



Holding Space for Grief

MEGAN BRODERICK, LICSW

Path for Today

The Impact of Grief



Tending to Others in Grief



Supporting Yourself

Why the Wendt Center?



“No one should have to
grieve alone.”

~ William “Bill” Wendt
Founder of Wendt Center
circa 1977

Settle In

Grounding
Meditation

Tending to Self



We will be discussing challenging topics that can elicit uncomfortable feelings.

Please tend to yourself:

- Breathe in for a count of four, exhale for a count of six
- Take a sip of ice water and trace the water down as you drink it
- Look up and notice three things in your space
- Stand up and stretch

When Grief Enters the Room

The Umbrella of Grief



- Absence of something cherished.
- Grief is about the relationship one has with another person/thing/experience/ pet/themselves
- It's not JUST the death of a loved one.
- When else might grief show up?

Common MIS-Conceptions of Grief

It is a linear stage-based process

Relationships end when someone dies

Grief can be completed

Time heals all wounds

After a few months you are ready to go back to your routines

Distracting ourselves will make the pain go away

Bad things happen to help us grow

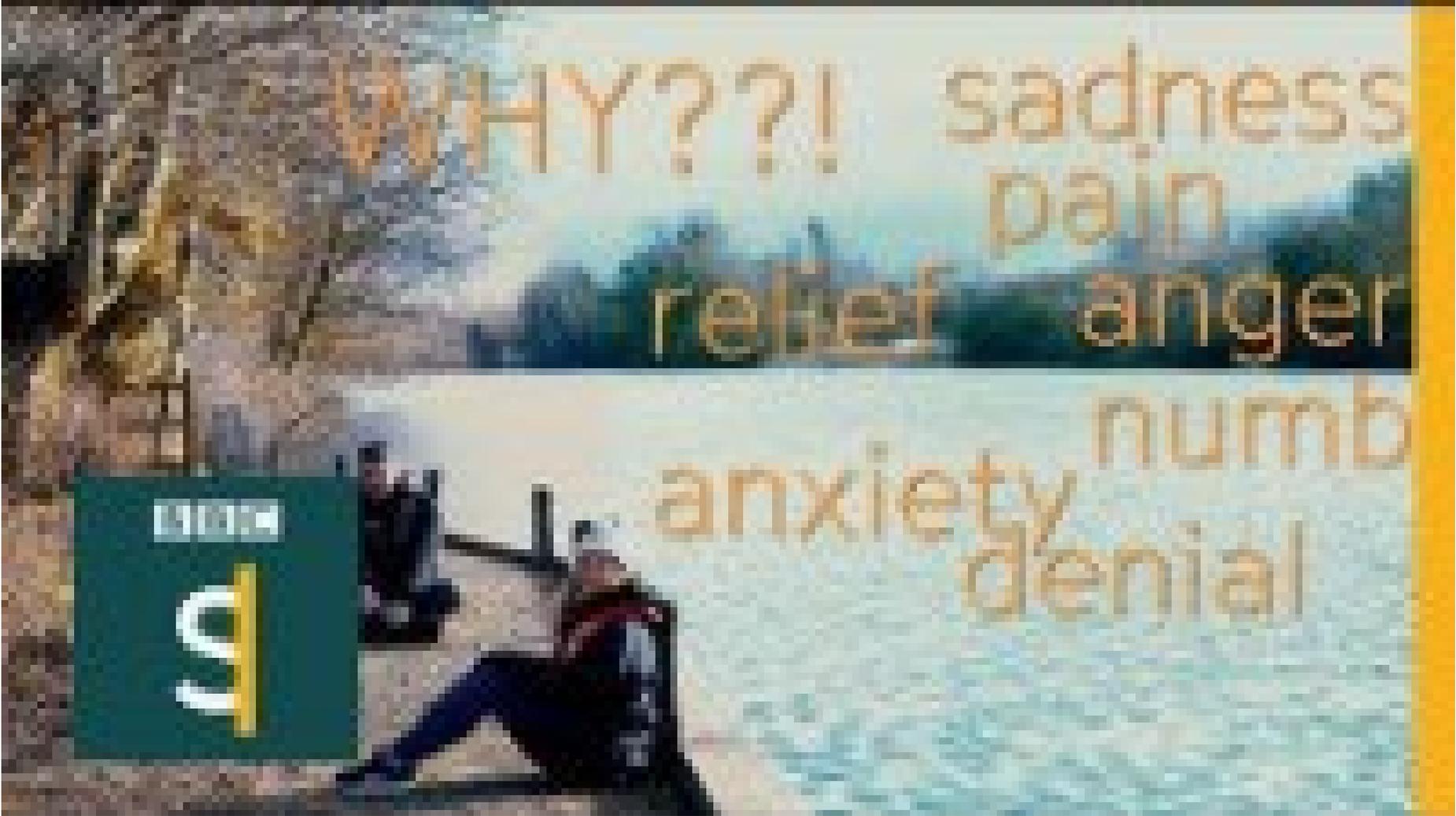
If you aren't crying you aren't grieving

The first year is the hardest

Grieving is best done alone

Talking about it makes you feel worse

Sadness is the primary emotion



Grief Symptoms

Exhaustion

Changes in
Sleep and
Appetite

Headaches

Stomach
Issues

Crying easily
and often

Feeling numb

Desire to
Isolate

Irritation

Forgetfulness

Difficulty
concentrating

Disorganized

Yearning

Grief Symptoms

Exhaustion

Change
S

Stomach
Issues

Crying easily
and often

Am I going
crazy?

