



BACKING the BADGE®

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The Inevitable Encounter with Grief

By Dr. Alison Brown, Co-Founder of BACKING the BADGE

Growing up, I was fortunate to live in a ‘tight-knit’ neighborhood, where people looked out for each other. When I learned that several people in one family, from our neighborhood, had been killed in a car accident it was devastating, and I had no idea as to how to ‘proceed.’ The pain suffered by this family affected all of our families in different ways.

For the family impacted by this tragedy, the challenges for the surviving children, and spouse, were understandably, herculean. We would visit our neighbor, and as time moved on, life moved on as well, with the scars of this event still visible.

In the recent months and weeks, as blue families have buried their own, moving forward is critical – and yet, hugely challenging. Here are some ideas about ways to address grief, and to encourage your colleagues to heal, while supporting their families and each other.

- Don’t ignore grief. It will not just go away.
- Grasp the biological signs of grief – isolating, tearfulness, anger and psychological ‘soreness’ just to name a few.
- When you experience the signs of grief, understand that they are NORMAL. By paying attention to the signs, you may then proactively address those signs. Talking with a trusted person may ease your grief and help make grief more understandable.
- Your own grief symptoms are an opportunity to honor your colleagues. By acknowledging the challenges and pain associated with the signs of grief, we honor those who served.
- Understand that your pain may lessen as you reach out to others. Your willingness to ‘be there’ for others is typically perceived by those who grieve as a gift. Sometimes people get hung up on saying just the right thing. That ‘right thing’ rarely exists. A willingness to be there, and to listen, may be just the comfort needed.

- **If you have experienced another loss during the past 18 months or two years, a new loss will likely re-open the wound of that past loss. Some people report that they have less energy, don't laugh as easily, or may not want to be around others. If you find yourself in this situation, consider investing in yourself by not tackling life as hard as you normally might. Your biological hard-wiring is giving you a signal to cut yourself some slack, at appropriate times.**

The biology and mechanisms associated with healing take time. This doesn't equate to forgetting. Personally, I don't believe in 'closure' but, as we commit to face our grief, we not only strengthen ourselves, but offer greater ways to effectively support each other through grueling times.