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EDITORIAL

Colin Murray Parkes

Bereaved people commonly ask, 'Is it normal to feel like this?' Grief is so overwhelming and painful an emotion and it goes on for so long that we may fear for our sanity. The loss of someone we love strikes at the very root of our security; suddenly the world which, up to now, we had taken for granted, cannot be taken for granted any more, the familiar world feels unfamiliar, even hostile.

We need to give reassurance and the emotional support which makes it possible for the bereaved to begin the gradual process of 'retrieving, consolidating and transforming the meaning of their relationship, not by abandoning it'

As Peter Marris put it, 'The organisation of reality...is inextricably derived from the unique relationships in our lives. Grief is a reaction to the disintegration of the whole structure of meaning dependent on that relationship.' Small wonder that newly bereaved people often feel lost, angry and afraid. Anger is most likely to predominate when the agent of death is another human being.

The aim of support is not to help people to forget the dead or to avenge them, but to retrieve from the past those memories, purposes and assumptions which can enrich and give meaning to the future. Thus we need to give reassurance and the emotional support which makes it possible for the bereaved to begin the gradual process of 'retrieving, consolidating and transforming the meaning of their relationship, not by abandoning it'*.

In this edition of *Bereavement Care* we focus on the special predicament of those caught up in the cycle of violence in the Middle East. How can they find meaning without retaliating against the supposed authors of the violence and thereby perpetuating the problem?

We offer no simplistic solution to this problem but one possible source of help deserves consideration. Global problems require global solutions and a source of help to bereaved people which spans the globe is the internet. In this edition Terry Oliveri examines grief groups and Amanda Aitken reviews internet resources for coping with traumatic loss. Do we dare to hope that resources such as these may enable those who are both grieving and aggrieved to find meaning in their suffering by directing their anger and discontent where it will do good rather than harm?

*Marris P. Loss and Change. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974.