



EMPLOYEE SERIES

Tips on how to support your partner through emotional trauma

"I don't understand him anymore", "She isn't the person I was married to", "I wish I could have my partner back". Often, these statements are an obvious sign that a relationship is going through a challenging period where one party feels the 'absence' of the other as they knew and loved.

Sometimes, you may come to know that your partner is trying to deal with something that has happened in their past and its emotional pain and trauma. As a result, you may have noticed the changes in your relationship, the way in which your partner views and interacts with everyday life. You may have attempted to talk to your partner and may have felt like talking to a brick wall.

When you are faced with a similar challenge, it is best to remind yourself that;



Everyone hurts differently. All of us in some way carry our past memories that are both positive and hurtful into our relationships. Most of us have dealt with our hurtful events as best we could with the knowledge and awareness we had at the time; or at least we thought we did. It's no one's fault if some of the hurtful memories begin to show up later in life needing attention and caring.



Everyone grieves differently. Hurtful memories often associated with feelings and thoughts that are challenging for all involved to comprehend fully. The person experiencing such memories may begin to feel confused, upset and frustrated as well as to lose their sense of self, meaning and direction. This is a period of searching and longing and they may often lack words to describe such experience.



Everyone copes differently. We rely on things that has worked for us to deal with difficult issues. There is a sense of familiarity and safety in going back to what we know. Your partner may choose what's familiar for them to handle the issues at hand. If you have concerns around their particular coping strategy, they need to be gently reminded that they already know more than their mind allows them to choose.



Everyone heals differently. The capacity to overcome adversity is something we all have. However, each one of us may access our resources, skills and strengths very differently to someone else, especially in challenging circumstances. This is because we have learnt to assess and evaluate situations through our personal history which also has a story of healing and recovery.



It would be also helpful to reflect on and maintain what you have already done in creating;



Safety: Hurtful memories has the potential to disrupt one's sense of safety leading them to feel anxious and worried about a lot of things including their relationships. In such times, it is important to be aware of things that have helped both of you to feel safe in your relationship. It could be a simple word or a gesture that made you feel that you are there for each other.



Space: While it could be emotionally challenging for all involved when someone you love begin to change their ways, it is important to ensure that you find time to meet your personal needs and interests. This will build your own capacity to be with your partner in their time of need.



Connection: Sometimes you may feel that you are walking on eggshells around your partner as you yourself is unsure what is the right thing to do or say to help your partner. While this is a normal feeling to experience, continue to engage in opportunities where you can maintain emotional connection through simple and genuine acts of love and appreciation.



Cooperation: It is important to know that professional support is available for you and your partner to go through this challenging phase of life. This will assist you to be aware of what is within your control and maintain your own emotional safety and wellbeing.

References:

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