



Navigating

# Grief & Loss

*AN ISLAMIC & PSYCHO-SOCIAL FRAMEWORK*

"INDEED TO ALLAH BELONGS  
WHAT HE TAKES AND TO HIM  
BELONGS WHAT HE GIVES, AND  
FOR EVERYTHING HE SETS A  
FIXED TERM. SO BE PATIENT, AND  
SEEK THE REWARD FROM ALLAH

(BUKAHARI & MUSLIM)

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**GUIDELINE**

COUNSEL · COMPASSION · COHERENCE

A Project of Darul Ihsan Humanitarian Centre



# 1. UNDERSTANDING GRIEF

## WHAT IS GRIEF?

Grief is a natural emotional response we experience to losing someone or something meaningful, whether it's a person, a treasured object, or even a way of life. The feelings that accompany grief can be intense and may deeply affect our everyday lives and relationships. However, it's important to understand that grief is a normal part of life, not an illness or something negative. It simply reflects how much you cared for what you've lost, which is a valid and important expression.

It is important to note that grief does not only entail losing a loved one. Instead, grief can occur through a divorce, grieving a portion of your life that no longer exists, grieving a place and various other meaningful losses, as mentioned above.

**Grief is also not a linear process.** A person may move back and forth between different emotions rather than progressing in a fixed order. It is normal to revisit certain stages multiple times, and each individual's experience of grief is unique.



## 2. GRIEF WITHIN THE SEERAH

Did you know that the Prophet ﷺ experienced so much of grief that in the Seerah, there is a year that is titled 'Aam-Al-Huzn' (The Year of Sorrow /Grief)?

To experience grief is a natural emotion. It is not something within one's control. Nabi ﷺ personally experienced numerous losses and setbacks throughout his life. He ﷺ expressed his grief on several occasions, illustrating that it is acceptable to be sad or hurt when we experience loss or suffer difficulties. Through his noble example, Nabi ﷺ demonstrated that experiencing and dealing with grief is both human and inevitable.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ visited Sa'd ibn 'Ubadah ؓ during his illness. He ﷺ was accompanied by Abdur Rahman ibn Awf, Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, and Abdullah ibn Mas'ud ؓ (May Allah be pleased with them all). The Messenger of Allah ﷺ began to weep, and when his Companions saw this, they too began to weep. He ﷺ then said:

**“Do you not hear? Indeed, Allah does not punish for the shedding of tears nor for the grief of the heart, but He punishes or bestows mercy because of this,”** and he ﷺ pointed to his tongue. *(Bukhari and Muslim)*

We learn from this Hadith that whilst it is okay to express our grief through sadness and crying, we should be mindful not to complain or utter any word of ingratitude that will be displeasing to Allah Ta'ala.

Nabi ﷺ not only acknowledged his own emotions but also validated the feelings of those around him. He ﷺ showed his companions that it is okay to feel sad and it is okay to cry. But at the same time, he ﷺ encouraged them to be mindful of their thoughts, guiding them to channel their sadness, grief, or guilt into positive and productive actions.

**What should I tell myself when I'm at my lowest, when I am feeling too overwhelmed by grief?**

**I tell myself that what I am experiencing is by the divine decree of my Lord and it is something that even the best of men and women underwent.**

**I remind myself that Allah Ta'ala is greater than my grief and sorrow and He is my Healer and Saviour.**



# Growing Around Grief

WE TEND TO THINK THAT GRIEF  
GROWS SMALLER AS TIME PASSES BY



IN REALITY, GRIEF TENDS TO STAY THE SAME  
SIZE, BUT SLOWLY LIFE BEGINS TO GROW  
AROUND IT





### **3. THE STAGES OF GRIEF**

In the 20th century, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross introduced the stages of grief, a framework to understand the grieving process, and interpretations of this model have evolved with time. It is important to note that these stages are not fixed and often not experienced in order. In fact, some individuals may not even go through all of them. They are simply a framework to help understand emotional responses to loss.

