

# Making sense of grief: a personal voyage of discovery

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**Bharat Maldé describes the impact of the sudden death of his only son Anjool and what he has learned about bereavement and coping from his and his wife's grief journey and those of his fellow-travellers.**

### Editor's comment

In this moving description of his grief for his beloved son, Bharat Maldé provides a convincing argument that attempts to support bereaved people must be grounded in an understanding of diversity and a willingness to connect with the individual and his or her preferred coping style. He weaves together a commentary on philosophical and religious world views, on grief theory, and on the social and cultural context in which grief is experienced, and also draws on his background as an organisational psychologist. While dismissing the helpfulness of beliefs such as the necessity to 'let go' and 'move on', Bharat describes the relevance of continuing bonds theory, the range of responses to loss and specifically the dual process model and other two-track models of grief. He also presents fresh insights such as the possible contribution of personality models like the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory and reminds us that ritual and customs may be oppressive as well as helpful. Bharat writes from the perspective of someone for whom formal support would not be welcome – as he points out, people have endured suffering for centuries – but his account clearly demonstrates the importance of his encounters with people who were willing to connect with him rather than making assumptions. Bharat is right to point out that few people need therapy, however increasing numbers of people are contacting bereavement services as they struggle to find a way to live in their changed worlds. This paper challenges us to think about how we assess what people 'need' from us and should be essential reading for all who respond to requests for support.

*Marilyn Relf*

### Introduction

It would have been his 25<sup>th</sup> birthday on 7 July 2009 when two police officers dressed in black brought the news that our son, Anjool, had fallen to his death from the eighth floor rooftop terrace of a swanky City of London restaurant two days earlier. He had dressed in his best suit and shirt with matching designer-



wear of watch, belt, cufflinks, tie and shoes, walked up to the restaurant from his nearby flat and ordered himself a glass of champagne, which was later found near the spot from where he fell. One of his very last tweets, just days before, had been 'Living the dream'; he had been enthusiastically planning a rolling birthday party with his friends to begin the following Friday at the holiday home he had bought in Spain just six weeks before.

The media went viral with the news – we later learned that his death had been reported in more than 70 countries and had even pushed the death of Michael Jackson off the front page in some newspapers. We, his parents, were left in a state of shock and devastation to deal with the glare of the press, police, friends, family, community, funeral arrangements and the many things that needed to be done, including that which we felt pressured into doing through custom or family wishes.

The coroner, at an inquest held several months later, concluded the cause as suicide, resting his primary evidence on police-held CCTV footage while acknowledging the substantial counter-evidence of a much liked young man full of life and dreams with nothing in his character or medical history, or a note or message, to suggest anything untoward.

He was our only child. He meant everything to us and his death turned our world upside down. It was as if the very core of our being had been wrenched out of us. If grief were not such a painful thing, it would be all the more remarkable for the special quality of human spirit that allows both frailty and resilience to reside side by side within.

This article charts my own journey of grief. It is an abridged version of a longer paper. My wife and I have journeyed differently: she is a private individual who believes in 'getting on with it' and does not have the urge to tell anyone her story, as I do. I include her when making a shared point or as one of a half dozen of individuals or couples whose experiences I also draw on selectively. These are grieving friends and relations who – with the exception of one whose loss dates back 20 years – lost a loved one around the same time as we lost Anjool. Each of these

deaths might be described as 'unexpected', 'unnatural', 'untimely' and 'tragic'. I refer to these grievors as fellow-travellers.

If there is a space and territory between life and death, that is where grief resides – inexplicable, painful, unsettling, leaving one bereft of any sense of self-control or security. Literature draws repeated comparisons with a rollercoaster. This is a good metaphor, up to a point. My wife and I have felt as if we have lost control over events but we have more or less 'level-pegged' in our moods, and have not had the highs and lows or ups and downs of the archetypal rollercoaster ride. The metaphor that applies to us more tellingly is something a grieving parent warned us about in a private letter: 'Life will be a living hell from now on'. And so it has seemed, but this has also served as a useful check never to let life descend that far.

*Loss of a child is one of the most painful of life experiences for parents. The loss of an only child in mysterious, inexplicable circumstances is all the more difficult to bear.*

## Custom and culture

There was – and still exists in traditional Hindu practice – a custom of forcibly removing, even crushing, the bangles from a widow's hands in full glare of those gathered around with no thought spared for her sensitivities. Bangles are an important symbol to signify married status. This, as well as communal wailing and other customs, can appear undignified, brutal, insensitive and intrusive. Yet they are intended to accelerate the acceptance of widowhood; the communal wailing seeks to induce weeping as a healthy, shared way of cleansing and coping.

