



Grief Happens...

Presented by the
North Simcoe Muskoka Palliative Care Network

Louise Brazier, Bereavement Coordinator

Disclaimer

In this module, you're encouraged to share your past experiences, whether that be with clients and/or family members. However, this sharing should not include any identifying information and confidentiality must be maintained at all times. If a colleague shares some of their story with you, please be the keeper of their story.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

Understand the basics of grief, bereavement and mourning.

Be able to identify various types of grief.

Be able to identify how we can support others and ourselves.

Definitions

- **Bereavement:** the *state* or fact of being bereaved or deprived of something or someone
- **Grief:** are ALL the *emotions we feel* as a result of loss
- **Mourning:** is what *we do to express* our grief

There is no right or wrong way to grieve.

*Grief is not a disorder, a disease or
a sign of weakness.*

*It is an emotional, physical and spiritual
necessity, the price you pay for love.*

The only cure for grief is to grieve.

- Earl Grollman

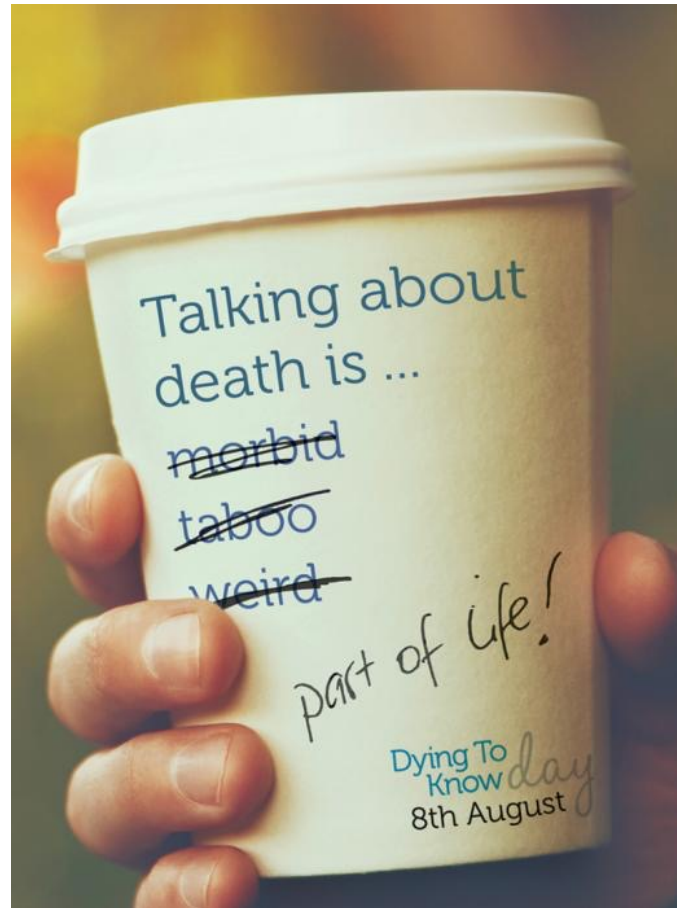
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NSMHPCN

North Simcoe Muskoka Hospice Palliative Care Network



Our Goal



Language

We avoid it so much, that we
have trouble using the words

DEATH, DYING, DIED



Personal Reflection Question 1

What's my story? Please describe your first experience with death and grief:

- a) How were you told about the death?
- b) What were you feeling?
- c) How old were you?
- d) How were others reacting around you?
- e) Were you included and allowed to express emotions?
- f) How was the death acknowledged?
- g) Was it talked about openly?
- h) What do you wish had happened differently?

Types of Grief

Disenfranchised Grief

A death/loss that cannot be socially sanctioned, openly acknowledged or publicly mourned.