#### **NORMAL VS COMPLICATED GRIEF**

Normal grief includes a range of emotional responses such as sadness, anger, confusion, and longing, which may come and go over time. Although the pain of loss may remain, these feelings gradually become more manageable, allowing a person to continue with their daily life.

Complicated grief, however, refers to experiencing intense and persistent symptoms of grief that continue for an extended period, typically beyond one year after a loss. This may begin to affect a person's physical health, interpersonal relationships, and ability to carry out daily responsibilities. In such circumstances, it is important to seek counselling or professional support if you feel you may be experiencing this, as additional guidance can support the healing process.

## **Stage 1: DENIAL**

The denial stage often brings feelings of shock, resistance, and avoidance. When a tragedy first happens, it's common to feel denial and try to reject the reality of what's going on. The numbness and disbelief we experience at this point is actually a way for our mind to protect us, helping us cope when things feel too overwhelming to handle all at once.

Example: "I feel so numb, I cannot believe it."

## **Stage 2: ANGER**

After the initial shock and disbelief of the moment the next emotion of grief is anger. Anger often surfaces as a way to shield us from the more painful emotions we experience during grief and loss. It gives us a sense of power when we feel helpless in the face of what we have lost. Beneath the anger, deeper emotions like anxiety, abandonment, loneliness, confusion, and pain are simmering. You may find yourself angry at those around you, or the changes beyond your control. Anger offers something to concentrate on when you feel an overwhelming sense of emptiness. Importantly, this anger must be channelled correctly, kept in check and not cause one to behave inappropriately.

Example: "Why has Allah allowed this to happen?" or "Why did this happen to me?"

### Stage 3: BARGAINING

This stage frequently involves "If only..." statements, as feelings of regret tend to surface with loss. Guilt often accompanies the bargaining stage. Nabi ﷺ advised us against these thoughts that inevitably bring up more pain. He ﷺ said, "If anything befalls you, do not say, 'If only I had done such and such.'" Rather say, '**Qaddara Allahu wa-ma sha'a fa'ala**' (Allah has decreed and whatever He wills, He does).' For (saying) 'If' opens (the door) to the deeds of satan." *(Sunan Ibn Majah)*

### Stage 4: DEPRESSION

Once our attention shifts away from the past and into the present, the depression stage can hit hard. We truly begin to feel the loss we've experienced, which can cause intense feelings of sadness, loneliness and emptiness. This stage can feel as though the pain will last forever.

We see the intensity of these emotions in the Prophet Ya'qub عليه السلام, when he was separated from his son Yusuf عليه السلام and he grieved so deeply that his eyes turned white from his tears. His intense grief is expressed in the Qur'an, "And he (Ya'qub عليه السلام) said, 'Oh, my sorrow over Yusuf,' and his eyes became white from grief because of the sorrow that he suppressed." *(Surah Yusuf:84)*

## Stage 5: ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance involves recognising that the person is physically gone and that this new reality is permanent. It does not mean being 'ok' with what happened, as the loss of a loved one may never truly feel acceptable. Instead, the aim of this stage is to figure out how to live with the loss and establish a new sense of normalcy, despite the significant absence. Initially, you might attempt to continue living as you did before the loss.

Examples: Accepting and asking yourself: "This is really happening; how can I adjust?"

## Stage 6: FINDING MEANING

After losing someone close, many people think, "There must be more." Grief experts refer to this as the stage of "finding meaning." Meaning is found by continuing to honour your love for the person while moving forward with your life. **While loss is something that happens to you, meaning is something you create from it.** (*Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2009*)





## 4. COPING STRATEGIES

The following are coping strategies to aid with navigating the different stages of grief.

### **Coping with Bargaining**

In this phase, it's important to recognise that no one has all the answers, and most people are simply doing their best with the knowledge they have. While sitting with uncertainty can be uncomfortable, it's a normal and expected human response to the unknown.

### **Coping with Anger**

Express your feelings, whether to yourself or to someone you trust, as this can be a helpful way to manage emotions. Communicate with your Creator and draw courage from His presence and compassion.