A fellow-traveller recovering from the loss of her husband and son shut herself in her room days on end to protect herself from the adverse impact of such practice and ritual.

For us, even the community memorial that we were obliged to hold in London – where Anjool lived and worked – became an uncomfortable experience. My wife and I live in the provinces away from a London diaspora (a sect of Gujarati-speaking, African-born Indians now settled in the UK, the majority of them in London) and have only a passing link with its customs and practice. Hundreds of people from this diaspora filed past our row of grieving family members, with my wife and I doing our best to hide our pain and dishevelled states from the public gaze of the vast congregation. This memorial lasted two hours or more and the vast majority who came to pay their respects barely knew Anjool.

The English custom of a short, dignified service as part of the funeral would have been far more bearable and in keeping with what my wife and I would have chosen had we not found ourselves thrust into the alien territory of London. Fortunately, the funeral a few days later was more bearable, largely because we had handed over its planning and choreography to Anjool's friends. Also comforting was a memorial that his college held a few months later in Oxford – in this case an opportunity for his college contemporaries to remember Anjool exactly the way they wanted to.

*Custom and culture can aggravate as well as ease grief.*

## Faith

Loss of a loved one generates a number of questions, many of which remain unanswered.

A number of eastern faiths, in particular Jainism, Buddhism and Hinduism, offer a clear view of life and destiny through their belief in an eternal soul and the cycle of birth and re-birth. Kabbalistic and Hasidic branches of Judaism also believe in the notion of the immortal soul. Belief in such notions absolves us from the struggle to make sense of the big questions about life and death. Whether it is the Hindu 'It was meant to be thus', or the Christian 'God's will be done', or the Jain 'We reap as we sow', all these faiths weigh up life's blessings and suffering on a balance sheet of good and bad taken from our past lives.

If only things were that simple. The Jain belief in self-caused suffering brings mixed blessings. It may explain why 'It is the way it is', but it can also lead us to blame ourselves for our suffering. At least if we believed in God – Jainism does not – we could hide behind 'It was meant to be thus. God's will be done'.

Eastern faiths make much of *Maya* to stand for attachment to an illusory world and warn of the suffering that invariably follows building a bond with anything or anybody. The Hindu holy book, *The Geeta*, refers to an extended discourse from Lord Krishna to Arjuna to emphasise the illusory nature of the world and life. Such lofty thinking can only do so much, alas, for parents who continue to miss their only child in his mortal, spirited and sprightly form and not as some transient here-today-gone-tomorrow incarnation or illusion.

To muddle things further, Jainism and Hinduism are unforgiving on death by self-harm. *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* (Rinpoche, 2002) suggests special rituals to help the soul of an unnaturally culminated life find peace. Jainism posits that one act of suicide has to be followed by six others before the cycle is completed. Spare a thought for us, Anjool's parents, who cannot bear the imagined pain of his last minutes and seconds, to be told that worse may lie ahead for him. Referring to this cycle, my sister texted me: 'I pray that this will have been his seventh and last' – a comforting and helpful thought.

*Faith and belief can help to understand and accept our loss but even here so much seems subject to 'a wing and a prayer'.*

## Attachment and letting go

The death of a parent, partner or child affects the griever in different ways. The untimely death of a partner or child can be felt so much more severely than, say, that of an elderly parent or someone with a wasting illness. The notion of attachment is relevant here. Grief literature refers to attachment theory as developed by John Bowlby (in Stroebe & Schut, 1999) – I refer here more generally to its more everyday meaning of a deep and abiding bond of love.

Anjool and I were more mates than father and son, from an early age. We would engage in matey banter 15 times a day via text, facebook and email. We would delight and infuriate each other. In the outpourings that followed his death, several of his

lady friends intimated to me how I had been his one constant. Is it a man thing that we never said how much we loved each other? Did he know how much he meant to me? This kind of attachment, where he mattered to us more than anything in the world, cannot be easily got over. Every grieving parent must have a similar sense of agony.