Examples:

- An unacknowledged or unaccepted partner
- Miscarriage
- Public figure/celebrity death
- Incarcerated individuals
- A personal loss that others can't see – for example a brain injury

Complicated Grief

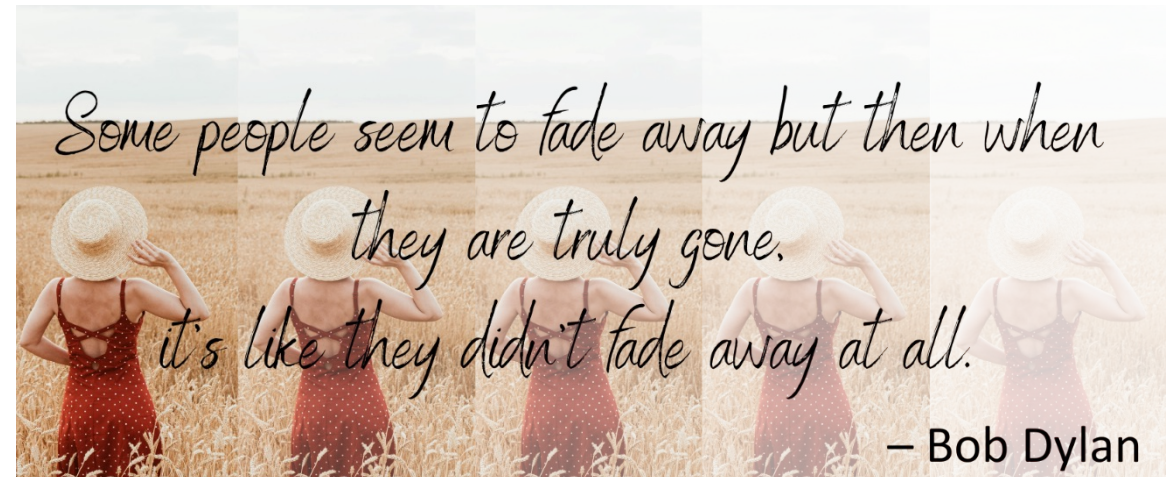
- Grief is complicated, similar to how wound healing can be complicated, when **intensity of symptoms is heightened**, and their **duration prolonged**
- Complications can include: troubling thoughts, problematic behaviours or inability to adequately regulate emotions

Ambiguous Loss

A death/loss that occurs without closure or understanding

Examples:

- Missing person
- Alzheimer's/Dementia



Anticipatory Grief

A grief reaction that occurs before an impending death/loss

Example:

- Caregivers through another persons terminal illness

Traumatic Bereavement

The state of having experienced a death which is associated with symptoms of trauma brought about by the circumstances of the death

