

GRIEF GALLERY

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WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Paper
- Pen, pencil or marker(s)
- A quiet place for reflection

“Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world’s grief.”

– [*Barbara J. McClure*](#)

The enormity of the world’s grief. Perhaps in this season of renewal you are truly feeling daunted by the world’s grief. Perhaps you do not have words yet for how you are feeling, making processing it and moving on from it difficult.

Much has been written on how the body is affected by grief. In Chinese medicine it is thought that grief is held in the lungs, which might just help explain why so often our chests feel heavy when we are sad or bereft. As we may have experienced many types of grief over more than a year - personally, socially, politically - perhaps you are holding more than your fair share. We may have endured the deeply personal loss of a loved one in this painful and discombobulating year of distance and social reckoning or perhaps we need space to grieve lost time, community connection, ambition, or the loss of human lives to the epidemic of systemic racism.

In Judaism, one of our most famous grief rituals is reciting the Kaddish, which, as a time-tested technology, offers much comfort and praise, but might not do the work of helping one externally process loss fully. Of course, with everything, results might vary. I know for me, as powerful as the recitation of the ancient Aramaic words was, after the sudden loss of my mother, I was not always able to really access what I felt through the prayer.

In this exercise we would like to invite you to try a different method of acknowledging grief.

Sit quietly somewhere for just a few minutes. We ask that you collect a piece of paper or a notebook and something with which to draw. In an attempt to pull the grief out from our bodies and into view, we will create a “grief drawing.”

The following contains some guidelines and suggestions to help you, but at all times feel free to skip, modify, or repeat any of the steps.

Sit comfortably at a table or other hard surface with your paper and writing utensil beside you.

Close your eyes for a moment and take a few breaths.

Scan your body as you gently, without force, inhale and exhale.

Notice what you feel. Where might you be experiencing tightness, fear or sorrow? The lungs? Your back? Your feet?

As you locate your grief in your body, do not run from it. For just a few silent moments, picture it. Allow the feeling to create an image.

In your time, take up your paper and pen and with your eyes either open or closed, begin to create a representation

of what you have conjured. Do not judge your drawing. Allow it to take on its own life. Perhaps it is a place, or an abstract image, etc. There is no right or wrong answer.

When you feel you have completed your drawing, put down your pen and observe it.

If you feel inclined, at this time, write a brief caption or note below your drawing. Does this drawing have something to say to you? Do you have something to tell it? Perhaps you will find that you would like to write more than a few words. Give yourself the gift of time to write it a letter if needed.

If you would like, we invite you to take a photo of your drawing and upload it [here](#) and peruse drawings from other members of the Avodah Community.

Feel free to come back to this activity anytime you need.

[RETURN TO MENU](#)

