kept going so far?



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# **The Grieving Process**

Identifying the Signs, Risk Factors, and Adaptive Grieving

# Key Terms

The anguish experienced after significant loss, usually the death of a beloved person.



The outward expression of grief. It typically involves cognitive, emotional, physical, behavioral and spiritual signs. These signs are not considered pathological.



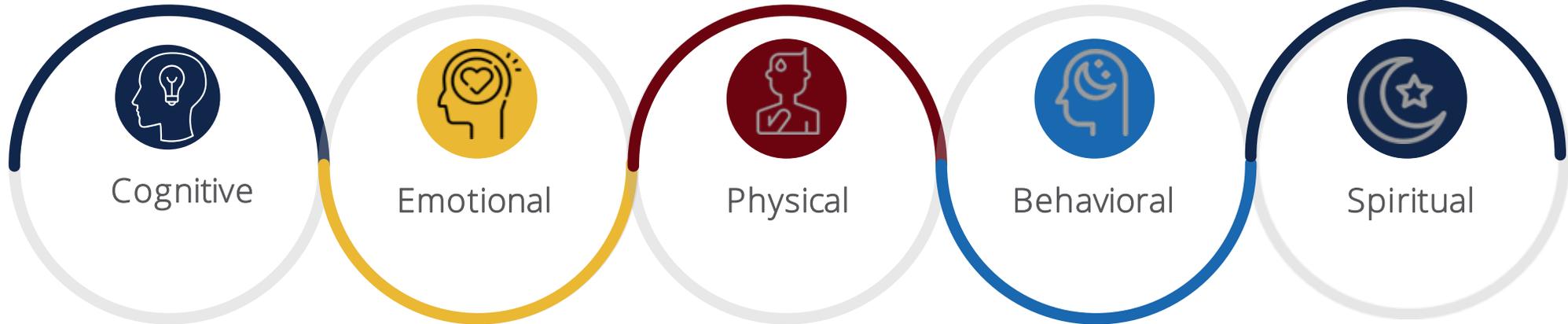
Period of grief and mourning after a loss.



A process by which a grieving individual mitigates, tolerates, and resolves the distress of grief in ways that foster personal well-being.



# What is Grief: Signs



- feelings of disbelief, confusion,
- difficulty concentrating,
- dreams,
- cognitive orientation to the past / reflecting on memories