A popular recommendation in what is regarded as a good coping strategy is to get the griever to *let go*. Let go the loss of a child, an only child, as special as each child is to every parent? I take this exhortation with a pinch of salt, as I do the well-intentioned 'move on with life' suggested in the very helpful government booklet on bereavement, *Help is at Hand* (Department of Health, 2010). Once a parent, always a parent. Letting go or moving on seem to me a dereliction of parental duty, further fuelling our niggling sense of failure as parents. But I am determined – my wife less so – to 'let go' in other ways. To let go of the dead wood that has gathered over a lifetime, of people with whom we seem to have formed fake relationships, of views and values that may have served well in the past but will not help us now in the important mission of adjusting to a new, very different normalcy.

I find that fellow-travellers keep their link alive through a variety of remembrance activities. These can be visits to a memorial or a special place on key dates in a year, taking up a cause closely related to the lost person in some important way, visiting places that have special memories, playing music that the person who has died enjoyed and spending time with their close friends. Many fellow-travellers find it difficult to accept the solitary nature of remembrance, that memories endure only in the minds of those closest to the loss. In our case, we have learnt the hard way that even the most wonderfully warm and flowing outpourings from so many of his friends and admirers were evidently considered to have done their job as soon as they were expressed. Life carries on for everyone, except the grieving. Yet others treat this 'we mourn and remember alone' as a fact of life and carry on serenely.

*The greater the attachment to the lost individual, the more acute and enduring the sense of loss. The received wisdom to let go is easier said than done. We should keep alive the link as a natural human need as we think fit and in ways with which we feel comfortable.*

## Personal constructs

Our loss shakes our world as we know it at its very foundations – or so it feels. The best explanation I have come across for how and why this happens is in George Kelly's *The Psychology of Personal Constructs* (Kelly, 1955).

According to Kelly, every individual has a unique way of mapping his or her world in order to make sense of it. We plot various aspects of our world along axes, such as fulfilling–aggravating, real–illusory, creative–dull etc. We continually refine and fine-tune our original mapping in the light of trial and experience. Some of these constructs recur more than others. Kelly calls these 'super constructs', as they are the most important

influences on us. It is as if a select few factors influence how each of us views our world. Each individual has a unique way to make sense of their world, which in turn guides their place in it and control over it.

Now suppose one such primary axis represents the well-being of your only child, around which your world revolves. What would happen if this axis was suddenly and brutally obliterated?

No wonder the foundations of whatever we have come to accept – this is our life, this is our world and this is how we do what we do – all seem to crumble. In time and through struggle, trial and error, we start reconstructing another axis to replace the one lost or begin shifting towards the next most important axis that shapes our world.

Kelly's model also explains why we may feel some losses more than others. Parents and grandparents may not occupy the central ground of our world as might children or partners. For parents with more than one child, coping may become easier with the facility to shift their focus to the surviving children as in the accounts of a number of fellow-travellers. It is as if their super-construct or main axis is labelled 'our children's welfare'. Not so the parents of an only child. For them their world changes forever and markedly.

*The theory of personal constructs may explain how and why the loss of a loved one can affect us in unique and fundamental ways as also how in time we construct a new and different world.*

## The type personality model

Personality science refers to the 'type model'. A popular example is Jung's four-factor model, adapted for general application in the form of the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory, or the MBTI (for an introduction, see Myers & Kirby, 2000). The 'type model' proposes that each of us behaves in predictable ways depending on how we align along a set of personality factors. So, in the Jung and the MBTI model of personality, each of us has a four-way profile as extravert or introvert, practical or ideas-driven, thinking or feeling, controlling and planful or impulsive and flexible.

It is easy to see how grief might affect different individuals differently depending on their personality profile. Both the way the event hits us as well as how we go about dealing with it can be different. The difference in coping styles between my wife and I seem much better explained by personality type than by gender. My natural tendency is to muddle along in an impulsive way, unable to resist the pull towards words, ideas or distraction. My wife is blessed with an abiding practical common sense that enables her to deliver a level-headed response to everything, even when dealing with this otherwise shared, worst experience of our lives.

There are other important derivatives of the type model. Acute stress can lead us to adopt the opposite end of the personality factor to which we otherwise naturally align. In common-speak, under acute stress, we can act completely out of character. I am not sure bereavement practitioners grasp the importance of this message – that each individual has their own way of grieving and coping and that certain types of interventions

– in my case any external intervention – can be wholly inappropriate for the individual.

