

I WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE A BABY ●●●

WAVE OF LIGHT: How To Support Yourself, Your Staff, and the Entire Community Through The War in Israel

Our collective Jewish family is suffering right now – the Jewish people are in pain. Our tradition teaches us that we must support and care for one another in times of need.

At [I Was Supposed to Have a Baby](#), our work centers around [holding space for those struggling to build their family](#). While many of us feel helpless right now, we **can** and **must** support each other by holding this grief which is too much to bear alone. Our organizational values compelled us to do our part to support the Jewish community as we move through our grief together.

Each year, on October 15th, in honor of *Infant and Pregnancy Loss Awareness Day*, people around the world light candles at 7 pm local time in memory of the babies they have lost. Photos of these candles on social media create a *wave of light* that spreads across the globe in remembrance and support.

We have created our own “WAVE OF LIGHT” Resource Guide to support the Jewish Community as we move through this current crisis. It is applicable for individuals, leaders, and organizations throughout the Jewish world.

Please click [here](#) to access and download the graphics, or reshare our posts from [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [YouTube](#), and [Threads](#).

Quickly navigate to the resources that speak to you the most:

- [What Does Grief Look Like?](#)
- [Podcasts on Grief and Anxiety](#)
- [How to Talk With People Who Are Grieving](#)
- [7 Ways You Can Practice Self-Care When The World Feels Like It’s Crumbling Around You](#)
- [Where to Get More Help](#)
- [How We’re Supporting Our Staff](#)



What Does Grief Look Like?

Grief is a natural reaction to loss, but many of us don't know what grief looks like or recognize it when it shows up. You may have different feelings that come and go, with no rhyme or reason, and grief can cause a whole host of physical and emotional symptoms.

There is no right or wrong way to grieve...and there is no timeline for how long grief lasts.

The **five stages of grief** (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance) are ways to understand the grief process, but most people don't fit into one of these categories, nor do they progress neatly from one stage to the next. It's much more common to experience a mixture of these stages at any given time.

Some people might find it helpful to seek a grief-trained therapist, and others may want to process on their own. Both of these are okay. But if your grief symptoms start interfering with your life, or if you are still in the active stages of grief, please reach out for mental health support. [Please see the resources listed below.](#)

In grief, it is normal to:

- Feel **numb** or feel nothing at all
- Be **angry** at everyone and everything
- Feel physically **ill**
- Feel **anxious** all the time
- Not feeling **hungry** or having an insatiable appetite
- Not to be able to **sleep** or be **tired** all the time
- **Cry** all the time or not be able to cry
- **Watch videos** of your loved one over and over again, **or not want to see them at all**

What can you expect in the days, weeks, months, years ahead?

- Some days you think you're okay, and other days you scream at the cashier at the grocery store.
- Sometimes you want to tell everyone what happened, and other times, you never want to talk about it again.
- Some days you think about all the things you have lost, and others you grieve the future of what could have been.
- Some mornings you jump out of bed, and on others you want to stay there all day.
- Some days you can laugh, and other days you play that sad song over and over again because you didn't cry hard enough the first time.

- Some days you lean on the people who get you and get it, and others you think that no one can possibly understand the depth of your pain.
- Some days you have moments when you forget what happened, and others you can't stop thinking about the what-ifs.
- Some days you feel fine, and other days you leave your phone in the fridge.
- Some days you want to be surrounded by people, and other days you want to be left alone.
- Some days you wonder if you're the crazy one or if it's just society that doesn't understand grief.

For more resources on grief, check out this comprehensive doc from [WebMd](#).

Podcasts on Grief and Anxiety

Talking Away the Taboo features Aimee Baron MD, FAAP, the Founder and Executive Director of *I Was Supposed to Have a Baby*, in conversation with world-class guests who work in the fertility field and/or are on their own fertility journey. The selection of episodes below may be helpful perspectives for these difficult times.

- [That Good Grief](#) with Rachel Reichblum
- [Grief](#) with Yonina Kaufman, LCSW, MSED
- [Time Does Not Heal All Wounds: The Wisdom of Grieving Perinatal Loss](#) with Rabbi David Balto, Dvora Entin, LCSW, PMH-C, and Nancy Berlow, LCSW
- [Anxiety of Uncertain Times](#) with Chiemi Rajamahendran
- [Am I Allowed to Be Angry at God](#) with Rachel Tuchman, LMHC

How to Talk With People Who Are Grieving

The longer this war continues, the likelihood increases that each of us will personally know someone who has died, or we will be in the position of comforting someone who is mourning. Most people don't know how to comfort a person who has lost someone close to them, going through unimaginable pain. So instead, people often choose to say nothing at all. Here are some tips on [what to say and what not to say](#), so you can be there for those you love.

DO:

- **Just Listen.** Give them time without interrupting (even to comfort or ask questions). Hold space for them to experience their emotions in your presence.
 - If you are uncertain as to whether they want to talk, try something simple like, *"What's on your mind today?"* or *"Do you want to talk about it?"*
- **Nonverbal Cues Are Key.** The power of a hug, making eye contact when speaking, or simply nodding your head in validation can go a long way.
- **If you are at a loss for words, say so.** Saying *"I have no words"* is validating and acknowledging.
- **Talk about their situation,** not someone else's. It doesn't matter what someone else has gone through/is going through. Your focus should be on them.
- **Offer to help in specific ways** like delivering dinner, walking the dog, or babysitting other kids. Avoid hollow-sounding phrases like, *"Reach out if you need anything."*
- **Forgive yourself if you make a mistake.** It is impossible to fully understand another person's situation. But if you recognize that you said or did something wrong, own up to it, and express your remorse. *"Oh my G-d - I can't believe I just said that. That was horrible. Please forgive me."*
- **Here are some examples of helpful things to say:**
 - I am so sorry.
 - I love you.
 - I am here for you.
 - I can't imagine what this is like/I have no words.
 - Do you want me to hold you while you cry, or would you like me to distract you (take you out, watch a movie, etc)?
 - Will a hug be helpful right now?
 - I can't stop thinking about you...you don't need to respond - Just know that you are in my thoughts and I love you.