- shock
- sadness
- denial
- anger
- guilt
- yearning

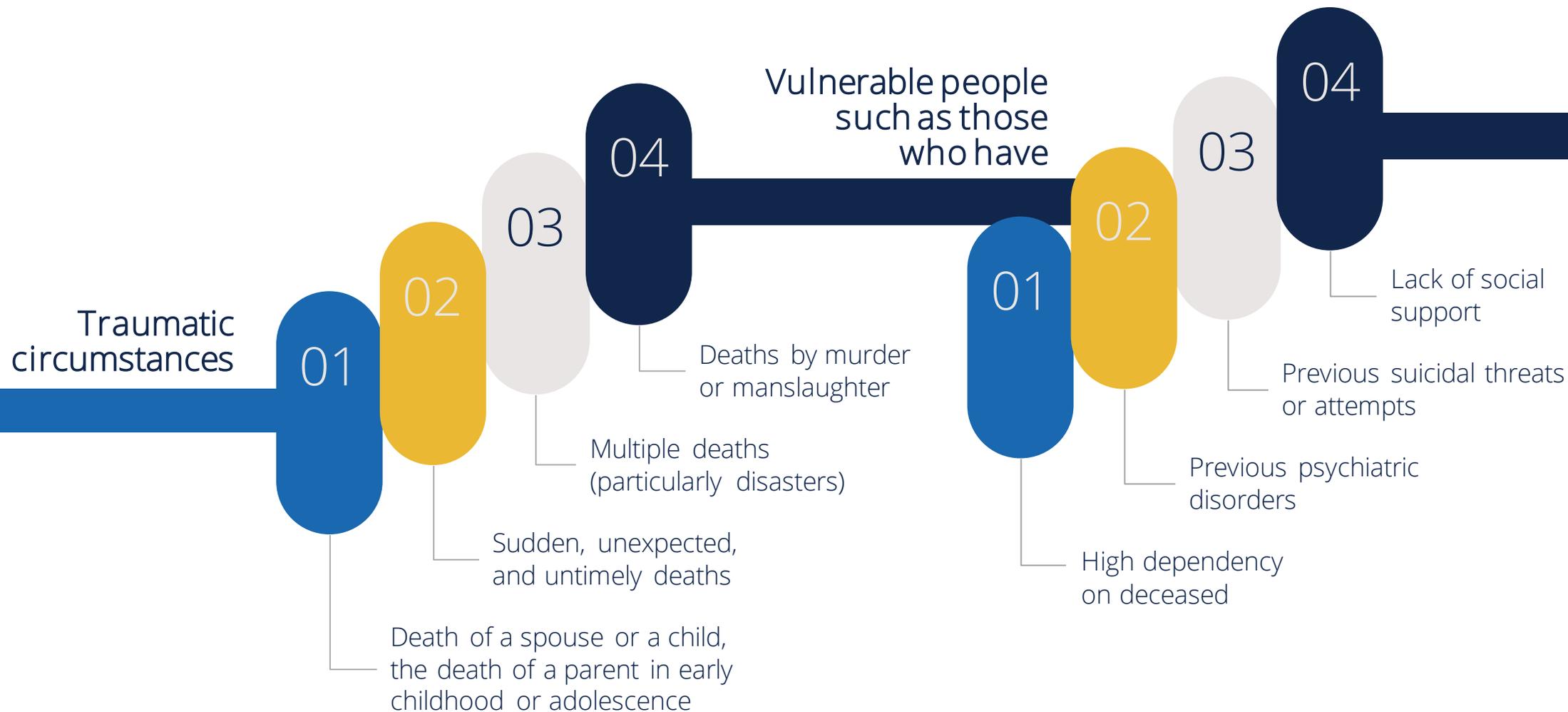
- tightness and heaviness in the chest or throat
- nausea or stomach upset
- dizziness
- headaches
- numbness
- muscle weakness
- fatigue

- sleep/ appetite disturbance
- social withdrawal
- loss of interest
- crying
- agitation/anger

- loss of meaning / seeking meaning
- spiritual depletion / spiritual elevation
- hope, holding onto faith
- disconnection with God
- negligence of spiritual and religious practices



# What is Grief: Risk Factors for Depression



# What is Grief: Grief vs. Depression



Reference: (Zisook S, Corruble E, Duan N, et al.)

## What is Grief: Adaptive Grieving

Prophet ﷺ witnessed his young son, Ibrahim, taking his final breaths. He began to cry and was questioned about this. In response to being questioned about his tears and clear sadness, the Prophet ﷺ said, *“This is mercy.”* Then he wept more and said, *“The eyes are shedding tears and the heart is grieved, and we will not say except what pleases our Lord, O Ibrāhīm! Indeed we are grieved by your separation.”*

(al-Bukhārī, 1303)

# What is Grief: Adaptive Grieving

## Model of Adaptive Grieving Dynamics (MAGD)

- Complex nature of the human beings
- *“Adaptive grieving is not something to achieve or complete, but a perpetual process by which a griever negotiates and renegotiates relationships with grief as an intrinsic component of the human experience.”*

# What is Grief: Adaptive Grieving

Dynamics of Lamenting and Heartening

Example

**Lamenting:** Expressing sadness, anger, despair, yearning

**Heartening:** Gaining spiritual insight, or encouragement; viewing stressors as challenges to overcome

The dual process model of coping with bereavement

Example

**Loss-oriented tasks:** Grief work, denial/avoidance of restoration changes.

**Restoration-oriented tasks:** Denial of grief in attending to life changes, and new roles/identities/ relationships

Positive and negative appraisals and outcomes

Example

Depending on an individual's grieving needs and preferences, the dynamic influences of any of these types of adaptive response can result in positive or negative appraisals and outcomes.