Even when a therapy is generally considered a guaranteed good thing, it may not suit the griever's own natural leanings. There is no better example than the case of a fellow-traveller who could not wait to escape the clutches of a cognitive behavioural therapist, which she used as a perverse incentive to find her feet quickly. Grief is a stressful experience in its own right and there seems little sense in anyone being subjected to further distress by being made to feel obliged to cope in a way that is at odds with their own preference.

*The 'type model' of personality can help to explain why each of us grieves differently as well as guide us towards a coping strategy that best suits us.*

### Primary and secondary stress

First a general point about stress as a reaction to a shocking event. Grief causes the body to go into a numb or overdrive mode. The common response is to freeze up between 'flight' and 'fight' in face of an over-surge of adrenalin. One fellow-traveller remained in this frozen state for a full six months before re-emerging a much stronger individual. In my case, I experienced a number of states simultaneously. I grieved and functioned along a twin track, able to switch back and forth as the situation required, much to the shock and horror of onlookers and business clients who expected me to behave otherwise. I continue even now in the same vein, but with the ability to lose myself completely in certain types of tasks of least association value with Anjool. This is just to illustrate the positive end of stress: certain activities can actually provide a constructive and helpful distraction, as if to allow healing to occur naturally behind the scenes.

There are two types of stress: primary and secondary. Primary stress is the distress from the loss *per se*. Secondary stress arises from all the many things that have to be attended to following the loss, including readjusting to a world without the loved one.

The tipping point is often the cumulative build-up of secondary stresses, rather than the loss of the loved one *per se*. The closest I have come to 'loss of function' is from the accumulation of frustrations arising from dealing with Anjool's estate: the liaising with lawyers, banks, lenders and other authorities, the putting up with those who promise to deliver but do not, the progress-chasing where important emails and answerphone messages go unheeded, and any number of setbacks and delays. It has not been easy and I have given in to ill-temper and blunt language.

While there is not much we can do to reduce the primary stress other than through the slow process of readjustment, secondary stress can be more controllable. I aim only to undertake tasks that tick all three boxes: 'I want to do it, I need to do it, I can do it' – wonderfully powerful wisdom that continues to elude me. Some fellow-travellers have been more skilled, sensible and realistic with their targets and choices.

*Grief generates a number of primary and secondary stresses that have the potential to overwhelm. The tipping point may*

*come from the build-up of secondary stresses rather than the loss itself. Dealing with the need to grieve as well as grow requires the wisdom of Solomon and the patience of Job, or so it can feel.*

### Support from others

Much is made of the paramount need for support from friends, family and 'experts' at a time of grief. This universal wisdom seems to have no health warning attached to it, as it should.

Here is a flavour of unhelpful support from friends, family and 'experts'.

Someone claiming to be my wife's best friend said to her: 'So you won't be a grandparent, then?' An aunt rang me from afar and declared: 'I said to so and so I am determined to ring him today to console him... How could Anjool have just gone like that? Without as much as saying goodbye to his parents?' On a visit to my GP (UK primary care doctor), he said: 'Before we come to why you are here, are you doing anything about your situation? Like taking help?' When I suggested 'I hadn't felt the need but thanks', he said sternly: 'That is all very well but we do not want to see you leaving it too late!'

So, what kind of support helps?

Much as I paint the picture of grief as rich and unique to each individual, there is an unspoken understanding shared between fellow-travellers that makes their company so gratifying. You can be silent in their company, ask questions, exchange reflections or seek advice, and they are always a comforting presence.

What about 'expert' help? All that most of us may need to set us off on our difficult journey of grief is a hug and reassurance, rather than to be made to feel we must accept help. Another GP in our practice has gone out of her way to make sure that we are properly cared for following Anjool's loss and has stopped me on the street and even sought me out on a train journey to offer some wise counsel. My own 'Doc Martin' (ITV, 2004–2011) might take advice from *Help is at Hand* (Department of Health, 2010, p36): 'Your GP may be able to help during bereavement ... by listening and offering emotional support...'

There is excellent advice in *Help is at Hand* on how friends can help (pp31–32) if only it were made essential reading. Grievers are in a no-win situation. No wonder so many of us end up with a dimmed social life. If we get invited to social events, we wonder whether our presence might dim the proceedings. If we do not get invited, we feel excluded. If we choose carefully who we wish to be in contact with, we are said to have become reclusive, unwell or rude. The time of grief is the time to be kind to ourselves rather than worry about how we might hurt others if we keep them at bay.

