



FINDING MEANING WITHIN TRAGEDY

I think we can all agree that tragedy (in all shapes and forms) has been occurring altogether too often and hits too close to home.

Within trauma, there exists grief and loss on a very individual and unique level. Common responses include the typical cycle of: *Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression* and the very challenging art form of *Acceptance*. Questions such as "WHY?" go forth unanswered and the ghosts of these events seem to linger, hardly ever fading in our memories.

So, the question remains, "How do we progress and move forward in our very ill-ridden society in the healthiest manner possible??"

I coach my clients to steer clear of blame and shame and focus more on the **present** and what you **can** do versus what you do not have control over... An extremely difficult task in the midst of trauma, grief and loss.

How can we find meaning and positive focus in the messy wake of disaster?

I'll be honest, it's not easy, but it's definitely possible. Time can help wounds heal, but it's what we **do** that makes a difference.

So, I call upon you (my lovely audience) to increase personal responsibility and work on proactive change. How??? Investing the time to teach children (and refresh yourself) what the PSSA's and KEYSTONE'S don't test for: **COMPASSION, KINDNESS, INCLUSION AND EMPATHY.**

It seems that our Society has forgotten what's important amongst all of the anger, hate and frustration. Emotional values are necessary for healthy human development and let's face it our communities, and us included, are in need of this type of nurturing.

Having a stronger emotional intelligence, creates an environment of healthy tolerance and the ability to problem-solve differences. Conflict-resolution skills are in demand as life presents new challenges. Life is not fair and it's very important to learn how to cope with this fact. Life, however, does not need to be violent or aggressive when things just don't go our way. This is the important lesson worth teaching and skillset that humanity is so desperately in need of.

Here are some helpful links to explore how to talk to your children about tragedies:

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/Talking-To-Children-About-Tragedies-and-Other-News-Events.aspx>

<http://www.pbs.org/parents/talkingwithkids/news/help-kids-feel-safe.html>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/childrens-health/in-depth/helping-children-cope/art-20047029>

More specifically, to cope with the aftermath of the mass shooting at the Tree of Life synagogue in Squirrel Hill, the following resources are available:

1. The Disaster Distress Helpline, available to help anyone seeking assistance in coping with this tragedy can be reached at 1-800-985-5990.
2. Morneau Shepell, a Toronto-based human resources firm that has offices in Pittsburgh, also opened a free mental health and crisis hotline available for anyone needing help at 1-866-885-6540

To be an active participant in helping those affected, the following donation sites have been established:

1. The Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh has created a page on its website to make donations to the "Our Victims of Terror Fund." The link is: jfedpgh.org/our-victims-of-terror
2. Donations to that same fund can be made through United Way's website. The link is: app.mobilecause.com/vf/JFPGH
3. A GoFundMe page has been established to directly support the Tree Of Life Congregation to help pay for the physical damages to the

building, as well as aiding survivors and the victims' families. The link is:
www.gofundme.com/tree-of-life-synagogue-shooting

Stay Strong, remain hopeful and take genuine concern through meaningful action.

Warmly,

Miss Gretchen, MS, NCC, LPC