

## Chapter II. Mapping Out the Journey

Opening  
Welcome  
Group Agreements  
Opening Prayer

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You have given yourself permission to begin the journey through grief. Navigating the many detours, closed bridges, and construction zones is not always easy. Taking the time to map out a course that circumvents these diversions will allow for easier traveling.

Let's begin by navigating around this first barrier:

Grieving persons are often told to “be strong,” “think of the good memories,” and to “keep their chin up.” These *words of encouragement* are meant to urge them to manage or cope with their losses and grief reactions in what we deem as socially acceptable manners. Such advice more serves the needs of those around the bereaved rather than being useful to the mourner.

What you must prepare for now is the fact that very well meaning people are going to try to take that permission away. They are unintentionally going to try to *take your grief from you* by trying to ‘cheer you up’ or ‘explain why’ this loss has happened. Their response has nothing to do with you, but rather with their inability to know what to say.

This is a side-road of your journey that should be avoided. A common road sign comes to mind:



How many times have we done this very thing of trying to cheer someone up by saying “It will be okay” or cracking a joke or simply telling a person to calm down?

Think of watching a news story or seeing a photo of Middle Eastern women wailing uncontrollably at the loss of a loved one. Western society does not understand that form of grieving because we do not allow it! In reality, other cultures have it right – they are expressing their grief, they have *permission* from themselves and others to grieve, they are *letting it be*.

Many times, in our religious cultures in America, people try to defend God rather than give permission to grieve. We've all heard (or even spoken) those irrational statements:

“God knows best.”

“It must have been God's Will.”

“God has a purpose for everything.”

“S/he's with God now.”

“God won't put more on you than you can bear.”

Those very statements, though true in many instances, can cause much hurt and confusion to a grieving person.

As we've allowed ourselves permission to grieve, we must allow others the permission to grieve - without defending God. Let's all agree that God does not need defending.

One's anger can be directed in many places. And many times, grievors direct their anger toward God. It is not a bad thing. Anger is an inner-emotion that must somehow be released.

Being angry at God doesn't mean we lose faith or that we won't get over our anger. Anger directed at God is not sacrilegious or blasphemous. It is healthier to be angry with God, a physician, a friend, or clergy than to turn the anger internally and be angry with ourselves. Anger directed at someone else will pass with time.

Allowing people to be angry with God is a difficult thing to do. What we have to remember is that God is quite capable to take it on. God is the Creator of Empathy – God will understand and be just fine.