Dynamics of Integrating and Tempering:

Example

**Integrating:** Accept the reality of the loss; emotionally relocate deceased and move on with life; construct new meanings

**Tempering:** denial, numbness

Reference: (Darlan, C.D.)



# What is Grief: Adaptive Grieving

*The grieving process requires the bereaved to make meaning of their loss*

Neimeyer



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# **Making Meaning in the Face of Loss**

Psycho-Spiritual Coping Strategies for Muslim Communities

## Islamic Cognitive Reframing: The Nature of this Worldly Life

*"And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits but give glad tidings to the patient those who say, when afflicted with a calamity, 'We belong to God and to Him we shall return.'"*

(Al-Baqarah, 155)

*"Life in this world, by its very nature, is not the abode of perpetual joy and happiness, nor the abode of avoiding any loss of loved ones or sought-after desires..."*

(Balkhi, p. 52)

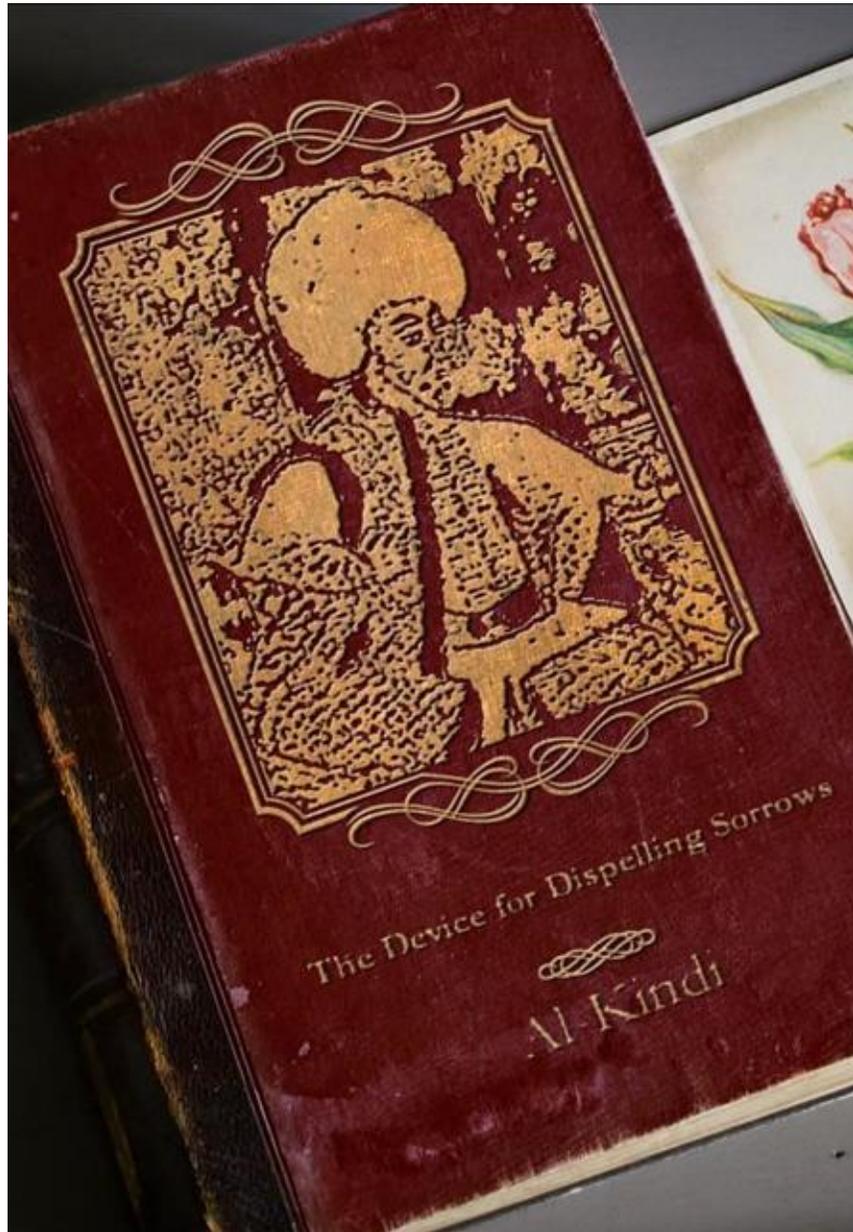
## Islamic Cognitive Reframing: Capacity to Cope