DON'T:

- **Spout toxic positivity.** None of these comments are helpful.
 - *"G-d only gives you what you can handle."*
 - *"Just stay strong."*
 - *"At least it wasn't worse..."*
 - *"Think positively - you can get through this."*
 - *"Your (insert deceased name) would not want you to be sad all the time."*
- **Give advice.** They need you as a friend, with an open heart and a listening ear. Giving advice instead of listening when someone is in pain invalidates their feelings and makes them feel like you have no room to hold their pain.

- **Try to fix.** This can't be fixed. It can never be fixed. Just hold space for people by listening, letting them cry, offering hugs, tissues and chocolate, etc.
 - **Share details about their situation with others.** If someone shared their story with you, consider it confidential unless specifically told otherwise. Ask for consent to share.
 - **Forget about them in the weeks, months, and years later.** Check in with warm "I'm thinking about you" texts or calls - it lets people know you care. Drop off flowers, cookies, soup, etc. in the months ahead. Birthdays, anniversaries, and Yahrzeits (date of death) can be very triggering too, so give your person some TLC then as well.
 - **Assume they won't want to come to your joyous family gatherings.** Treat them the same as you did before you knew what they were going through, and invite them. But understand that they might not be up to attending, and be kind when they decline or need to leave early.
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7 Ways You Can Practice Self-Care When The World Feels Like It's Crumbling Around You

Set Boundaries

- Turn off the news, tell people what you need (or don't need) from them, walk away.
- If there are certain topics you don't want to think about, stay away from situations where they are being discussed.

Get Outside

- Take a walk, sit on the porch, or even just open the window for fresh air.
- Get a change of scenery and slow down.

Laugh

- Laugh with friends, watch heartwarming videos, share funny memes.
- Allow yourself to find pockets of happiness. It's okay to do this.

Reach Out To Your Support System

- You are not alone.
- Call your friends/family. Share with them how you are feeling, or don't - talk about anything else to get your mind off things for a bit.

Take A Deep Breath

- Don't forget to breathe.

- Try the 4-7-8 breathing technique: breathe in for 4 seconds, hold your breath for 7 seconds, and exhale for 8 seconds.
- Center yourself.

Start Small

- Get out of bed, make your favorite breakfast, enjoy the morning sun, call a friend, move your body, draw a relaxing bath.
- Focus on things you can control and ways you can support your mental health.

Let It Out

- Let yourself feel the emotions. Don't hold it in, it will just grow until it is too big to handle. Cry. Pray. Write. Let it out.
- Allow yourself to process what you are feeling and validate yourself.

[Click here for some tips](#) from Hey Alma on how to stay calm and take a break right now.

Where to Get More Help

The world is heavy right now, and you don't need to go through it alone.

- **Betterhelp** is offering six months of free online counseling to those impacted by the ongoing war. Highly praised by reputable sources such as the Wall Street Journal, Business Insider, Forbes, and others, BetterHelp has 34,000 licensed, experienced, and accredited mental health professionals in its database. [Click here to sign up.](#)
- **Chai Lifeline** is offering crisis services in both America and to English speakers in Israel. The 24-hour crisis line can be reached by calling 732-377-5135 in Israel or 855-3-CRISIS in the United States or by emailing crisis@chailifeline.org. Their website also has a full page of resources for adults and children. [The website can be accessed by clicking here.](#)
- **Crisis Text Line** provides English language mental health support, **text SHARE to 741741** to connect to a live volunteer Crisis Counselor or via web chat.
- **ERAN** provides emotional first aid for those in Israel. **Call *3201** for support. For lone soldiers, specialized assistance is available through the Nefesh B'Nefesh Lone Soldier Hotline at *6563.

- **Gefen Fertility** in Israel has dedicated team members available to speak and provide emotional support. Email your name and phone number to info@karengafen.org and they will be in touch.
- **Merkaz Panim Fertility** provides emotional and physical support to families facing fertility challenges. They can be reached at merkazpanim1@gmail.com.
- **Ohel Children's Home and Family Services** released a resource on managing trauma that is geared to parents and caregivers, with specific tips for helping children of all ages cope. [The guide can be accessed by clicking here.](#) Ohel also has a dedicated support line for teachers which can be reached either by emailing teachersupport@ohelfamily.org or by calling 718-686-3189 from 12 to 1 PM on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays, or from 4 to 6 PM on Wednesdays and Thursdays.
- [Click here](#) to access a list of Jewish Mental Health Organizations from Prizmah: Center for Jewish Day Schools.

How We're Supporting Our Staff

Carrying on with daily work can feel nearly impossible during a time of traumatic grief. However, we also know it's important to continue providing support for people who were already going through the immense pain of infertility and pregnancy loss. Here are some of the ways that we're supporting our staff, so we can continue to support our community:

- Regularly holding space (dedicated Zoom staff meetings, daily WhatsApp check-ins, and in 1:1 meetings) for team members to process the war and the feelings and emotions that come along with it, if helpful.
- It was made explicitly clear that all nonessential work can be delayed, and that everybody will continue to be fully paid regardless of the hours they put in.
- Sharing resources from other Jewish communal organizations, like the [Leading Edge Supporting People in Diaspora Jewish Nonprofits During the Crisis in Israel guide.](#)