Seeking refuge and comfort in Allah Ta'ala's mercy and promises is an effective method of healing. Two people insulted each other in the presence of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and the eyes of one of them became red like embers and the veins of his neck were swelling. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Verily, I know a word he could say to calm himself: I seek refuge in Allah from the cursed satan.” *(Sahih Muslim)*

Grounding is also useful when emotions run high, as it redirects focus from overwhelming thoughts and emotions to the physical body. The Prophet ﷺ described anger as an ember in the heart, recommending grounding as a way to cope: "Whoever feels anything like that, let him lie down on the ground."

*(Sunan al-Tirmidhi)*

Reign in your regrets: Rather than dwelling on "What if...", focus on "What is." The one constant within our control is how we handle the present moment. By redirecting our attention from past regrets and future anxieties, we can make the most of the present and take meaningful action.

What may feel like rejection or loss could in reality be Allah's protection or redirection. At times, what we may dislike may actually carry goodness for us, even if we cannot yet perceive it. "Perhaps you dislike something which is good for you and like something which is bad for you. Allah knows and you do not know." *(Surah Baqarah:216)*

## **Coping with Depression**

Remind yourself that feeling deep sadness during grief is normal, healthy, and part of the healing process. Like the other stages, this one won't last forever. Remember Allah's Ta'ala's promise: "With every hardship comes ease." *(Surah Ash-Sharh:5)* The depression stage is a necessary part of moving forward after loss, and each moment of sadness contributes to healing.

Focus on small steps instead of being overwhelmed by the future. Taking one step at a time, especially during tough moments, can help you navigate through the day and gradually ease the burden. *(Sultan & Awad, 2020)*

At times when the heart feels heavy, remind yourself: what feels like delay may be preparation and what feels like loss may be a form of mercy.

## **Coping with Acceptance**

Even after accepting your loss, there will still be emotional ups and downs. On tough days, acknowledge your emotions and remember that they reflect the love you can no longer share with the person physically. Channel that love through Dua.

Finding new meaning and forming new relationships is not a betrayal; it honours your loved one's memory and the life Allah Ta'ala has blessed you with. Trust that Allah's plan is always unfolding in your favour, even when the outcome differs from your expectations.

## **Coping through Finding Meaning**

Remember Paradise: Envision your loved one in the highest levels of Paradise, surrounded by peace and joy. Imagine reuniting with them in a place of eternal tranquillity and the emotions that will follow. Picture the scene Allah Ta'ala describes: "They will have Gardens of everlasting bliss with flowing rivers, adorned with gold bracelets, dressed in fine green silk and brocade, comfortably seated on soft chairs. What a blessed reward and a wonderful resting place!" (*Surah Al-Kahf:31*)

**Create Changes in Your Life:** The loss of someone or something dear to you can often lead to re-evaluating your priorities in life. When Nabi ﷺ was asked which of the believers is best, he replied: “The one who remembers death the most and is best in preparing for it. Those are the wisest.” *(Sunan Ibn Majah)*

Often loss causes a shift in perspective, allowing this loss to push you toward positive changes in your life is one of the most profound ways of creating meaning. It invites a person to realign their life with purpose, strengthen their relationship with Allah, and invest in what carries eternal value.

**Charity & Dua:** Charity yields continuous good deeds because it has ongoing benefits for those you assisted. Support a cause that was meaningful to your loved one like contributing to a water well or Masjid, plant a tree in your loved one's honour, care for others with the intent of your loved one sharing in the reward. The Prophet ﷺ said “The best of what a man leaves behind are three: a righteous child who supplicates for him, ongoing charity, the reward of which reaches him, and knowledge that is acted upon after his death.” *(Sunan Ibn Maajah)*



# The Grief Iceberg

*What people see*

STRENGTH

COPING

MASKING

KEEPING BUSY

"I'M OKAY"

