

Managing Grief & Anger

A Guide to Channeling Pain Into Productive Action

As a community, we are too often blasted with news about terrorist attacks, vandalism of our sacred spaces, and other acts of targeted violence against Hindus, which can stir up waves of emotion for us all. Whether it's anger over the biased media coverage, fear for family and loved ones, grief, despair and loss for the victims and their families, or feeling re-traumatized as a survivor of Partition, the Bengali Hindu Genocide, the Kashmiri Exodus, or other terror incidents, many may experience a tumult of heavy emotions that can be difficult to process, manage, and channel.

We want to equip you with the tools to engage in self-care and emotion regulation so that you feel positively empowered to process difficult information and engage in constructive action, if you so choose.

Take Time To Process & Accept What You Are Feeling

For so many of us, wounds of erasure and intergenerational trauma are opened by the losses we or our loved ones have experienced. Grief and trauma look different for everyone: one may tear up, another may laugh to discharge their heightened emotion. There may be temptation to engage in self-critique and judgment of ourselves and others for emotional reactions. Kindness and compassion for ourselves are essential in our journeys of accepting loss, experiencing change in how we understand the world and our relationships, and moving forward meaningfully.

Our communities have long repressed our sorrow for numerous reasons. At times, it hasn't been physically or psychologically safe to process our heartache. Other times, the social and cultural impulse to move on because the past cannot be changed is strong. This is how intergenerational trauma is passed through our environments, how we're raised psychologically, and some scientists believe, through our genetics. In the diaspora now, many of us may have the safety or need to stop burying our tragedies and express our anguish as our first step to building strong communities.

It can be tempting to skip straight to action, especially if we're feeling a great deal of anger and loss. However, action taken when we are consumed by anger is not always strategic and can result in negative consequences down the line. Reasoned action will take us farther.

Sādhana such as meditation, puja, yoga, chanting, or engaging in Hindu arts, are all means of helping us release ourselves from highly-charged emotions so that we can use all of our logical brain to understand how to move forward. This is essential if we want to be able to engage in productive conversations with loved ones, elected officials, or yes, your favorite social media influencer.

Managing how much news, social media, and WhatsApp content we intake is an important part of actively managing our well-being as well. While we can convince ourselves that our engagement is owed to the victims and their

families, the truth is that any fight for justice is always long and hard, and equipping ourselves to be healthy through it is important.

Understand What Can & Can't Be Controlled

When tragedies take the lives of innocent Hindus or destroy their safety and security, we can feel a unique sense of helplessness and loss. Some avenues of action are always available to us as American residents and citizens, and we encourage you to look at our resources at hinduamerican.org/take-action.

There is much that cannot be controlled, and we have found that even fierce advocacy doesn't always move our elected leaders or the media at the rate or in the way we wish. We have to practice a lot of wisdom to understand what does remain in our control, and avoid the mental trap of gravitating towards engaging in actions that make us feel like we have control, but only lead to negative consequences.

Our brains are designed to pull us into stereotyping in moments like this. We may find ourselves blaming and judging entire groups of people for a range of behaviors -- for terrorizing, fomenting hate, being too passive or complacent, not caring or doing enough, etc. It is understandable that our brains are wired to consider this behavior protective, given both the shock and trauma of attacks and the compounding effects of centuries of persecution we've experienced at the hands of hatred and extremism that has subjugated or attacked our people again and again. We can recognize this, and also that stereotyping groups of people is also fraught with potential challenges - spreading more hate, division, and discord, in addition to leaving innocent people misunderstood and mischaracterized.

As a community that has been mischaracterized too often and subjected to the hate, violence, and terror that come part and parcel with such attitudes, no matter our past experiences or impressions, we have the opportunity to practice discernment and dispassion. We can rise above making sweeping generalizations or engaging in blanket hatred, no matter how much hurt, pain, grief and despair we feel. Shifting from asking ourselves if our sentiments are justified to whether our actions are effective in meeting our long term goals of securing the safety and stability of our people globally can be a valuable guide post in the journey of discernment.

Take Action

As we navigate the difference between what we can and cannot control and what is and isn't effective, we can take meaningful action on what is within the realm of our influence. Some avenues include engaging in [letter writing campaigns](#), joining local vigils, educating yourself and those in your life, and committing time to advocacy. There may be many other unique avenues that may suit your individual strengths and resources as well. Engaging in sādhanā (meditation, yoga, puja, chanting, etc), which, at its heart, is self-care, to regulate our minds and bodies and understanding our personal capacity and limits are a part of the action we can take as well. Talking, sharing our stories, and processing our grief as we build up our community is as crucial as all of the other potential actions we've shared. Grief is designed evolutionarily to pull people in, while anger is designed to push threats away. Our grief has power in helping humanity understand us and our civilization's story, seeing that it can be as formidable a tool at creating awareness as anger is an important part of understanding what is effective action.