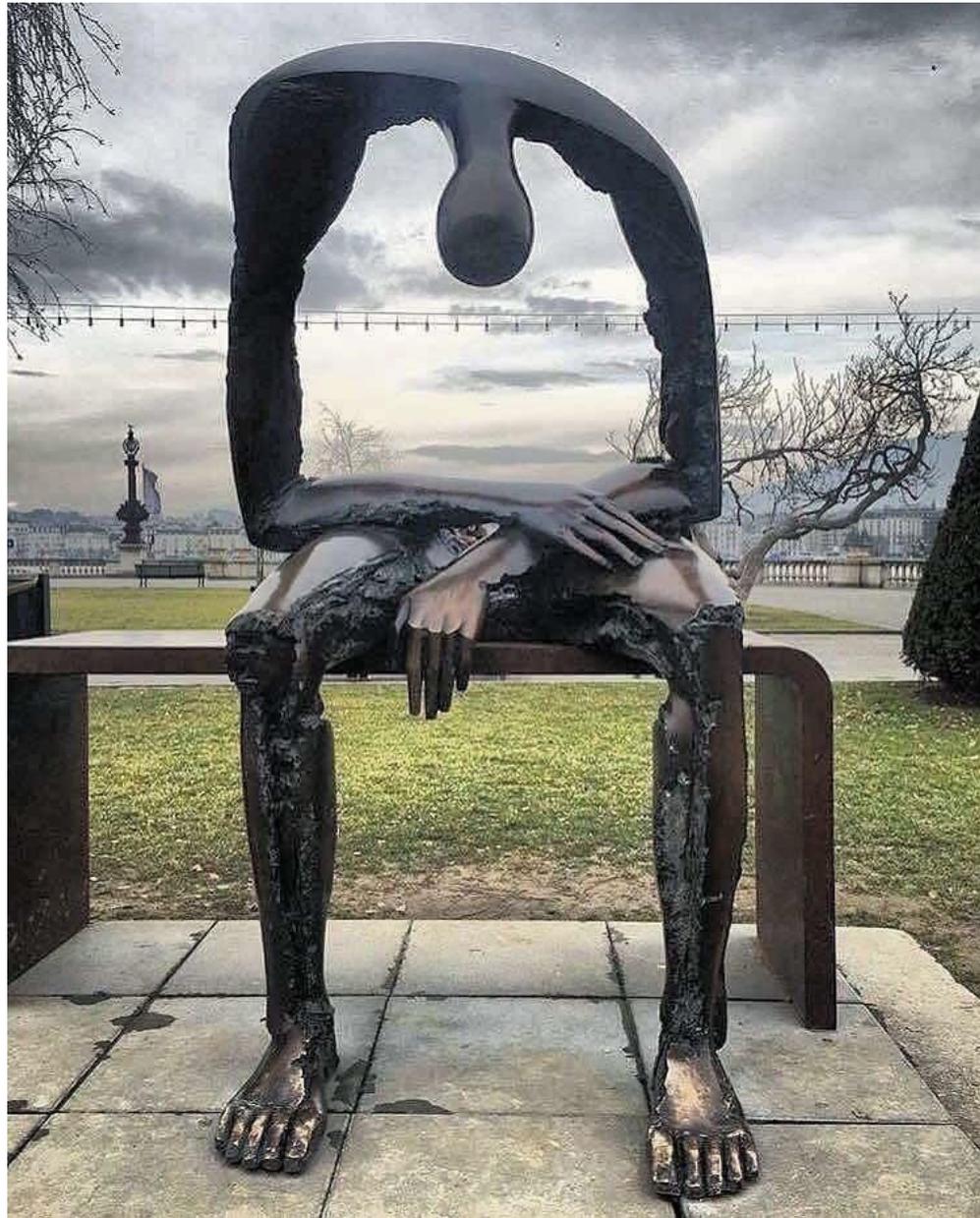
Irritate

Forgetfulness

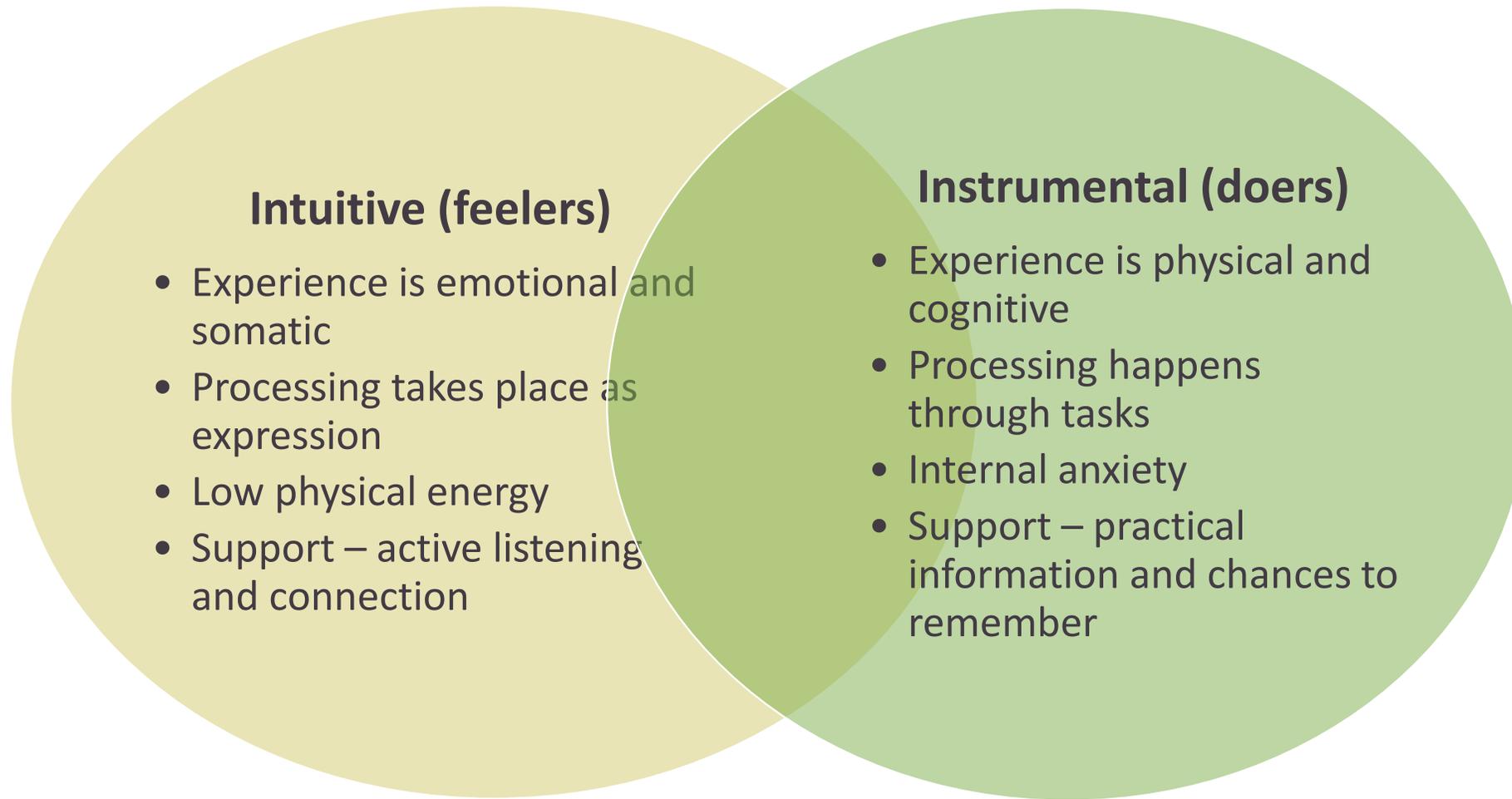
Diff
concentrating

Yearning





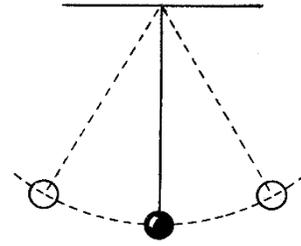
Styles of Grieving



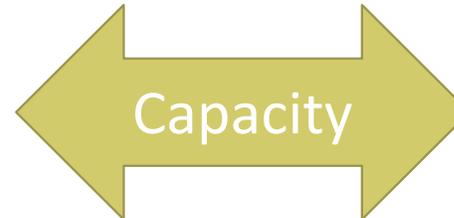
Naming the Grief



Pendulation in Grief



Integrated



Pain

- Crying
- Longing
- Remembering
- Memorializing
- Low motivation

Joy

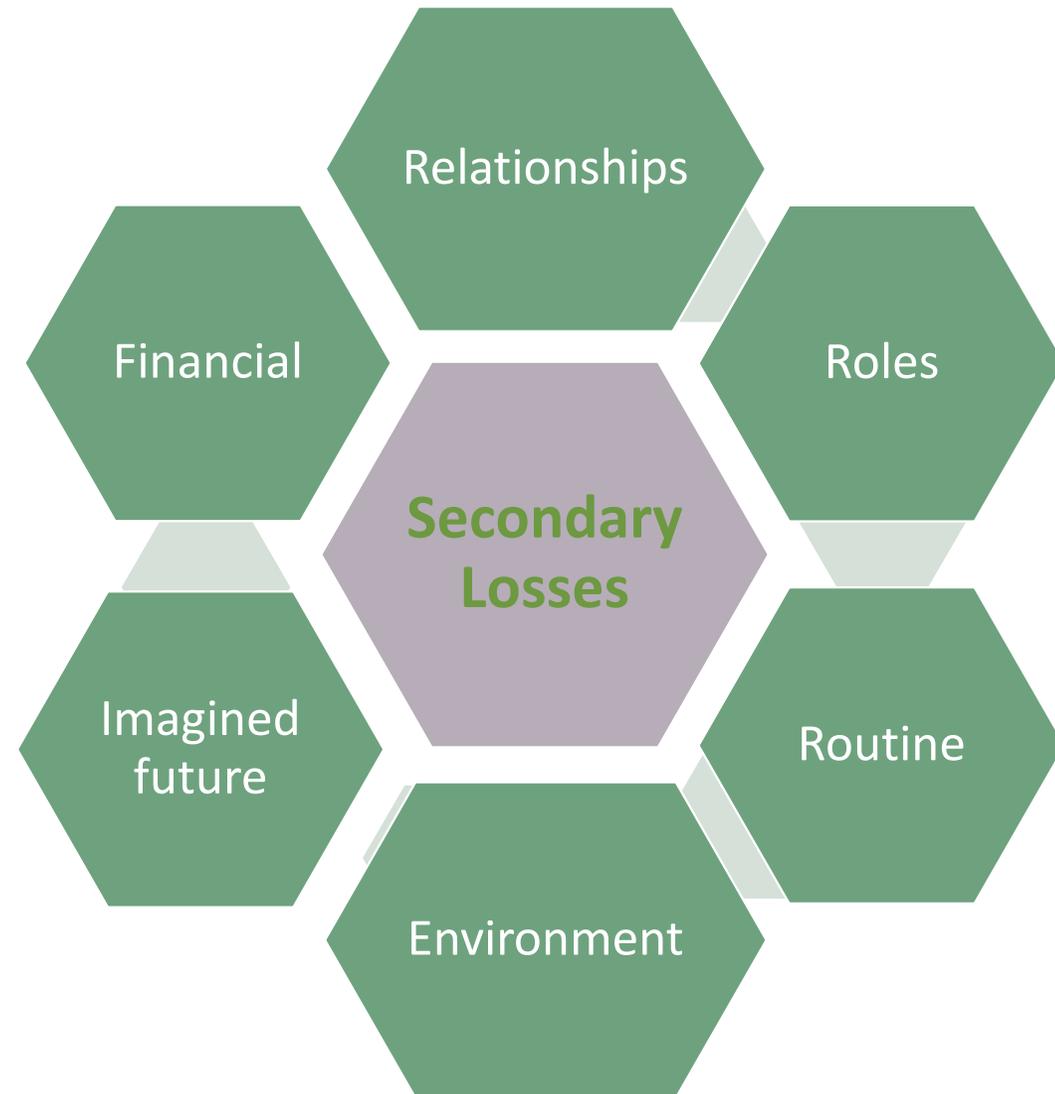
