



# 9/11 Families Seek Closure After Osama Bin Laden Death

## 9/11 Families, Americans, Express Mixed Emotions After News of Bin Laden's Death



Mark Lennihan/AP Photo

Mary Power cries in reaction to the news of the death of Osama bin Laden on May 2, 2011 in New York. Power said her daughter survived the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 on the World Trade Center but that they both lost friends and acquaintances.

By LARA SALAHI

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For many families who lost loved ones on 9/11, news of Osama bin Laden's death and burial at sea has brought mixed feelings -- relief that the world's most notorious terrorist has been brought to justice, but also a reminder of the pain they felt nearly a decade ago.

"It was a feeling of elation, but for those of us who lost so much on 9/11, it wasn't totally elation. For me there was sadness attached to it because it was a reminder of what I lost," David McCourt, whose wife and daughter were killed in the second plane that crashed into the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001.

Meanwhile, celebrations erupted across the U.S. immediately following President Obama's announcement that Osama bin Laden was killed Sunday by U.S. troops. While it may seem jubilation and grief are distinct sentiments, many psychologists and

psychiatrists say these mixed emotions are painful indicators that define feelings of long-awaited closure.

"Closure does not necessarily mean no longer feeling grief, or no longer feeling angst or pain over a situation," said Dr. Alan Hilfer, Chief Psychologist at Maimonides Medical Center in New York. "It means essentially having threads of resolve." But many find peace of mind by allowing themselves to understand that they may never stop feeling a sense of loss, Hilfer said. And some, regardless of bin Laden's death, may say that they have already reached their own feeling of closure. "Some just see this as a task that was incomplete and is now complete," said Hilfer.

Abigail Carter, 45, whose husband Arron was killed in the World Trade Center on 9/11, said she did not need news of Osama bin Laden's death to feel closure. "For me to close a chapter, I don't need vengeance. For me, closure comes from within," said Carter, who wrote, "The Alchemy of Loss: A Young Widow's Transformation." Carter, who now lives in Seattle, Wash., said her 15-year-old daughter Olivia was horrified that people would celebrate someone's death.

"We've done our forgiving," said Carter. "Obviously [Arron] was murdered, but we've gone through the process of putting him to rest." While Carter was hesitant to describe her feelings as "closure" -- more like, "scarring over" -- she says bin Laden's death is just another stitch in an already closed wound. "I know for a lot of people it's going to help them. I just happen to not be one of them," she said.

Still, for others like McCourt, the news evoked raw memories of sadness and grief. McCourt's 4-year-old daughter, Juliana, and wife Ruth were on their way to Disneyland when their flight was hijacked on 9/11 and flown into the World Trade Center. McCourt said he was "100 percent" angry as he tried to grapple with the loss of his family. "This is too much pain," McCourt told ABC News in an earlier interview. "This is just too much pain."

The intensity of bereavement wanes over time, said **Dr. Howard Belkin, assistant professor of psychiatry at William Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak, Mich.** But for some, bin Laden's death may bring back some of the sharpest memories of 9/11. "[Bin Laden] was a figure that was so significant in our psyche, that it can take weeks to months to years to feel full closure," said **Belkin**. "The mourning period may start over, but will be shorter lived than initially."

The near decade-long struggle to capture bin Laden has weighed on the minds of most Americans, not just those who lost someone they knew on 9/11, said Dr. Igor Galynker, associate chairman of the department of psychiatry at Beth Israel Medical Center in New York. "We are victims of a crime, and until there's a verdict and the perpetrators are punished, many go through anguish," said Galynker. "Only until justice is done, can some feel that they can move on."

Indeed, nearly a decade later, McCourt says although reminders like bin Laden's death bring back feelings of sadness at the loss of his family, the event serves as some assurance that he can get on with his life. "I'm at a different place," said McCourt. "I can look at my wife and daughter in one sense, in a better sense, and thank God for allowing them to be in my life for that short period of time."