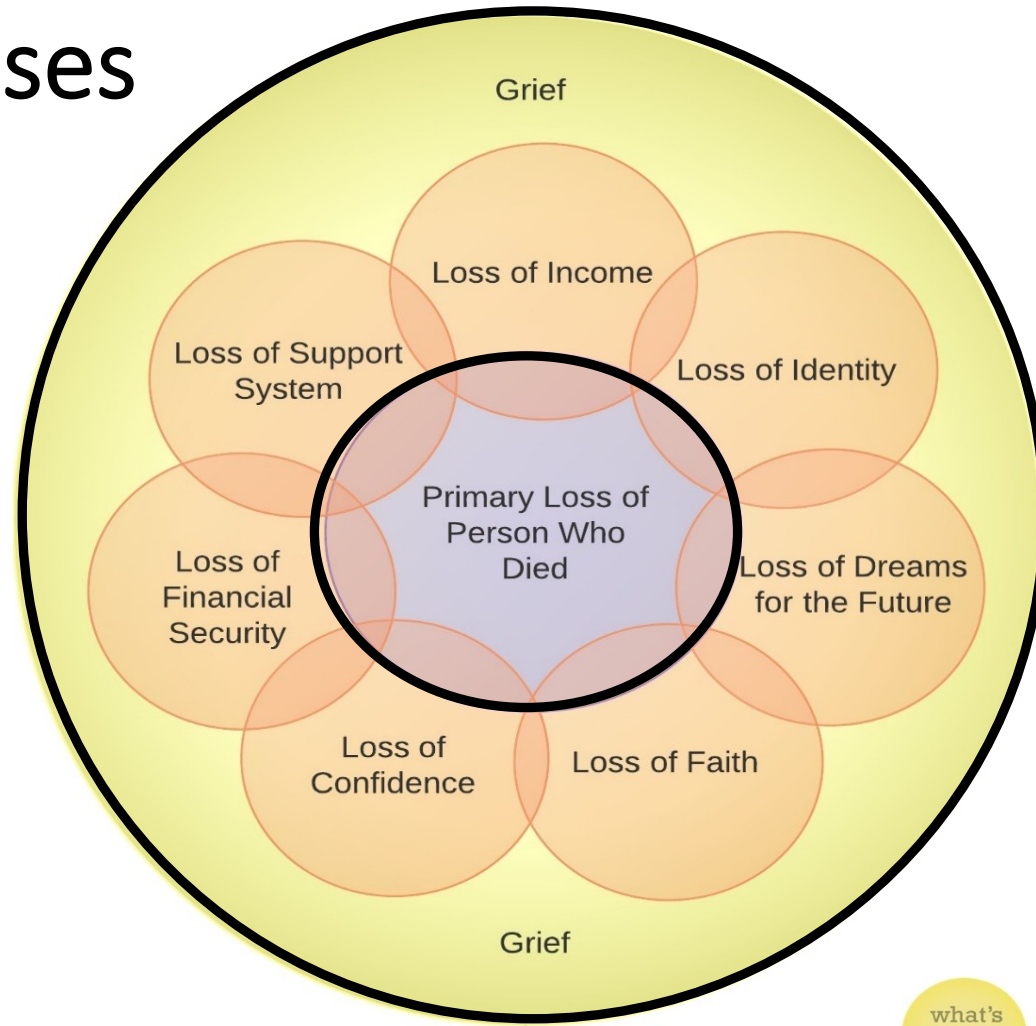
Core issues:

- Disengagement with belief system
- Ruminating on the death
- Feelings of guilt and blame

Examples:

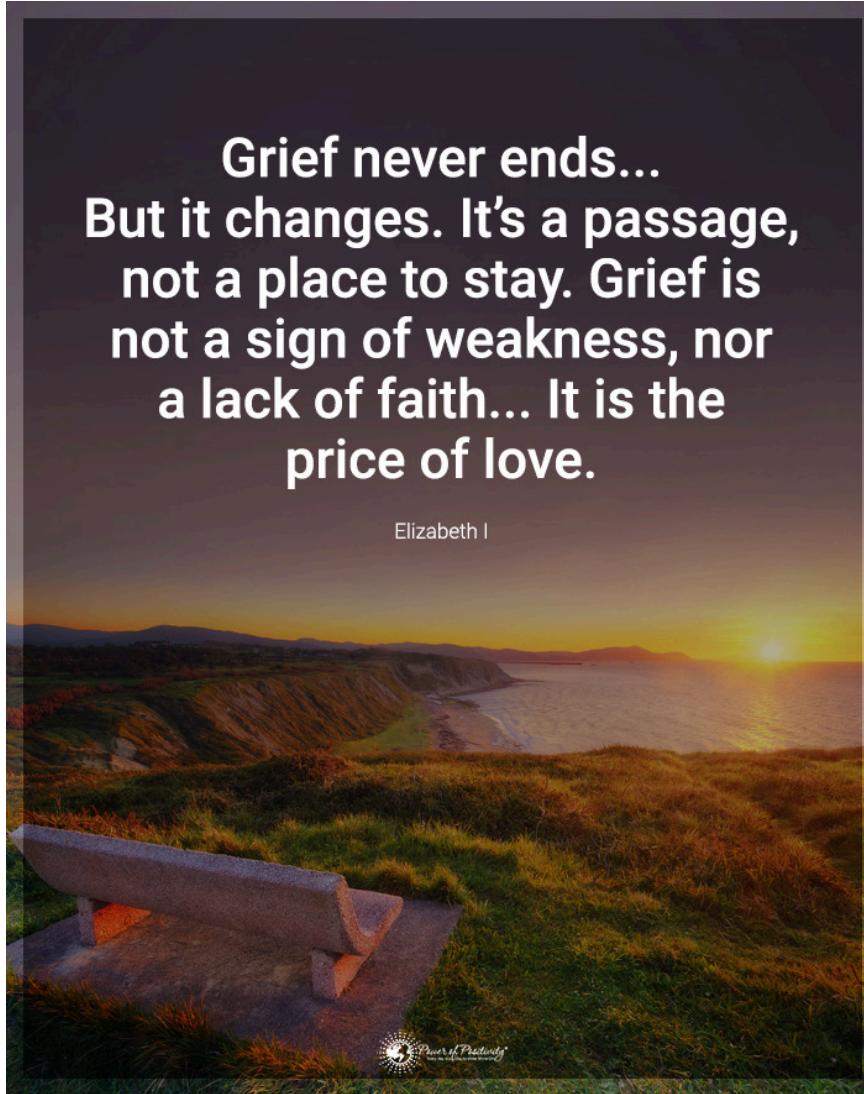
- Accidents
- Suicide
- Involvement in failed heroic measures
- Overdose
- Sudden Unexplained Infant Death