- Socializing
- Celebrating
- Setting goals
- Trying new things
- Increased motivation

The Losses Behind the Loss

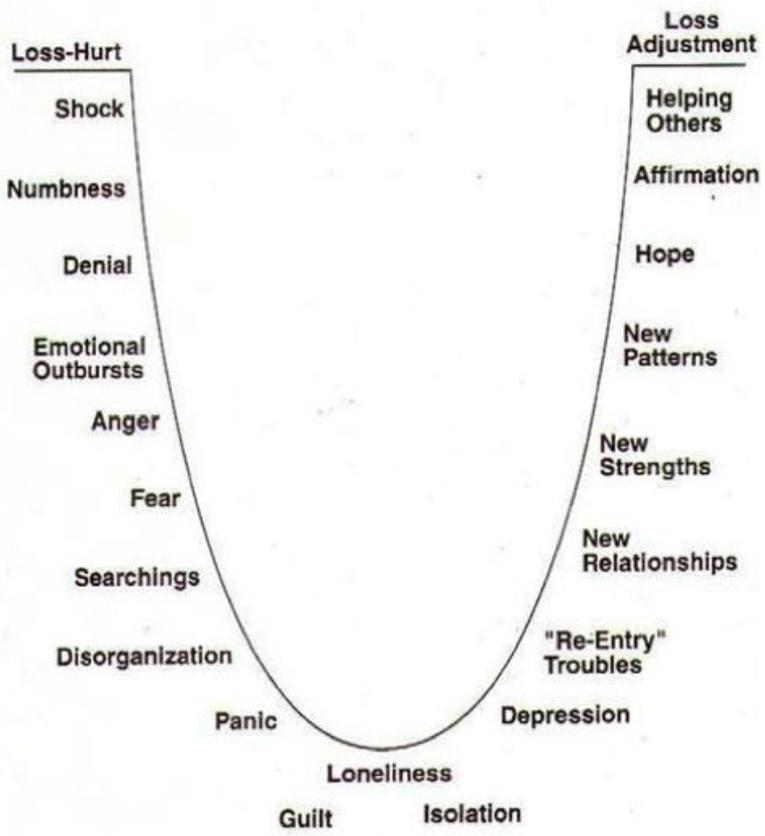
That's how it is in grief. The things, the common place ordinary things, we found comforting in our lives before take on a greater weight. Innocuous things become painful. Evidence of what you've lost is everywhere. Nothing just is what it is anymore.

