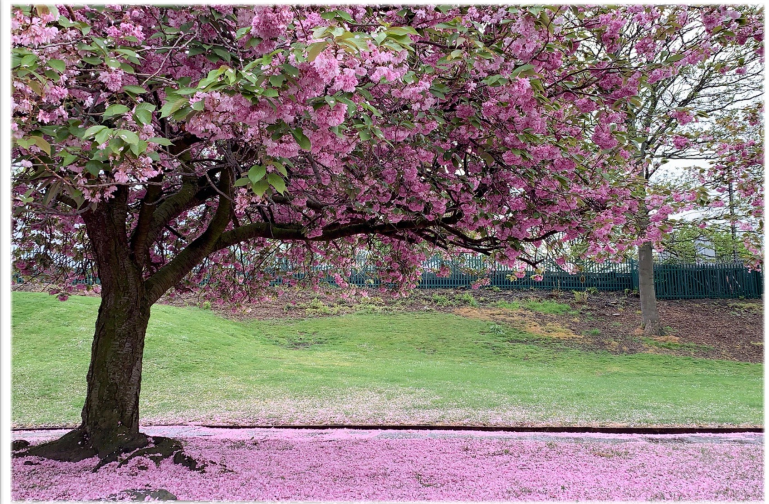




How do I grieve *now*?

Covid-19 layers of complicated grief

Grief is everywhere, loss is all around us...

I'm sitting in the garden trying to get as close to nature as possible within the current lockdown situation. I think the sun has departed for the day. I sit and look at the bed of clouds above me, marvelling at the sight of the clouds and what holds them up; how much do they weigh? I see the birds fly beneath the clouds witnessing the freedom they have to roam free and what keeps them elevated. My thoughts are answered as I know The Creator has best knowledge and He takes care of everything.

Including those we have loved and lost and continue to love always.

Lost in this life although always found in our hearts and sincerest of prayers.

Grief is everywhere, loss is all around us from the constant news on the television, WhatsApp messages flooding your phone; feeling like you are suffocating with all the news we hear some true and some false. And the news is sad. So very sad. It feels like we are in a movie, the scene feels quite unnatural and unfamiliar albeit it is quite the reality. We are experiencing a loss, a trauma predominately vicarious

Allah plans and His Plan is determined....

although sadly primary for some. We are in this together which feels unexpected to be collectively grieving, feeling the loss as a whole rather than individually. I notice there is an element of togetherness which unites us in this plight.

Today has been a sad day. Today I heard a local neighbour who was 29 years old had taken his last breaths and returned to his Master. My neighbour was admitted to hospital with Covid-19 on what was suppose to be his wedding day, we have his invite in our home but little did anyone know this wedding along with many many other plans we all had made will not come to pass. Allah plans and His Plan is determined.

I did not know my neighbour; I've seen him, know the car he drove, which is still parked on the road. I saw people today grieving by his car, a memory of him which remains and I imagine they felt somewhat feeling closer to him, from what was his. I never really knew him and this made me reflect on my feelings and how it hurt me to hear of his passing. Of someone I did not know. I felt someone close to me and my family had passed and it hurt. It grieved me deeply to think of his families loss. Death is painful but Covid-19 related is extremely painful as it has its layers of grief; complicated grief. How do they grieve? And knowing your loved ones were not with him, perhaps one, but who chooses? Who comforts the one who is alone? And what do the others do knowing they will not see their beloved?

There is ease in knowing that he died as a martyr as we have been told in the hadith (prophetic sayings/actions), the one who dies of a plague is considered as a martyr. This is Allah's Rahmah (Mercy), the ease He gifts you in this hardship. Take comfort in the notion that your beloved will be greeted by those who have long passed; the joy of seeing the one who has passed away will be greater than when a person is reunited with a long lost relative. Reflect on this for a sweet moment. How does your heart feel? (For more information, refer to the link on 'The Life of the Barzakh' https://youtu.be/kXX5MPMd_mc).

I was talking to a dear friend about Covid-19 death and how heartbreaking it is that your loved ones cannot be with you. We reflected on how difficult it is for the well person who can't hold their loved ones hand, kiss their forehead, pray with them, cry and smile as they talk of the memories, say all the things they wished they did say and sadly to bid their final farewell on earth until they meet again; Insha'Allah (God willing) where rivers flow. I reflected on the one who is dying and how this is the utmost time for tadabbur (contemplation)

During Covid-19 the process of death, loss and grief builds layers upon layers of complication and uncertainty.

in preparation to meet your Lord. Do you really need your loved ones there as you prepare for this grand meeting?! I think this is personal but for me I think your focus would be on 'The Meeting' of your life, the life in the Barzakh (Hereafter life). Although never to negate the pain and heartache of the well person who want nothing more to *be there* for the ones they love and say that final goodbye. To have that closure.