Primary vs Secondary Losses

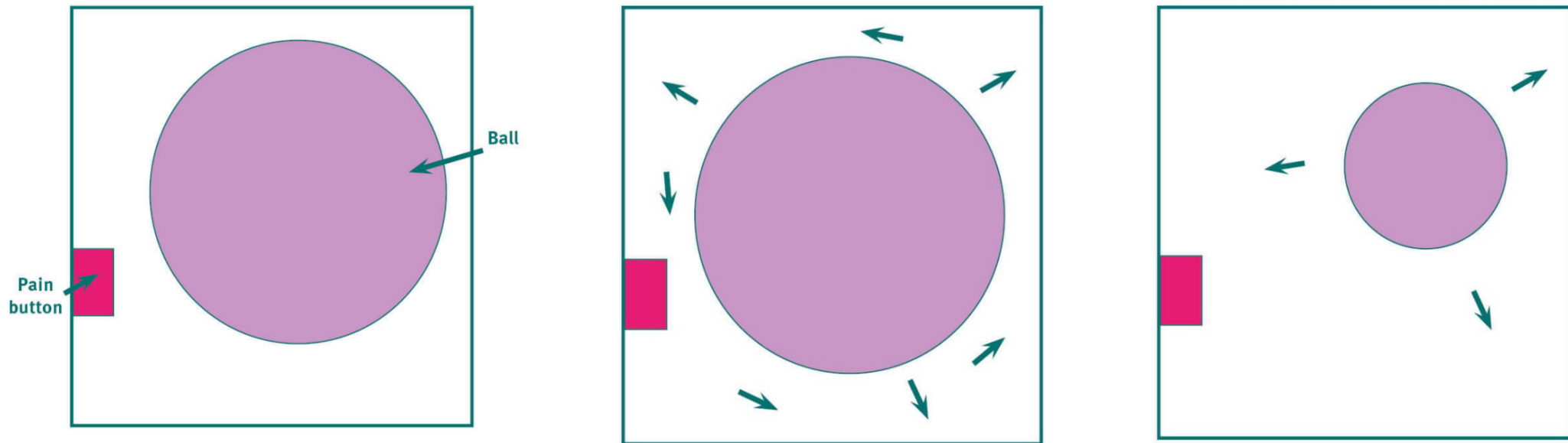


**Grief never ends...
But it changes. It's a passage,
not a place to stay. Grief is
not a sign of weakness, nor
a lack of faith... It is the
price of love.**