DEEP SADNESS

*What people don't see*

ANGER

STRESS

REGRET

FEAR

MOMENTS OF  
DISBELIEF

QUESTIONING

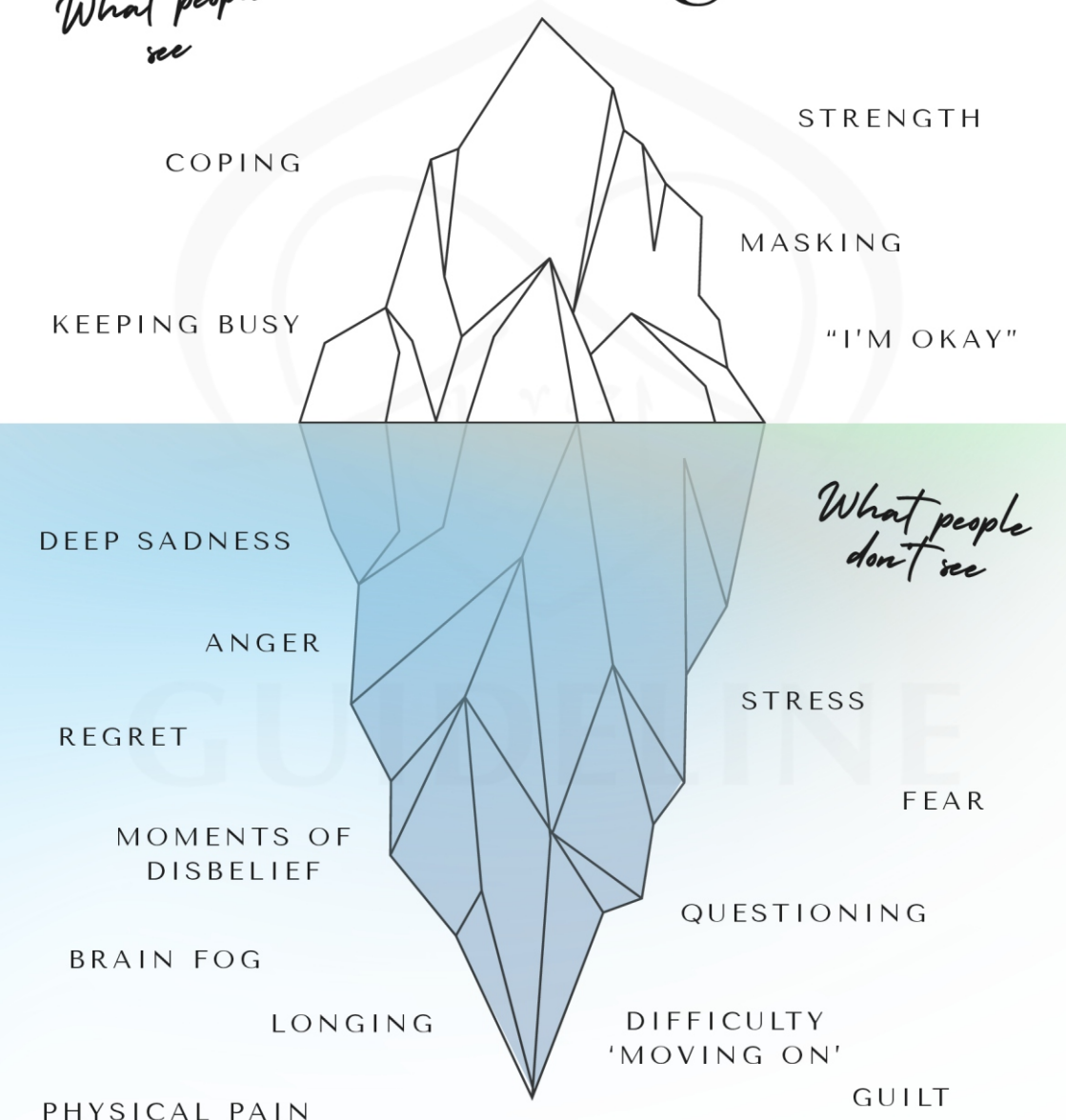
BRAIN FOG

LONGING

DIFFICULTY  
'MOVING ON'

PHYSICAL PAIN

GUILT





## 5.COMFORT FROM THE QUR'AN & SUNNAH

“No disaster strikes except by permission of Allah. And whoever believes in Allah, He will guide his heart. And Allah is Knowledgeable of all things.”