-Megan Devine

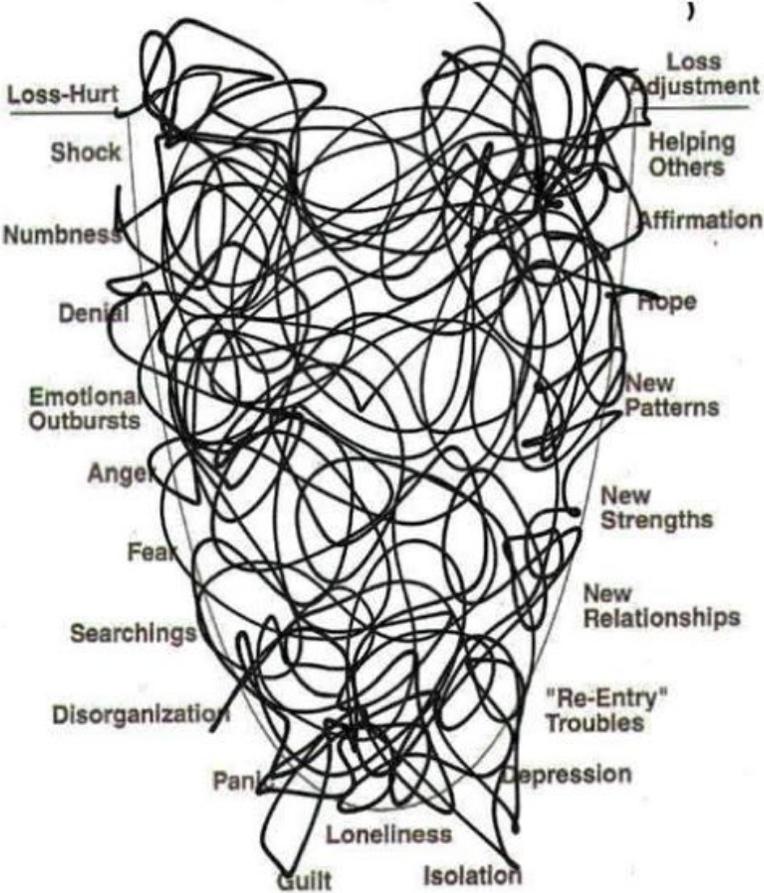
Author: It's OK That You're Not OK



STAGES OF GRIEF



My experience



Sitting With Grief

Rethinking How We Hold Space for Grief and Loss – Michele Pearson Clarke



Carrying Grief

Grief is seen as a kind of malady: a terrifying, messy emotion that needs to be cleaned up and put behind us as soon as possible.” ~ Megan Devine



“Grief expressed out loud for someone we have lost, or a country or home we have lost, is in itself the greatest praise we could ever give them. Grief is praise, because it is the natural way love honors what it misses.” – Martin Prechtel



Grief cannot be fixed. Grief is carried. Grief is integrated.

Exquisite Witness

Exquisite: an interaction based in respect, care, honesty, and the ability to truly hear and understand the grieving person's anger and confusion.

Witness: the grief journey belongs to the grieving person-it is not yours. "As a witness, we observe more than act, listen more than talk, and follow more than lead. Witnessing celebrates the dignity and authority of the grieving person."

"What distinguishes an exquisite witness is not one's level of training but one's willingness to approach another human being with compassion and deep respect for that person's needs, fear, and grief."

~J. Shep Jeffreys (2011)

A Culture of Fixing

Most professional cultures require and reward fixing or solving problems.

Many problems have two needs-that which can be fixed (tangible needs) and that which needs to be held (emotional need)

Holding the emotion requires empathy, empathy requires connection, connection requires being fully present in the moment.

When you are fully present in the moment you are not focused on fixing and it prevents their issue from becoming your burden.



11 Tenets of Companionship

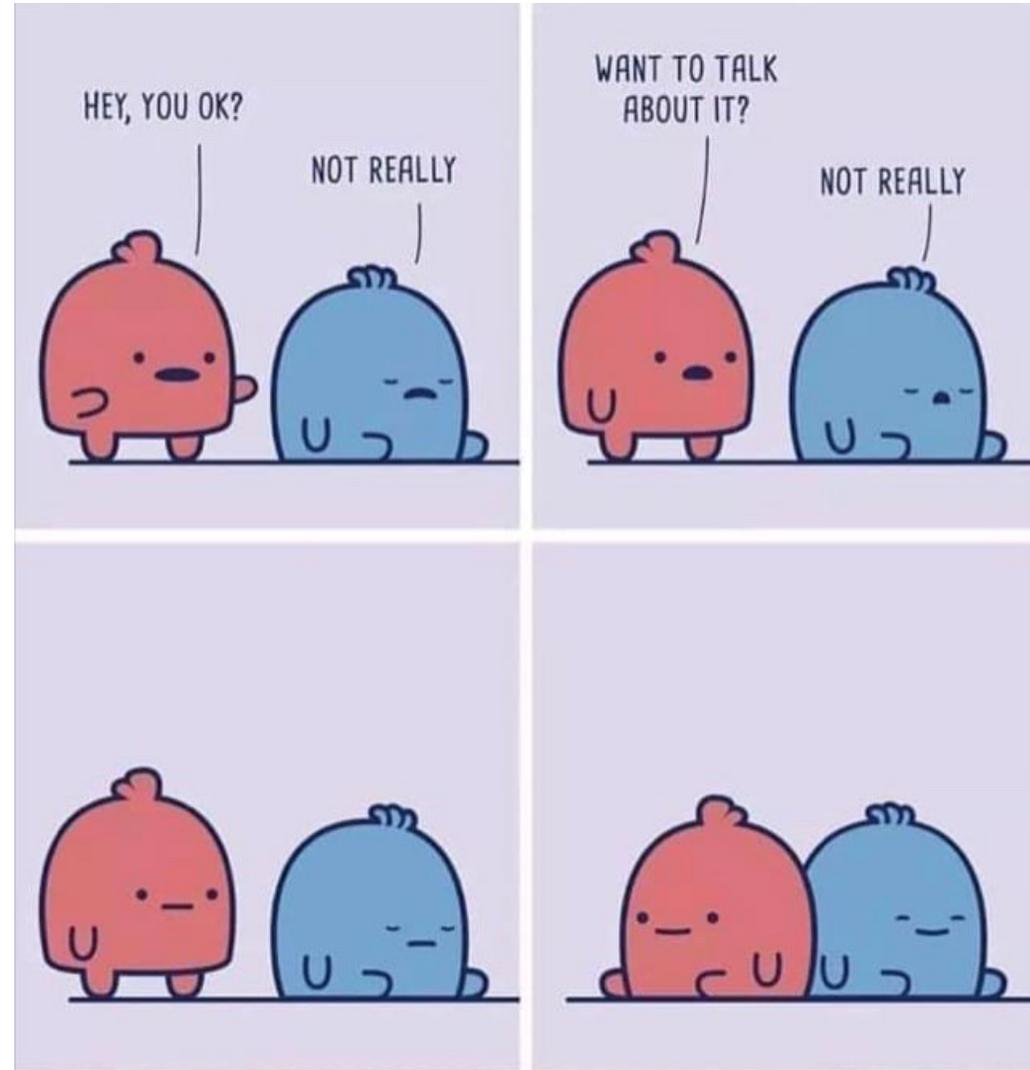
1. Companionship is about being present to another person's pain; it is not about taking away the pain.
2. Companionship is about going to the wilderness of the soul with another human being, it is not about thinking you are responsible for finding the way out.
3. Companionship is about honoring the spirit; it is not about analyzing with the head.
4. Companionship is about listening with the heart; it is not about analyzing with the head
5. Companionship is about bearing witness to the struggles of others; it is not about judging or directing those struggles.