*"Allah does not burden any soul with more than it can bear..."*

(Al-Baqarah, 286)

## Islamic Cognitive Reframing: Positive Outlook



*And indeed, it is We who give life and cause death, and We are the Inheritor.*

(Al-Hijr, 23)

*Everything we have is loaned to us from the Creator of those possessions (Glorified and Exalted is He). We would have never come to possess what He had not lent us.*

(Kindi)

# Dhikr



Remembrance of Allah (99 attributes of Allah)  
Recitation and contemplation of the names illicit  
same attributes in us.

*As-Sabur*: The Patient One

*Al-Shafi*: The Healer

*As-Salam*: The Source of Peace

*Al-Warith*: The Supreme Heir



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# Social Support

Reaching Out to Community Members

## Activity



What actions or responses felt supportive to you when grieving, and what actions or responses felt unsupportive?

## Social Support: Reaching out to Community Members

Ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said,

*"...Whoever fulfilled the needs of his/her brother/sister, Allah will fulfill his needs; whoever brought his/her (Muslim) brother/sister out of a discomfort, Allah will bring him out of the discomforts of the Day of Resurrection, and whoever screened a Muslim, Allah will screen him on the Day of Resurrection."*



## Social Support: Reaching out to Community Members

Poor social support and loneliness can adversely affect physical, emotional, and mental well-being (Wang et.al., 2018), is linked to an increased premature mortality risk (Cacioppo et.al, 2018) and adverse health outcomes (i.e., depression, poor coping behavior, compromised well-being, reduced quality of life, etc.) (Wang et.al., 2003).

Strong social support for those dealing with intense grief may improve the capacity to cope with psychological distress (Harrop et.al., 2020; Juth et.al., 2015)

Much of the responsibility for grief support falls on family and friends (Gijzen et.al., 2016). Yet, bereaved people often report insufficient support from these sources (Hartig & Viola, 2016).

**Social Support:  
Reaching out to Community  
Members**

**Communicate your needs!**



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# Social Support: Reaching out to Community Members

## 1. *What actions or responses felt supportive to you?*

"Support groups have been most helpful, knowing there were others who truly understand, and went through similar things"

"Helping take care of my child. Helping with household chores."

"Written notes, gifts, money for the expenses..."

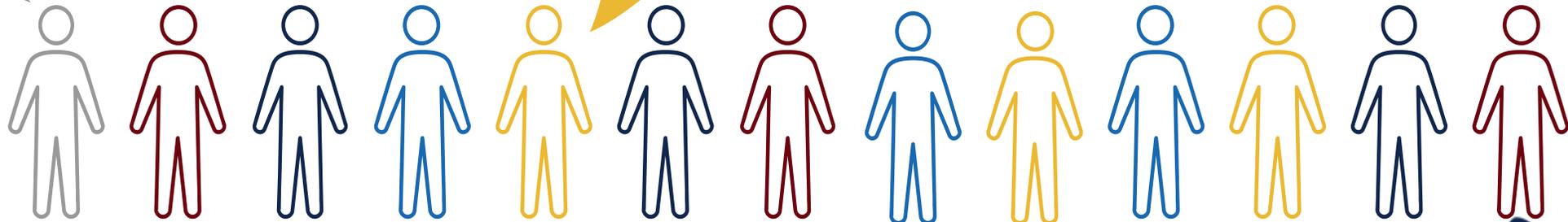
"Consistent communication, acceptance of my feelings, allowing me space as needed, listening without trying to fix or belittle my grief."