*(Surah At-Tagabun:11)*

Allāmah Ibn Kathir explains this verse by stating that no calamity occurs except by the permission, decree, and will of Allah. Whoever experiences an affliction and recognises that it comes from Allah's judgement, and then responds with patience while seeking His reward, Allah will guide their heart and grant them certainty in faith. He will compensate them for their loss by replacing it with something equal or better.

It is reported from Ibn Abbas, through Ali ibn Abi Talhah, regarding the verse “And whoever believes in Allah, He guides his heart” *(Surah At-Taghābun:11)*, that Allah grants such a person conviction, they come to realise that what afflicted them could never have missed them, and what missed them could never have reached them. *(Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Surah At-Taghābun:11)*

Narrated Abu Uthman: Usamah ibn Zayd said that while he, Sa'ad and Ubay ibn Ka'b were with the Prophet ﷺ a daughter of the Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) sent a message to him, saying. “My daughter is dying; please come to us.” The Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) sent her his greetings and added “It is for

Allah what He takes, and what He gives; and everything before His sight has a limited period. So she should hope for Allah's reward and remain patient.” She again sent a message, beseeching him by Allah, to come. So the Prophet (peace be upon him) got up and so did we (and went there). The child was placed on his lap while his breath was irregular. Tears flowed from the eyes of the Prophet. Sa'ad said to him, “What is this, O Allah's Apostle?” He said, “This is Mercy which Allah has embedded in the hearts of whomever He wished of His slaves. And Allah does not bestow His Mercy, except on the merciful among His slaves.” *(Sahih Al Bukhari)*

Nabi ﷺ said, “There is no Muslim who is stricken with a calamity and reacts by saying as Allah has commanded: **'Inna lillahi, wa inna ilayhi rajioon. Allahumma 'indaka ihtasabtu musibati, fa'jurni feeha, wa 'idni minha** (Truly, to Allah we belong and truly, to Him we shall return. O Allah, with You I seek reward for my calamity, so reward me for it and compensate me),’ but Allah will reward him for that and compensate him with something better than it.” *(Sunan ibn Majah)*

While nothing can truly replace the loss of a loved one, our healing lies in accepting that it is the decree of the All-Wise. What belonged to Him has returned to Him. We take comfort and solace from the fact that this separation is a short one, far shorter than we think or realise. Importantly, we should strive to make our lives such that when we reach them in the Hereafter, it will be the ultimate and everlasting reunion. We will never be separated again.

In another verse of the Holy Quraan, Allah mentions, “Indeed, whoever is mindful of Allah and remains patient, Allah never allows the reward of those who do good to be lost. (*Surah Yusuf:90*)

This verse reminds us that even prolonged hardship, like that experienced by Prophet Yusuf عليه السلام, carries wisdom. Years of difficulty can lead to outcomes far greater than what we could have imagined.

**When things do not go as planned, remind yourself:** Allah's decree is always better than what we envision for ourselves. What feels like a closed door may in fact be guiding you toward what is truly meant for you.



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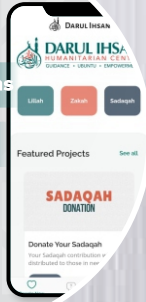
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## About Darul Ihsan

Darul Ihsan Humanitarian Centre provides education, guidance, social, empowerment and welfare services to the community. In providing this service, we adopt a holistic approach, that gives due importance to basic needs as well as human rights and dignity of those that we serve.

## Founding Philosophy

Darul Ihsan Humanitarian Centre is a multi-purpose, humanitarian-services providing organisation. 'Ihsan' means compassion towards mankind and to act with excellence. The Centre was established in the year 2000 with the primary objective of serving humanity and alleviating poverty and hardship locally and abroad. Since its inception, it has developed and established many humanitarian projects and provides a variety of free services to the community.

## Key Objectives

One of the key objectives of the Centre is to promote a better understanding of humanity and peace, thereby serving as a bridge-builder between faiths and communities. Through guidance, Ubuntu and empowerment, the organisation hopes to train and develop the youth to become torch bearers of hope, peace and compassion to humanity.

