

*First of all, please know that I do not expect nor desire a response to this email.* My only purpose in sending it is with the hope that you all may come to a higher level of awareness with regard to people who suffer from (often invisible), chronic pain and illness.

As part of this population, I can assure you that we are doing the best that we can to play the cards that life has dealt us. It is challenging, frustrating, and exhausting. However, it can also be rewarding when we are understood to be unique and part of the world we live in.

By telling me I was no longer welcome, you chose not only to dismiss my grief, but also to dismiss me because I am not an able-bodied person. These dismissals are not only unkind and quite the opposite of support, but also inflict moral injury to a person who is already suffering. What is ironic is that I wished to discuss the disrespect and dismissal of my Mother's burial wishes – unbelievable I know (!) – and then I was disrespected and dismissed due to chronic pain and illness – unbelievable I know!

I can identify nothing that I did to degrade your support group. I can find no evidence to suggest that by missing two sessions I would somehow interfere with group bonding as you claimed. In fact, I feel confident that if you asked every person in that group if they would suffer somehow because I could not attend every session, the answer would be a resounding “no.”

My wish is that you have greater awareness of people who are not able-bodied. *We do not have the luxury of deciding when our bodies will allow for another effort on any given day.* This is our reality and it is harder to navigate our lives because systems are set up for able-bodied people to succeed. I'm sure that you would agree that we do not want to continually perpetuate ideas of valued and included, versus creating conditions for discrimination and lack of inclusion. All of us desire to feel safe and part of the group - regardless of its purpose; it is a biological imperative for good health. Please understand this and make it part of your hearts and minds. Best regards for future wellness and the same for all of the people that will cross your doorstep looking for support.