

## **Grieving in Silence**

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In Western society, particularly in the mental health culture, one is expected to talk about what pains him/her. Talking is interpreted as ‘communicating.’ Communicating verbally, we believe, is the main means to achieve mental health; to clarify misunderstandings, and to solve conflicts. The conclusion then is: Talking is ‘good for you’ whether you are grieving or not, and silence, as the opposite of talking – is less desirable. I agree that talking is important in attempting to understand another person, but silence should receive the same importance. We need to listen to silence both in ourselves and in others. After all, we were silent before we became verbal.

Here are a few thoughts about the role and importance of silence:

Silence is not always the opposite of talking. It is the lack of external verbalization, but it may also be an expression of inner talk.

The normalcy of silence: Lack of external talk, does not mean the denial of grief; delayed grief or unexpressed grief, for grief is expressed in every cell of our body; in every ‘cell’ of our soul.

A silent cry – talking in your heart

Talking is not necessarily communicating; Communicating is not done verbally only, and verbalization does not always lead to enhancement of understanding.

Most of our communication is non-verbal - the importance of non-verbal communication. A bereaved parent may appear silent (verbal expressions repressed) but this parent may be talking, either to other people, or internally (taking Inward Steps) to God; to him/herself; to his/her deceased child, etc.

Silence may be needed as a mental ‘break’ to catch ones breath.

Above all – silence is the expression of choice in the lack of existing words to describe the horror, pain and suffering that a parent may feel.

Silence can be an expression of protest against “man” and God – against the injustice of the death of a child.

Silence as an expression of anger against others or against one self – self- punishment – withdrawal from connecting to the outside world.

During the life long process of bereavement, the bereaved parent takes both Inward Steps (silence) and Outward Steps (talking, reconnecting to outside world), both types are important to the readjustment of the bereaved parent to his/her new reality.