*Support from others can be discomfiting. We should be selective in whom we let into our personal space. Contact with fellow-grievers can be a powerful tonic, the more so if they are friends with important shared circumstance between their loss and ours. Grief is more likely to be helped by an expression of a shared humility rather than expert or strident posturing on the part of helper.*

## Stages and states

Literature and guidelines on grief and grieving make regular references to stages and states. The latter typically include shock, denial, anguish, acceptance and adjustment. *Help is at Hand* outlines 14 such stages and states.

I began to puzzle when some conditions applied to me but many did not. Nor was there any clear pattern or progression; I could feel any number of states depending on where I allowed myself to go. It was good to learn recently that stages and phases are now generally regarded as an outdated view.

Machin (2006) describes three principal states in grief as overwhelmed, resilient and controlled. I can relate to all three. When I looked at the items making up Machin's Attitude to Grief scale I found they ran into one another, as if to suggest they may not be mutually exclusive. Whatever the psychometric properties of Machin's states, labels such as overwhelmed, resilient and controlled are excellent lenses through which to look at grief, so long as we do not treat them as absolutes to describe a griever's condition.

*The reported wisdom that grief progresses in stages can be misleading. The various reported states are a good way to understand the richness and complexity of grief. But their relevance should not be overemphasised to lead to the wrong judgements about a griever's true condition.*

## The multi-track models

The stages and states approach has been further advanced through some seminal work by several researchers. For example, Worden (1991) sees the key tasks of coping as acceptance, working through the experience, adjustment and reconstruction. Of the various dual models, Horowitz (in Stroebe & Schut, 1999) summarises extreme reactions to trauma as intrusion and avoidance. Rubin (in Stroebe & Schut, 1999) sees grieving proceeding along the twin tracks of outcome-reaction and transformation. Stroebe and Schut (1999) have developed the dual model of loss-orientation and restoration-orientation.

The most revealing feature for me of the Stroebe and Schut model is the challenge to the long-held axiom among grief pundits that a griever needs to undergo 'grief work' with the help of expert intervention. Their dual process model of coping sets grief on a more flexible footing, resonating well with my own experience and that of other fellow-travellers. Grievers may or may not do or need to do 'grief work'; they may do so with or without help or they may do bits of it and in ways that suit them. There is no prescribed way to 'grieve well' except that which comes naturally to the griever.

Even more reassuring is the unpredictable and dynamic way loss-orientation and restoration-orientation co-exist: sometimes one is in ascendancy, sometimes the other. This aligns well with my own twin-silo existence, even two years on, as I slip through the semi-porous walls between 'normal' and 'grieving', depending on the demands of the occasion. 'Restoration' also offers good aspirational value as a positive end-goal to any grief journey. I

was heartened to know that the work of Stroebe and Schut has become an important influence on the current thinking on grief.

I see grievers along a normal distribution with the left tail representing those 'in the grip of grief', the right tail as those 'in denial' and the vast territory in between as grievers undergoing the dynamic interplay between loss and restoration suggested by Stroebe and Schut. I can see a need for expert help for grievers whose state persists or slips into either end of the distribution. But I see the vast majority in the middle going through their suffering with or without concerted or specific strategies, making their way as they feel best and self-managing their experience without expert intervention, as a natural process of coping and adjusting that has to be gone through.

*Whatever way we grieve, however we go to and fro or back and forth between dealing with loss and restoration, it is good to accept grief's tortuous dynamics as natural. Those of us who believe there are no shortcuts to suffering owe it to ourselves to ensure that we remain on course, in whatever way or pace that suits us, towards the end-game of restoration.*

## The stiff upper lip

'Toughing it out', 'soldiering on' and 'braving the situation' are all regarded as potential harbingers of trouble down the line.

Dickens' novels bear witness to the omnipresence of hardship and untimely death in most people's lives in 19<sup>th</sup> century England. My forebears, whether the generations who led tough lives in rural India or those who migrated at a young age to Africa to make new lives for themselves, as my father did at the tender age of 12, were all used to losing several members of their family from disease or tragedy, often in the early years of life. They all showed considerable stoicism in the way they carried on raising families, putting down roots in new lands and adopting new walks of life. Chitrabhanu, a popular Jain philosopher, says in one Gujarati text: 'When suffering comes, ask for it to come all at once so as not to have to endure any of it ever again'.