Elizabeth I

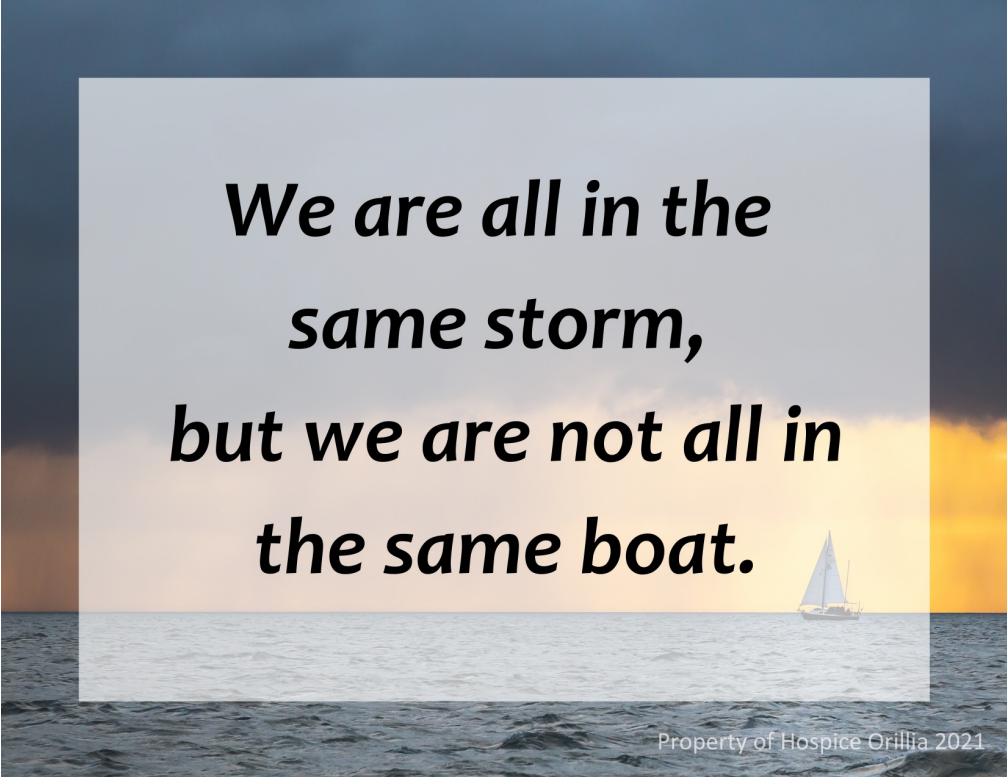


The Ball and the Box



Death, loss and grieving are **universal experiences...**

Despite this, we will all respond differently to loss, as every single relationship is unique.