11 Tenets of Companionship

6. Companionship is about walking alongside; it is not about leading.
7. Companionship is about discovering the gifts of sacred silence; it does not mean filling up every moment with words.
8. Companionship is about being still, it is not about frantic movement forward.
9. Companionship is about respecting disorder and confusion; it is not about imposing order and logic.
10. Companionship is about learning from others; it is not about teaching them.
11. Companionship is about compassionate curiosity; it is not about expertise.

Sitting with the Unfixable

*Remember that
we can't fix grief,
as much as we
want to.*



Caring for You

Reflection

What brought you to this work?

What keeps you in this work?

What is the best use of you?



“The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet.”

Making Space

Do you give yourself permission to be impacted by your work?

What does that look like?
Sound like? Feel like?

What would it take to begin to give yourself that permission or expand what is there?

“Having compassion for yourself means that you honor and accept your humanness.”

- Kristin Neff

Patient Loss

CNAs and HHAs experience many of the same grief symptoms as family caregivers including: missing the deceased, painful memories

A close, caring relationship is both an important factor in providing quality care AND a risk factor for more intense grief

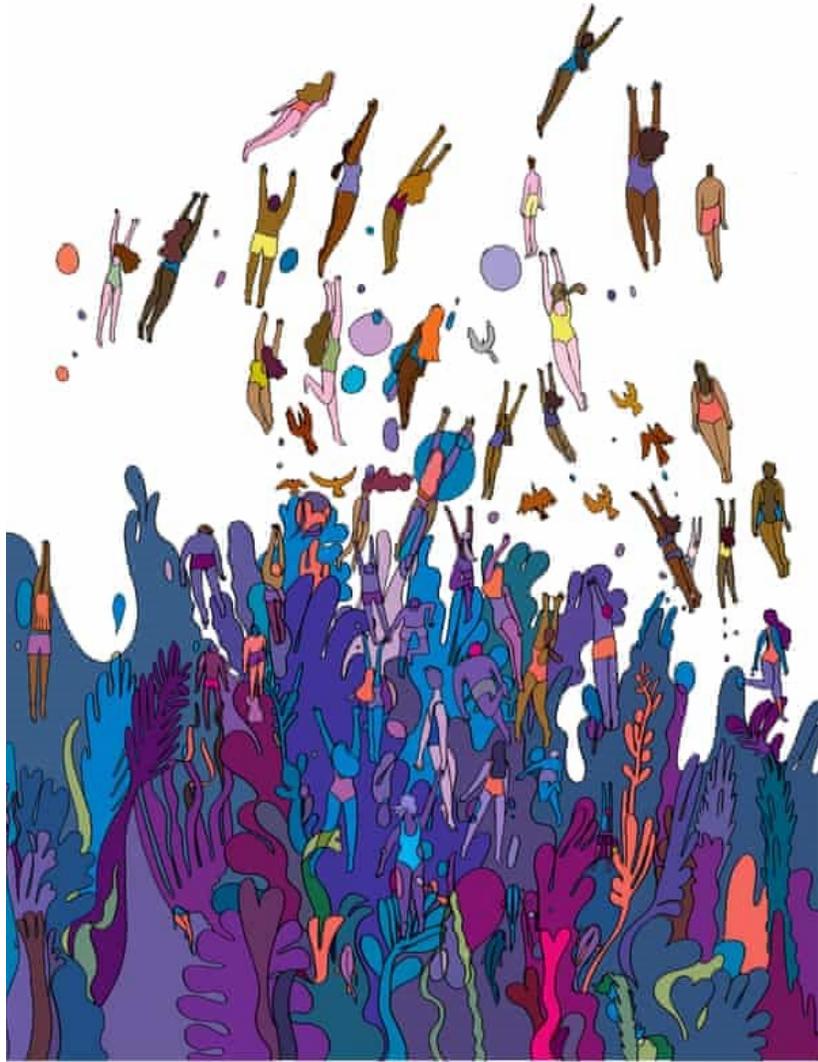
Many direct care workers reported feeling unprepared for the death of a patient – emotionally unprepared and lacking concrete information

Disenfranchised grief: employer and societal underestimations of the closeness of client relationships and extent of the loss

You and Your Clients



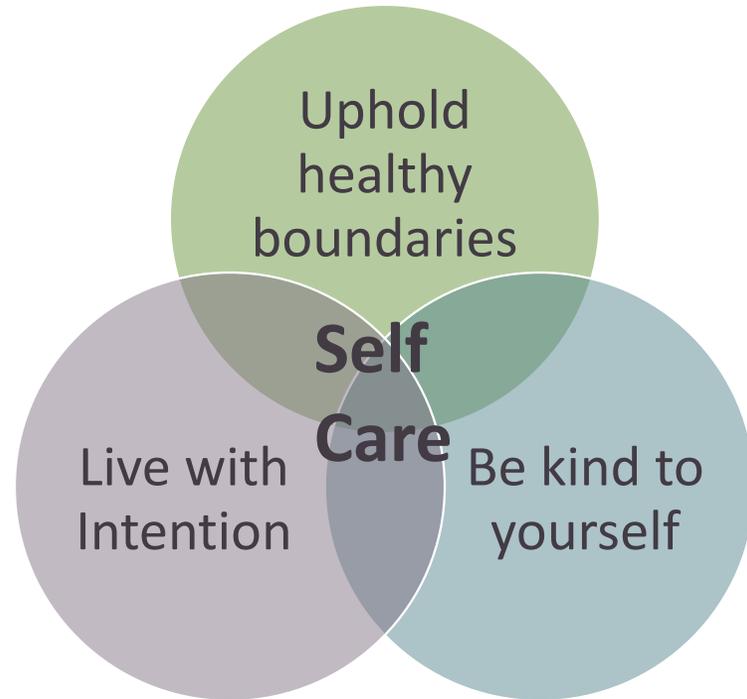
- Collective grief (i.e. COVID)
- Shared Identities
- Personal losses
- Comparison and Minimization



True care requires time,
intention, awareness,
human to human
connection, presence,
skill, compassion,
curiosity, energy and
experience.