There are no shortcuts to suffering in Jainism. If forbearance is a time immemorial way of bearing the hardships of life, is the drift from self-reliance to reliance on others a symptom of a western lifestyle with all its associated comforts and a ready availability of 'expert' help?

The stiff upper lip need not shore up trouble for later. If we choose to be dignified in public, this does not stop us behaving in private exactly as we please. Each of us is blessed with the ability to think, reflect and introspect. The same human spirit that can feel such pain from the loss of a loved one is also capable of great resilience, if only we let it do its work. It is as if wretchedness and rebuilding can take place side by side, one moment one in ascendancy, another moment the other, rather like the dual process model of Stroebe and Schut. When we resolve our struggle through self-reflection, the process seems so much more natural and the outcomes so much more enduring than if we look for wishful shortcuts. Broks (2012) reminds us from his recent experience of grief of the positive value of stoicism as an overarching philosophy of life.

We should regard pain from the loss of a loved one as an acute human condition to be endured as part of the deal with life and living. We should recast Descartes' famous saying into every griever's motto: 'I think, therefore I endure'.

*Sufferance, resilience and self-reliance can be our true friends even at the worst time of our lives.*

## Going forward

Several faiths from the East regard life as a journey of suffering. Chuang Tzu is frequently quoted: 'The birth of a man is the birth of his sorrow'. Death is regarded as a relief from suffering. This is a challenging thought for those of us immersed in the pleasure-seeking western way of life but it can also help alleviate the grief of someone dying of a terrible illness or condition, as it has for some in my reference group of fellow-travellers. This is of less help to other fellow-travellers trying to accept an unnaturally curtailed life of a child at the hands of an accident, mishap or misfortune.

Some have found a new fire and purpose with which to forge ahead following the death of a loved one. A number of fellow-travellers have taken up an important cause with close links to their loss. One uses the special qualities of her lost child as an important reference and inspiration to shape her own life. These are inspiring examples of positive coping, and none is more inspiring and brave for me than a fellow-traveller's 'open letter to her son' (Anonymous, 2011). Every time I think of this letter, it makes me want to salute every grieving mother, each of them with the only true claim to a flesh and blood link with their lost child, who carries on with life, somehow.

While my wife and I struggle to deal with the business of unfinished parenthood, Anjool's trust ([www.anjool.org](http://www.anjool.org)) goes a long way to fill the void he has left and provides us with a purpose for positive living. Even as I write, the inaugural winners of an annual scholarship in his name at his alma mater have just been announced and it feels good to see an endowment in his name that will hopefully carry on forever and will certainly outlive us.

Inspiring vignettes of wisdom also help. *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* (Rinpoche, 2002) makes repeat references for the need to embrace the 'certainty of impermanence' as key to positive living. Not far behind is the Buddhist take on mindfulness, which I came across paraphrased as: 'If we spend all our time moaning about the past and worrying about the future, we might just miss the preciousness of the present moment'.

Our lives can never be the same again after the acute loss of a loved one but the new normalcy need not be a sad place. Life still offers so much. There can always be, close to hand, the prospect of a good read, good music, select company of friends and no end of the marvels of nature and the human spirit to lose oneself in. The smallest pleasures can be the best.

*We must resolve what we can and learn to accept what we can't. Despite our bruised and depleted state we should seek ways to enjoy the many marvels of life, if possible by turning our very loss into an enduring inspiration.*

## Key lessons

So, what have I learnt that is worth sharing? It is okay to grieve. It is healthy. It is natural and normal. We should be allowed to grieve in whatever way we find natural. Sadness and grief are a natural human condition and sadness is not depression. There are no easy shortcuts to escape suffering. External interventions to shorten the journey of suffering may interfere with the need for it to proceed and resolve naturally. We can benefit from the valued support of a select few individuals; ideally friends with a firsthand experience of a loss of a loved one close in context to our own. We all have an inner resilience and the precious asset of the ability to think and reflect to see us through even the worst of experiences. We should not expect grief to be an easy journey but we owe it to ourselves to keep in mind the ultimate goal of restoration. We should rely on the marvel of human spirit to help us rebuild our world. Even if things may never be quite the same again and we must adjust to a new normality, life is still worth living. The memory of the person we have lost and the way so many fellow-travellers carry on with their lives should be our abiding inspiration.

Peace and *Jai Ho* to all. Live well, live long.

*It is good to grieve, it is natural and healthy. A different world with a new normality that will become our new home need not be a sad place. There is much still to live for.*

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