

## **INFORMATION FOR THOSE WITH LOVED ONES WHO ARE MISSING**

In general, we grieve the loss of a loved one who has died. But grief may follow any separation from those we love; especially loved ones who are missing. There are some common reactions many individuals will experience as they wait for news regarding their whereabouts:

What may you be experiencing as you wait for important news about your missing loved one? Normal feelings and symptoms may include:

- Shock/denial/disbelief - "I can't believe this is happening to me"
- Fear/terror/panic
- Anger
- Shaking and nausea with periods of increased heart rate
- Confusion- feeling lost and "out of it"
- Frustration at inability to do more, especially when your loved one is not within reach
- Difficulty concentrating
- Lack of appetite
- Stomach ache
- Hyperactivity or exhaustion
- Isolation from others
- Irritability
- Inability to sleep
- A general sense of "numbing"
- Crying or the absence of crying
- A feeling of emptiness
- Depression
- Overwhelming need for information

These are all normal responses to an abnormal situation. In many cases, individuals with loved ones who are missing remain hopeful. It is important that those helping to comfort others support that sense of hope.

### **Tools for managing these emotions, feelings and physical symptoms:**

- Identify your feelings and find ways to express them through writing, talking with supportive helpers, drawing.
- Write a letter or poem to your loved one telling them how you feel right now
- Engage in physical activity to help decrease anger, anxiety, and depression
- Avoid alcohol, drugs, overeating to cope
- Try to maintain a schedule for the day
- Eat small nutritious meals or high vitamin liquids
- Allow your friends, neighbors and family to assist in daily activities like: answering the phone, going on errands, cooking meals, escorting children to sport/social activities, mowing the lawn
- Reach out to your spiritual leader
- Remember to take medications for pre-existing medical conditions as prescribed by your doctor.
- Report to your nearest emergency room if you have chest pain, chest heaviness, or difficulty breathing.

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