Grief and Loss in Islam

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We all experience grief and loss in different ways and use various stories, passages, and supplications from our traditions to help us make meaning of our situation and bring us comfort. Below are a few Qur’anic verses, Hadith (Saying of Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings upon him), and Duas (supplications) that can be helpful.

Relieving Anguish and Distress

- The Prophet (S) used to say, “O Allah! I seek refuge with You from worry and grief, from incapacity and laziness, from cowardice and miserliness, from being heavily in debt and from being overpowered by (other) people.” (Sahih Bukhari)

- There is no god but Allah, The Almighty and Forbearing. There is no god but Allah, the Lord of the Great Throne. There is no god but Allah, the Lord of the heavens and the holy throne.

- Oh God, I need your mercy! Oh Lord, allow me not my own desire, even for the blink of an eye. Mend all my affairs, there is no god but You.

- Reflecting on the 99 Names of God and those that are meaningful to you in this moment. A few common ones are:

  - Ar-Rahman- The Most Merciful
  - Ar-Rahim- The Bestower of Mercy
  - Ar-Razzak- The Provider
  - Ar-Sabur- The Patient
  - Al-Ghaffar- The All & Oft Forgiving
  - Al-Wadud- The Loving One
  - Al-Salaam- The Giver of Peace
  - Al-Nur- The Illuminator

Death of a Loved One

- When we hear that someone has died, Muslims say,

  إِنَّا بِيَتِّيكَ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

  “Verily we belong to God and verily to God we return” (Surah Baqara 2:156)

  This is a reminder to us that God is our Creator and our Source of Life. This life has been given to us and our ultimate return is to God and the Hereafter.

- When someone dies, Muslim read or recite Surah Yasin (Chapter 36)
  - Recitation by Shaykh Mishary Rashid Al Afasy
  - Translation by M.A.S. Abdel Haleem (Different translations can be selected from the settings)

- After someone has died, friends and family are encouraged to pray for them asking God to bless them, remove any sins, and have mercy on their soul. These are a few examples of duas. Many of these supplications are also for the living as reminders about our ultimate destiny.

  - Oh God, this deceased person, is in your mercy, and dwelling in your company, protect him/her from the trial of the grave and the torment of the Fire. Oh God, you are the One who fulfills covenants and restores justice. Pardon our deceased and forgive him/her. You are the Most Forgiving Most Merciful.

  - Oh God, forgive our living and our dead, those who are present and those who are absent, our young and our old, and males and females. Oh, God, whoever among us you caused to live make him/her live in accordance with Islam, and
whoever among you caused to die, make him/her die on the state of faith. Oh, God, grant us the rewards and protect us for being astray

- Oh God, your servant, son/daughter of your male and female servant, is in need of your mercy, and you are in no need of any torment. If he/she was from the righteous, increase their righteousness, and if he/she was from among the transgressors, pardon his/her transgression.

Grief
Grief is a natural human response to many kinds of losses and hardships. Each of us will experience it in a different way and will seek meaning from it in our own ways. Grief is not a sign of spiritual weakness, it is an expression of our emotional state, and should not be shied away from. It is an experience that many people will face including many of the prophets. All of our emotions are part of Allah’s (SWT) creation and served a purpose. By telling yourself that sadness, grief and other emotions are bad, or you shouldn’t feel them, you are not only denying a part of your humanity, but part of Allah’s (SWT) creation.

- Allah (SWT) comforts Prophet Muhammad (S) by telling him, “We are well aware that your heart is weighed down by what they say. Celebrate the glory of your Lord and be among those who bow down to Him: worship your Lord until what is certain comes to you.” (Surah Al- Hijr 15:97-99)
- When Prophet Yaqub (A) was separated from his son, Prophet Yusuf (A), he said, “Oh, my sorrow over Yusuf,” and his eyes became white from grief because of the sorrow that he suppressed (Surat Yusuf 12:84).
- The Prophet Muhammad (S) buried all but one of his children. It is narrated that when his son Ibrahim died, he wept.

“Allah’s Messenger took Ibrahim and kissed him and smelled him and later we entered Abu Saif’s house and at that time Ibrahim was breathing his last breaths, and the eyes of Allah’s Messenger started shedding tears. ‘Abdur Rahman bin ‘Auf said, ‘O Allah’s Apostle, even you are weeping!’ He said, ‘O Ibn ‘Auf, 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 Ibrahim! Indeed we are grieved by your separation.” (Sahih Bukhari 1303)
- When Prophet Yunus was in the belly of the whale, it was one of his lowest and darkest moments. He called to Allah (SWT), and said, “but then he cried out in the deep darkness, ‘There is no God but You, glory be to You, I was wrong.’” (Surah Al-Anbya 21:87)

References
- “Islamic Spirituality and Mental Well-Being” by Zohair bdul-Rahman
- “I Should’ve Gotten Over It by Now.” Surviving the Impact of Grief on Faith.” By Najwa Awad and Sarah Sultan
- Duas have been adapted from Ziyara: Spiritual Care
- “The Islamic Perspective On Grief - Coping with Individual and Community Loss/Hardship.”
- Coping with Grief and Trauma Webinar