"Telling me that my grief is valid, that my feelings are real. Basically, just allowing me to be."

"ANYONE doing ANYTHING that lets me know they are thinking of him."

"Checking in on me. Coming over to see how I am. Bringing dinner."

"Just letting me mention his name without awkward silence or changing the subject."



## Social Support: Reaching out to Community Members

### 2. *What kinds of actions or responses felt unsupportive to you?*

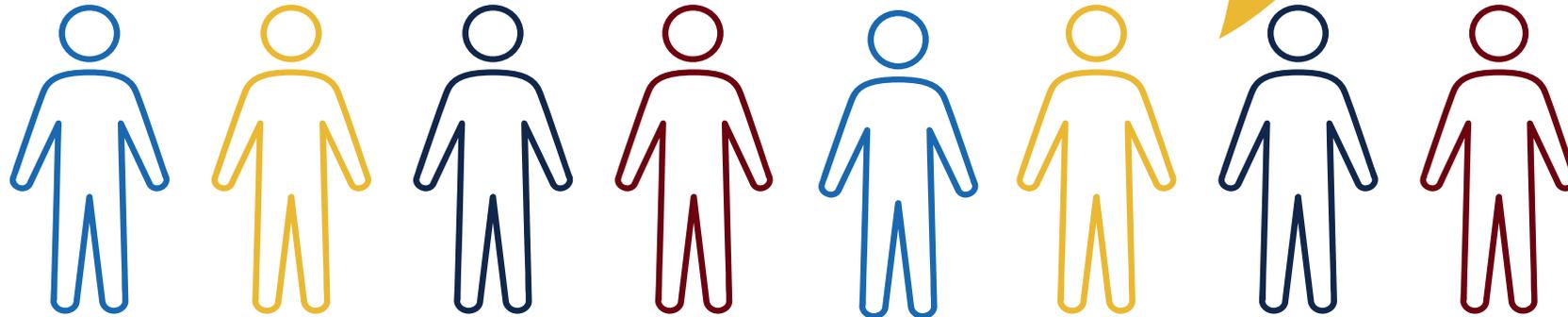
*"... failing to acknowledge death days, birthdays, him at other holidays, indicating by words, silence, or actions that they are tired of my grief and tired of hearing about him or grief."*

*"Never mentioning my daughter as if she never existed... friends stopped talking to us."*

*"No one checked in on me, feeling alone and isolated."*

*"Walking away from us when they see us. Changing the subject. Insisting I need to get out of the house because they miss the old me. Wanting me to participate in social events or visiting in the same way I did before Gabe was murdered. Not understanding I am forever changed."*

*"I was surprised that the pastor who oversaw my son's funeral never checked on us."*



## Tips to connect someone to mental health support

- **Set up a time to speak privately with the individual and share that you are concerned**
- **Let them know you care and you would like to refer them to a professional**
- **Reassure them that mental health services are confidential and effective**
- **Present some options and information about mental health providers**
- **Assure the person that you will continue to be there for them**