It makes me think of this trauma how will we move forward? Can we really? I lost my father almost 25 years ago, he went to Pakistan never to return. Not a day/prayer goes by where I don't think of him and utter his name. I wait patiently for the day where we will meet; where rivers flow, often thinking of all the things I will ask him and tell him how much I missed him and that I love him. Always. Today marks the day my dadee (paternal grandmother) passed away in 1964. I never met her, I often wonder what she was like, the woman who gave birth to the most amazing man in my life and heart. I shall await where rivers flow Insha'Allah...

During Covid-19 the process of death, loss and grief builds layers upon layers of complication and uncertainty. We have been told how to grieve, to embrace love from our loved ones, to be together, take care of the grieved, the sense of community, the janazah (Islamic prayer for the deceased) and attend the burial/family home/masjid. All this has changed, what we knew is no longer relevant during this time. What do we do? I believe there is some guidelines of a live stream for family and friends. I know this is not ideal although it is making something better possible of a trying situation.

My sister today said to me 'not to feel sad, it was his time' although I know this, I still felt sad. As Covid-19 did not kill him, it was his time to leave the dunya (earth) and return to his Lord. This was decreed 50,000 years ago; on this day he shall depart to meet his Lord. But I needed to feel sad and to express how I was feeling. I share this because it's okay to feel sad and grieve for the appointed time. Sadness heals; it can bring us closer to our purpose. To feel is to be aware of our emotions, name your emotion. We do not expect any one to take away the pain but understand like all emotions they come and they ease and then come back again and ease. No feeling is constant, I know I am not feeling as upset as I was earlier today and this is time. Time is a rahmah (mercy) from Allah.



Please do search for these moments of ease; within such hardships there are moments when there is relief.

I shall list some tips which have helped me during this process and some wisdom from others. I hope by reading this, it will help you and your loved ones deal with death, grief and layers of loss in a helpful way.

- Cry - let it out, better out then in. Please do not be afraid to cry whether you cry openly or alone express your emotion.
- Be with your loved ones (at home or virtually). My beloved mother has just come to join me in the garden sipping on her tea. I look over at her and my heart smiles - she is my blessing; she is my loved one. Be with them.
- Sujood (prayer prostration) the closest you are to your Lord; know He is closer to you than your jugular. He is Ya Qareeb (The Near One).
- Call your family/friends via Skype/Video Call let them see you, you see them, share your feeling, it heals.
- Go out in nature, whether it's the back garden or your daily exercise within government guidelines, get some air. Notice the sounds of the birds, the sky and clouds above you and the beautiful colours of the blossoms and watch how peacefully the blossom petals fall.
- Write down your feelings, let them out. Or perhaps draw how you feel.
- Write a letter to your loved one, tell them what you never got to say and what you have said. And know Allah knows and He will take care of your words.
- Create a memory book of your loved one, cherish those memories and collate others memories of your loved one, be creative.
- Spend time finding peace, how do you accept death?
- Islam, we are aware that our time on this earth is limited, only for a decreed time.

- Prayer for your loved ones, three things benefit the deceased, sadaqah jariyah (charity), knowledge they had shared and prayers from a pious child.
- When you are unable to follow the deceased, the prayer, the burial, try to identify whether this can be live streamed and take part.
- Talk about your memories, this will make you cry and smile, this I call 'beautiful pain.'
- Heart-Fullness- to feel with your heart; know your feeling and know that your fitrah (your natural disposition) is within you and this draws one closer to its Creator. What makes your heart feel and be fulfilled?
- For me tafsir (detailed description of The Qu'ran [Holy Book]) has been immensely therapeutic, especially on a Friday studying Surah Kahf -The Cave (chapter in the Qu'ran). Friday's are still the best day of my week amidst the lockdown. I recall feeling emotionally overwhelmed when I knew I was taken care of, my loved ones too and the whole of humanity. This can only be felt with the heart...

Blessings of Surah Kahf one Friday to the next...

Great opportunity to study the tafsir.

We are in 'our caves.' #reflection

"When the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) was in the cave Thaur with his beautiful companion Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) hiding from the Quraysh. Abu Bakr was frightened they will be caught. Our beloved Prophet reminded Abu Bakr with such a beautiful reminder: "What do you think, O Abu Bakr, of two the third of whom is Allah?"

Know Allah is with you in your isolation.

He. Is. Your. Companion.

Please note any mistakes are from me and any good is all from Allah.

If you feel you need emotional support please review/refer to the following organisations:

GLM Hear4U - Helpline service providing emotional support for the community relating to Covid-19. Please call on 0121 713 0095 Tuesdays: 11:00-13:00 females and Thursdays: 18:00-20:00 Females and Males.

Muslim Women's Network UK – The MWN Helpline service to provide information, advice and support. Please call on 07415 206936 and 0800 999 5786 www.mwnhelpline.co.uk and email: info@mwnhelpline.co.uk Mon-Fri 10:00 - 16:00

Muslim Counsellors Birmingham - private therapists, please refer to website for details:
www.muslimcounsellorsbirmingham.co.uk

Sending my heartfelt prayers and positive thoughts to all of humanity.

Khudeja Sattar