Engaging in conversations, in particular, is a challenging and crucial part of the action that is available to us. Be sure to set yourself up for success with the tools to regulate your emotions listed under “*Take Time To Process & Accept What You’re Feeling*” and then consider the following guidelines for effective conversation. These can be adapted to talking with both our cherished loved ones and our adversaries.

Best Practices for Engaging In Productive Conversations

Dharmic Communication

Hindu Dharma traditions are about having the freedom to ask questions and pursue answers, to discern truth from untruth, and to act in accordance with *dharma* (right thought and action) and avoid *adharma* (selfish thoughts and actions). Some of the values promoted in the Hindu Dharma traditions which can be instructional in constructive communication include:

- ❖ **Kindness And Compassion (*ahimsa*)**
- ❖ **Truthfulness (*satya*)**
- ❖ **Thoughtfulness (*viveka*)**
- ❖ **Dispassion And Objectivity (*vairāgya*)**
- ❖ **Equal Regard (*samadrishṭi*)**

Practicing these values daily is essential for building the emotional and mental resilience needed for difficult conversations. In fact, daily practice not only prepares us for moments of conflict, but also enhances our relationships, decision-making, and overall ability to cultivate a mindset that fosters understanding and respect, ensuring that we approach every interaction with clarity, grace, and wisdom. Whether trying to understand someone we love, or engaging with someone who is in an adversarial role, we are empowered when we’re grounded in our values, and thus far more effective in our communication goals.

Gottman-Rapoport Intervention

The Gottman-Rapoport Intervention is a strategy that, when practiced intentionally, enables effective conversation that allows one to move from conflictual conversations to deeper discussions that allow for more productive work.

The Principle

Come in with the assumption of similarity — if you attribute a positive trait to yourself, find it in your partner. When you find yourself attributing a negative trait to your partner, find it in yourself. This frame of mind, while challenging to establish (especially with adversarial conversation partners), opens up the capacity to deepen discussion. It is heavy work, but we can remember that understanding isn’t agreement, it’s the crucial first step towards influencing.

The Rules of the Gottman-Rapoport Intervention

Speaker

- I. **Use “I” statements sharing how you feel while avoiding blaming, criticism, or contempt**
 - A. Example: *“I feel deeply hurt by your word choice, and calling the terrorists ‘separatists.’”*
 - B. NOT: *“I feel that you are a hateful person”*
- II. **Be concise and focus on your experience, rather than offering your assumption of what your conversational partner is thinking/feeling/doing**
 - A. Example: *“In my experience, this type of language has the impact of minimizing and subtly condoning the actions of terrorists”*
 - B. NOT: *“I know that you’re just trying to brainwash everyone into thinking that Kashmir is theirs!”*
- III. **Use positive requests — ask your partner to add something, rather than asking them to subtract something**
 - A. Example: *“Can you please explain this statement? Can you please use this word instead?”*
 - B. NOT: *“Stop trying to use Pakistani propaganda on me!”*

Listener

- I. **Postpone your agenda**
 - A. Before you think of what you’re going to respond with, make sure you’re fully understanding what the speaker is trying to communicate.
 - B. While you may disagree, everyone is entitled to how they feel, and effective communication, including disagreement, starts with understanding.
- II. **Paraphrase what the speaker is saying**
 - A. Elaborate when you can see/feel the underlying emotion, to show this engagement.
 - B. Example: *“What I hear you saying is…”*
- III. **Validate them and ask questions**
 - A. Continue until they are satisfied that you understand what they’re saying, continue to ask questions and validate them. Then, switch from listener to speaker, intentionally and with clarity for all involved.
- IV. **Persuasion**
 - A. Maintain the positive tone of all the above
 - B. Use the Venn Diagram Method to understand where there is room for persuasion as well as compromise. Create two concentric circles. In the smaller circle, put what is inflexible for you (i.e. values/asks that cannot be compromised on). In the larger circle, put themes that are flexible (i.e. things you’re willing to explore and understand in more depth). Look at these circles with your conversation partner so you’ll have a better sense of where you both can agree, disagree, and agree to disagree.

In the wake of profound grief and trauma, it is essential that we honor our pain while cultivating discernment, compassion, and resilience. Our tradition equips us with the tools to rise above reactive emotions and act with both courage and clarity.

Through sādhanā, intentional self-care, grounding in dharmic principles, and a commitment to effective and respectful communication, we can transform our anguish into purposeful, impactful activism. Let us strive not just to react—but to respond wisely, ensuring that our efforts lead to greater awareness, healing, and justice for our community and beyond.

Need Additional Support?

This work is hard, and some of us will need support to engage in this healing work. Please feel free to reach out to Dr. Sekhsaria at kavita@kpspsychotherapy.com to understand the psychological resources available.

HAF Mental Health Resources

- [Navigating Mental Health & Substance Abuse: A Guide for First Year College Students](#)
- [How to Deal with Election Anxiety and Political Disagreements With Close Friends and Family](#)
- [How Hindu Teachings Can Help Our Kids' Mental Health Crisis](#)
- [Hindu 988 Suicide Hotline PSA](#)