***We are all in the
same storm,
but we are not all in
the same boat.***

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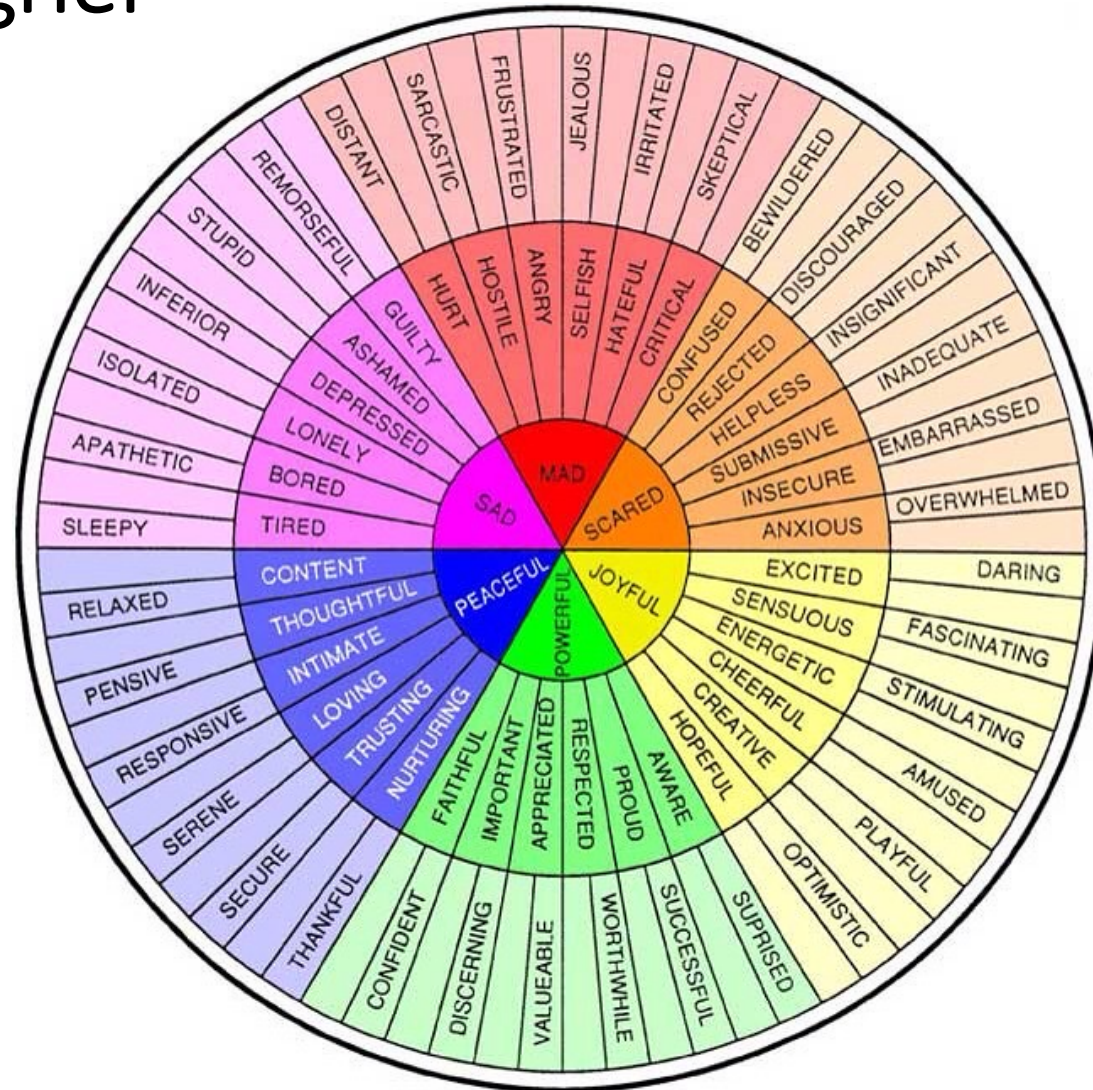
Factors Influencing Grief

- Relationship with person who has died/thing which has been lost
- Age of person grieving/current health status
- Previous experience of grief
- Cultural background
- Belief system
- Financial situation
- Knowledge around cause of death/loss
- Personality
- Concurrent losses/changes occurring
- Support systems –family/friends/community
- Cause of death (i.e. expected or not expected)
- Expectation of death
- Recognition of loss by others (i.e. disenfranchised grief)
- Social ‘acceptability’ of cause of death
- Social ‘acceptability’ of relationship of bereaved to deceased
- Ability to communicate feelings
- Language levels

Symptoms of Grief

- Shock
- Anxiety
- Guilt
- Anger
- Numbness/ Withdrawal
- Depression
- Relief
- Sadness
- Feeling of being lost
- Conflicting emotions

Q - Can we sum up grief
in one word?
A – Highly unlikely!



Personal Reflection Question 2

Think about how you mourn:

- a) What religious traditions or rituals do you practice?
- b) As an adult do you include younger family members in rituals?
- c) Have you ever thought about or experienced how other cultures mourn and appreciate the value of how they say goodbye and acknowledge the dead and the period of time following a death? Discuss with your group.