~ Alua Arthur, Going with Grace

Internal Acts of Self Care



Check-In

- Do I get enough sleep?
- What am I feeling right now?
- Did I show myself and others kindness?
- Do my muscles need stretching?
- Do I drink enough water?
- Am I eating healthily and regularly?

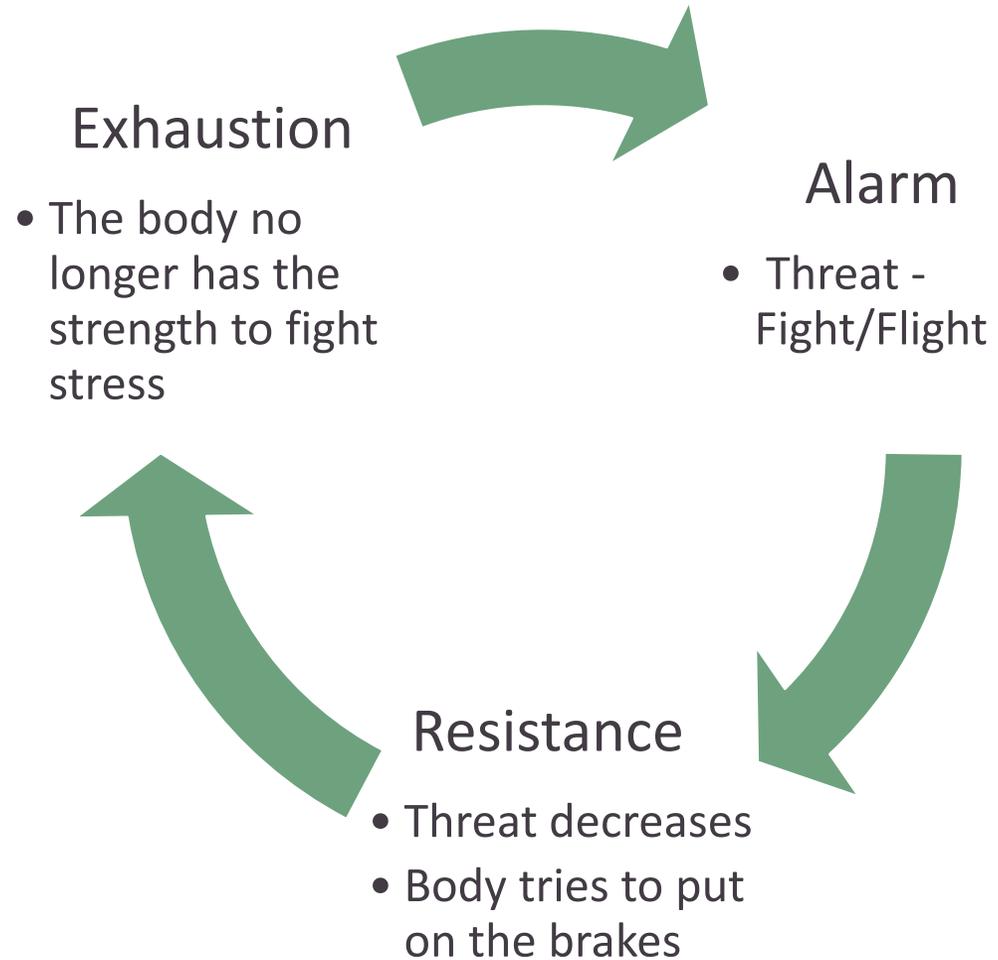
“Self Care: Absolutely Essential AND Essentially Inadequate”

~ Vikki Reynolds

Tending to the Stress Response

Imitate the energy output that your body needs

- Physical activity
- Creativity
- Laughter or Crying
- Physical affection
- Center through breath
- Rest



Self-Compassion

1. Say to yourself: This is a moment of suffering. (Alternatives: This hurts. Ouch. This is grief.)
2. Acknowledge: Suffering is a part of life. (Alternatives: I am not alone. Other people feel this way.)
3. Place your hands over your heart. Feel the warmth of your hands and the gentle touch of your hands on your chest. Or adopt the soothing touch that feels right for you.
4. Say to yourself: May I be kind to myself. (Alternatives: May I give myself the compassion that I need. May I be patient.)



Co-regulation



How do we hold ourselves collectively well?
Who is holding you up in this work?
Who is your howl at the moon person?
When was the last time you used them?

*"We are not the survival of the fittest,
we are the survival of the nurtured."*

~ Louis Cozolino

Transitional Care

Listen to a recorded meditation or breathing exercise.

Stretch your body.

Write it out

Turn up your favorite song and sing, dance

Wash your hands mindfully.

Strong tastes and scents for rising anxiety

Start meetings at five minutes after the hour

Shake/Tap it Out

Change the Scenery

Creation

Offers opportunities for relaxation, confidence building, satisfaction

A tool to process, make connections, build insight and examine world and where we are in it

“Sacred Pause”

Individual and collective care

- Writing
- Music
- Clay
- Dance
- Cooking
- Meditation
- Gardening
- Building
- Painting, Collage, Drawing, Coloring