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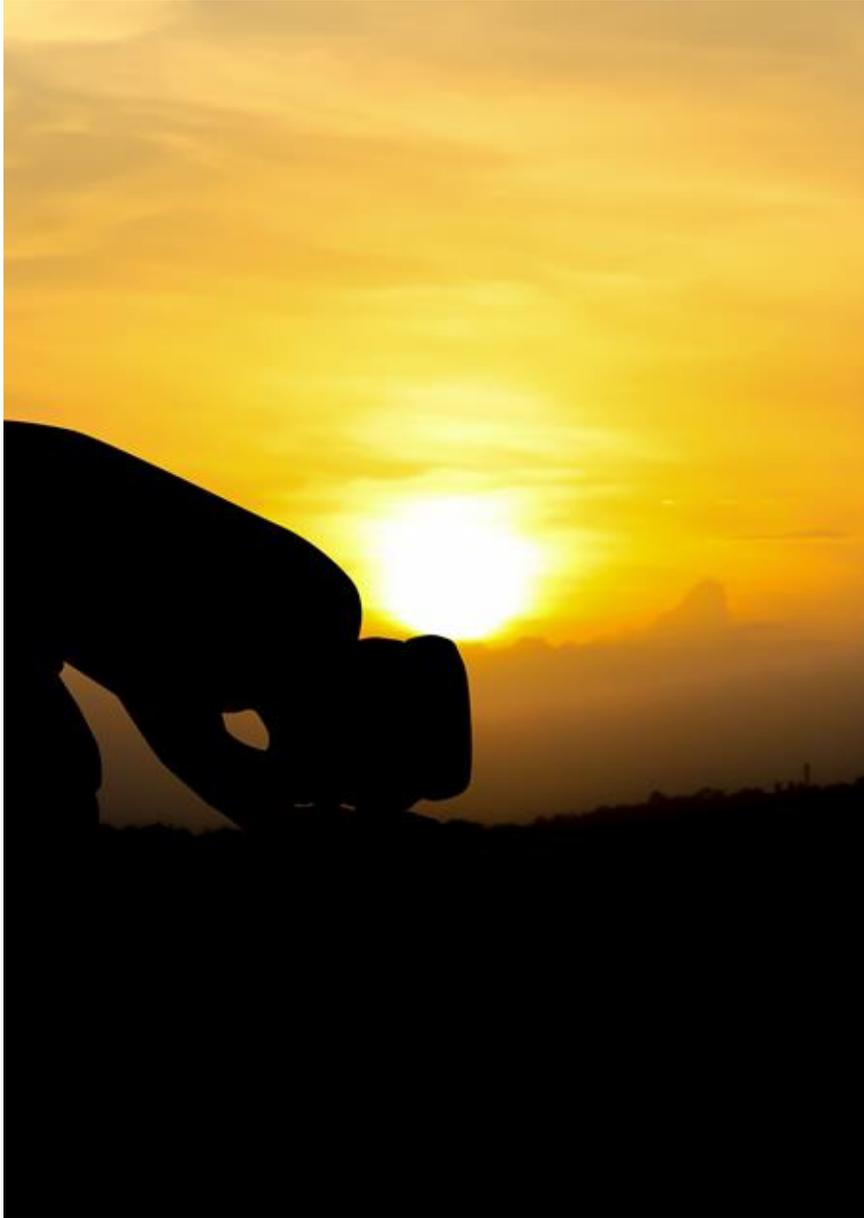
# Honoring Their Legacy

## Honoring Their Legacy



*What can you do after your loved ones pass that would benefit them and honor their legacy?*

## Honoring Their Legacy



*If s(he) could speak,  
what would s(he) ask me to do?*

## Activity



### - Writing a Letter -

- What I miss doing with you...
- Things that you have taught me that stay with me are...
- My best memory with you is...
- Makes me smile when I remember how you...



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# Resources

## Free Resources



**NYC Well offers trained counselors who provide support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in over 200 languages.**

**☐ CALL 1-888-NYC-Well (692-9355), TEXT “Well” to 65173, or CHAT at [nyc.gov/nycwell](https://nyc.gov/nycwell)**

Visit <https://mentalhealth.cityofnewyork.us/faith-leaders>

### Mental Health Toolkit for Faith and Community Leaders

Learn about mental health and why it matters  
Understand how the COVID-19 crisis may affect  
the mental health of your faith community  
Take action to care for your own mental health  
Take action to support the mental health of your  
faith community

- Mental Health Toolkit for Faith and Community Leaders
- Trauma support in communities: Understanding trauma & trauma-informed strategies for faith leaders
- Webinars on the role of faith communities in promoting mental health following a disaster

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