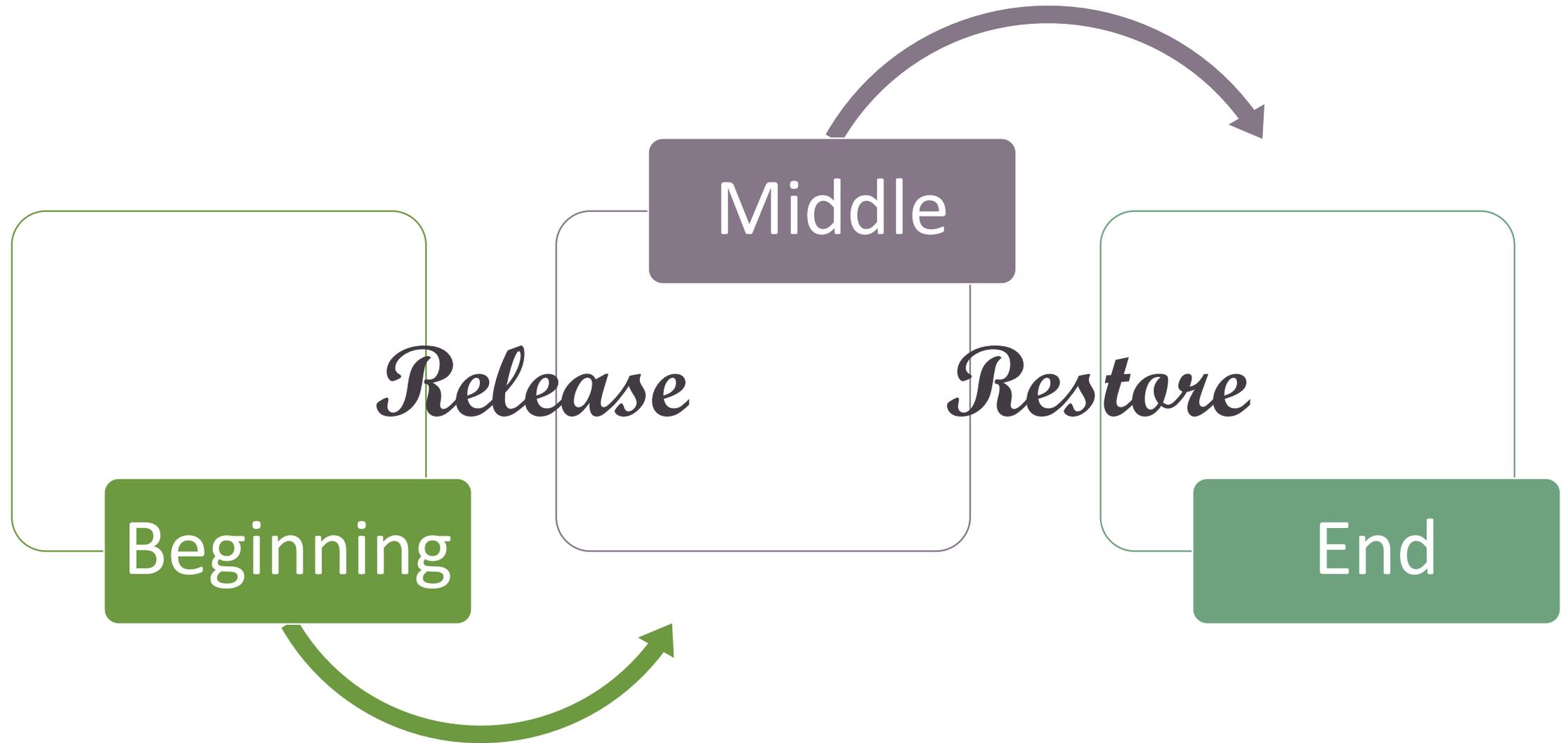
Rituals & Wellbeing

- Found around the world in all cultures (*animals too!*)
- Series of actions performed according to a prescribed order
- Provide signals to our body and spirit
- Create an anchor for intentional practices
- Increase levels of pro-social states (goodwill, empathy, trust, unity) that can engage and strengthen relationships
- Can be individual or communal
- Acknowledge the life cycle/transitions

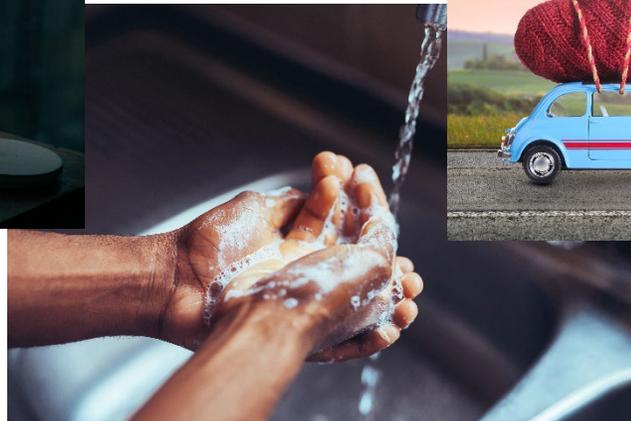


This is not about creating rituals and habits to influence external expectations of success, or productivity. This is about nurturing and tending to wellbeing.

Daily Rituals



Reclaiming small moments



Cultivating Resilience

At the end of each day:

One thing to release

- Courage vs. avoidance
- Identify your internal narratives
- Rituals
- Movement
- Low Impact Debrief

One way to restore

- Laughing
- Connection
- Rest
- Movement
- Learning
- Unplug

Making a Plan

Who...

can I reach out to for support?

What...

can I do to regulate and/or process?

When...

will I make time to practice self-care?

Where...

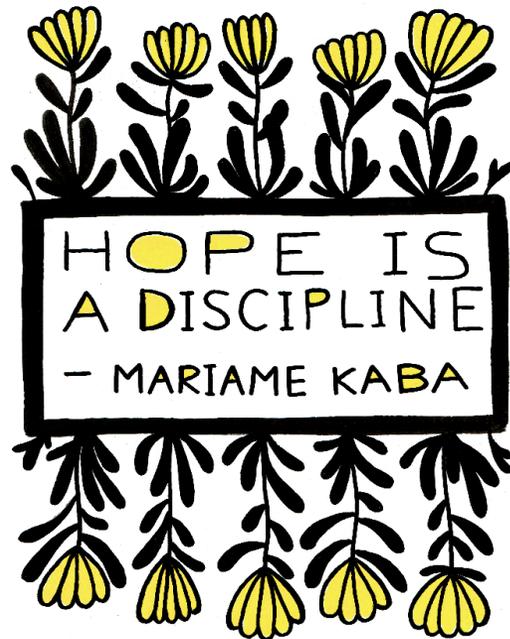
can I go if I need a break in the day?

How...

will I know when to use these skills?

Cultivating Hope

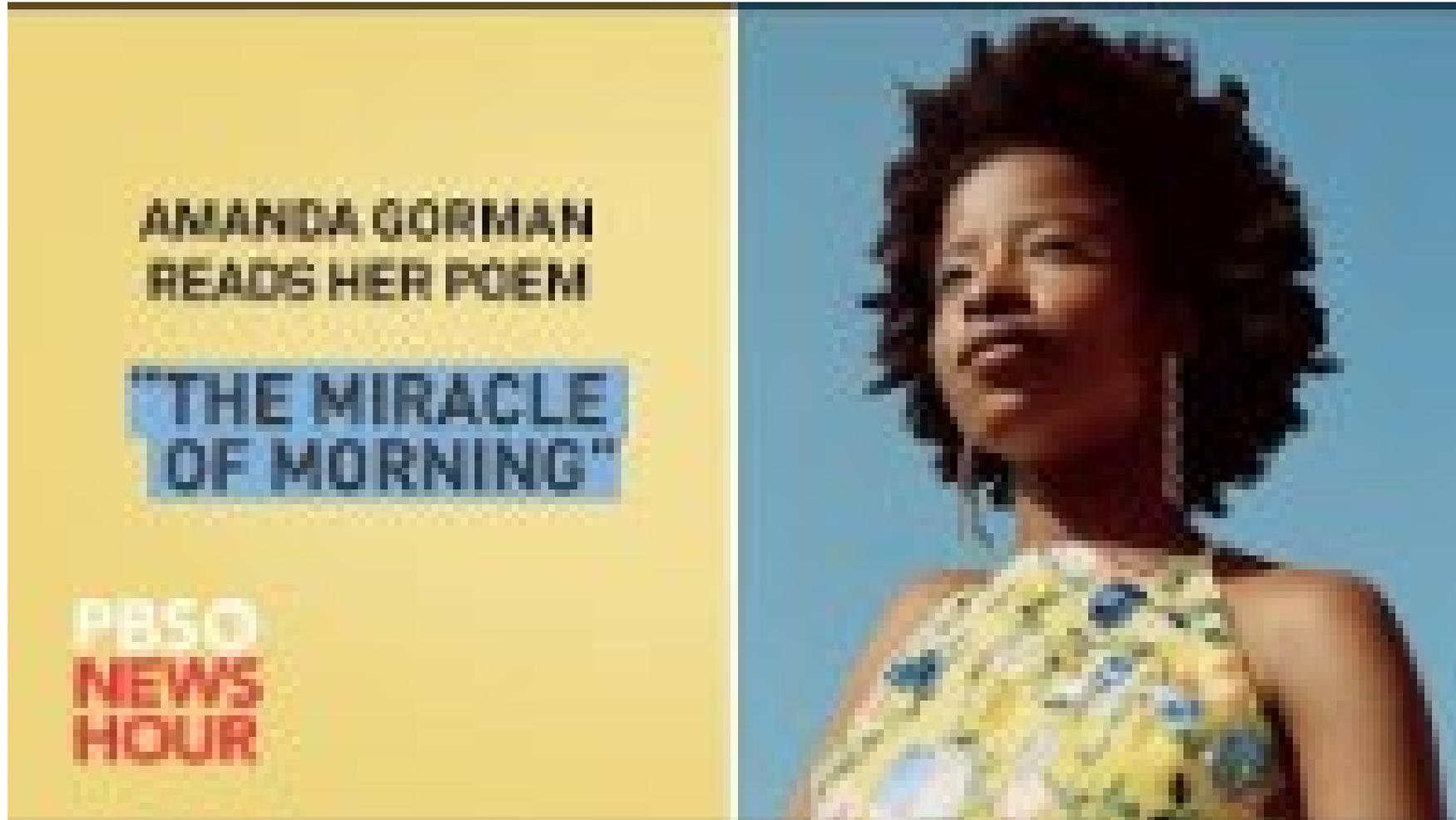
Hope is a mode of resistance;
a gift we can cultivate. ~
Barbara Kingsolver



It's less about "how you feel,"
and a practice of making a
decision every day that - you're
still gonna put one foot in front
of the other, still gonna get up in
the morning. It's a hard thing to
maintain...to believe that it's
possible to change the world. We
don't live in a predetermined,
predestined world where nothing
we do has impact. No, no, that's
not true! Change is, in fact,
constant. ~ Miriam Kaba

The Miracle of Morning

By Amanda Gorman



WENDT CENTER FOR LOSS AND HEALING

Rekindling Hope, Rebuilding Lives

Let's continue the healing conversation

@WendtCenter



www.wendtcenter.org

4201 Connecticut Ave NW Suite 300 ♦ Washington, DC 20008 ♦ 202-624-0010

Works Cited

- Barnett, J. (2014). *Distress, Burnout, Self Care and the Promotion of Wellness for Psychotherapists and Trainees*. Society for Psychotherapy. <https://societyforpsychotherapy.org/distress-therapist-burnout-self-care-promotion-wellness-psychotherapists-trainees-issues-implications-recommendations/>
- Boerner, K., et al. (2014). *Grief After Patient Death: Direct Care Staff in Nursing Homes and Homecare*. Journal of Pain and Symptom Management, 49(2). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpainsymman.2014.05.023>
- Coan, J. A., Schaefer, H. S., & Davidson, R. J. (2006). Lending a Hand: Social Regulation of the Neural Response to Threat. *Psychological Science*, 17(12), 1032–1039. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2006.01832.x>
- Chu B, Marwaha K, Sanvictores T, et al. Physiology, Stress Reaction. [Updated 2022 Sep 12]. In: StatPearls [Internet]. Treasure Island (FL): StatPearls Publishing; 2022 Jan-. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK541120/> Columbia River Mental Health Center. (2017). <https://crmhs.org/mental-health-self-care/>
- Everall, R. & Paulson, B. (2004). Burnout and Secondary Traumatic Stress: Impact on Ethical Behaviour. Canadian Journal of Counseling, 38(1).
- Hernandez, P., Gangsei, D., & Engstrom, D. (2007). Vicarious Resilience: A New Concept in Work with Those Who Survive Trauma. Family Process, 46(2), 229-241 13p
- Hone, L. (2019). The Three Secrets of Resilient People. TedXChristchurch. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWH8N-BvhAw>
- Kabe, Miriam (2021). *We Do This 'Til We Free Us: Abolitionist Organizing and Transforming Justice*. Haymarket Books, Chicago, IL.
- Lipsky, Laura van Dernoot, Burk, Connie. (2009) *Trauma Stewardship: An everyday guide to caring for self while caring for others*.
- Lipsky, Laura van Dernoot. (2015) Beyond the Cliff. TEDxWashingtonCorrectionsCenterforWomen <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uOzDGrcvmus&t=335s>
- Neff, Kristen. (2018). *The Mindful Self-Compassion Workbook*. The Guildford Press.
- Neff, Kristin. (2021). Self Compassion. <https://self-compassion.org/the-three-elements-of-self-compassion-2/>
- Reynolds, V. Riel Dupuis-Rossi, R & Heath, T. (2021). **Inspiring Believed-in-Hope as an Ethical Position: Vicarious Resistance & Justice-Doing**. **Journal of Contemporary Narrative Therapy**, 2021, Release 1, p. 2-18.
- Reynolds, V. (2011). **Supervision of Solidarity Practices: Solidarity Teams and People-ing in the Room**. Context. August 2011, Association for Family and Systemic Therapy, UK, 5-7.
- Remen, R. N. (1996). *Kitchen table wisdom: Stories that heal*. Riverhead Books. · Chicago Style (17th ed.)
- Rossano, M. J. (2021). *Ritual in human evolution and religion: Psychological and ritual resources*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Rothschild, B. (2006). *Help for the Helper: The psychophysiology of compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma*. W W Norton & Co.
- Taitz, J. (2021). Radical Acceptance Can Keep Emotional Pain from Turning Into Suffering. New York Times.
- Tsui, E., Franzosa, E., Baron, S. and Cribbs, K. (2018). Home Care Workers' Experiences of Client Death and Disenfranchised Grief. Qualitative Health Research, 29(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732318800461>