Grief Work Theories

The 6 Needs of Mourning

Alan Wolfelt¹

1. Acknowledge the reality of the loss
2. Embrace the pain of the loss
3. Remember the person who has died
4. Develop a new self identity
5. Search for meaning
6. Receive ongoing support from others

1. Wolfelt, A. (n.d.). The Six Needs of Mourning. Retrieved April 4, 2019 from <https://www.centerforloss.com/grief/six-needs-mourning/>

Basic Principles of Grieving

Dr. Bill Webster³

- Stabilization (Re-establishing safety)
- Cognition (Recounting the story)
- Emotion (Feeling the feelings)
- Reconstruction (Empowerment of the survivor)

3. Webster, B. (2021). *The Grief Journey During COVID-19* [PowerPoint presentation]. NSMHPCN Regional Conference, Virtual.

18 Assurances on Grief Clare Mackintosh

Author of "I promise it won't always hurt like this"

- I promise it won't always hurt like this
- That you won't always lie awake at night, sobbing until you cannot breathe
- I promise the waves of grief that knock you off your feet won't drown you
- I promise that you will find a way to say goodbye
- you will find a reason to keep going
- I promise this won't always be your first thought in the morning
- that you won't always fear the worst
- I promise you won't always feel so angry
- so guilty
- so tired
- I promise you'll find someone who understands
- I promise you won't always be winded by someone else's happiness
- be broken by anniversaries
- Or by questions you can't answer
- I promise you will be happy again
- That one day you'll be able to pay it forward
- I promise you won't forget
- I promise it won't always hurt like this

A person's most useful asset is not a head full of knowledge, but a heart full of love, an ear ready to listen and a hand willing to help others.



Personal Reflection Question 3

What qualities should someone supporting a grieving person possess? (Please describe)

W – Why

A – Am

I – I

T - Talking

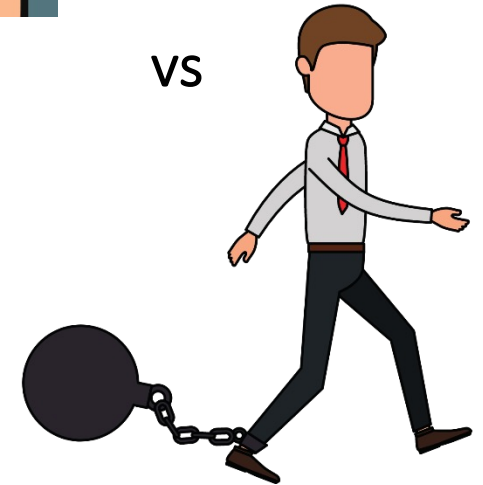
Perspective

Our experiences, past events, media and other messages shape how we interact with others

Self awareness is key when dealing with bereaved people, any people in fact. Before we judge, we must first be curious...



vs



Personal Reflection Question 4

We all have a bag.

We all pack differently.

Some of us are travelling light.

Some of us are secret hoarders who've never parted with a memory in our lives. I think we are all called to figure out how to carry our bag to the best of our ability, how to unpack it and how to face the mess. I think part of growing up is learning how to sit down on the floor with all your things and figuring out what to take with you and what to leave behind.

Author – Unknown



Map your losses: Think about how, throughout your life, you have grieved the loss of something. For example, the death of a loved one, the loss of a job, a relationship, your health, your youth, etc.

BIRTH -----TODAY

Five Reasons to Embrace the Companioning Model of Grief Care

1. Companioning invites the use of care (“being present to,” “a willingness to be taught”) instead of cure (“to eradicate an illness.”)
2. Companioning invites you to be totally present to the mourner as you create hospitality – “the creation of a shared space where the stranger can enter into a co-equal relationship that acknowledges the mourner as the expert of their experience.”
3. Companioning invites an awareness that hello is the path to goodbye, darkness is the chair upon which light sits, and that you must follow the invitation to go backward before forward.
4. Companioning invites advocating against the Resolution Wish – wherein you believe grief is linear and finite; where you will wake-up one day and all your painful thoughts and feelings will be over.
5. Companioning invites an awareness that grief is “naturally complicated” instead of being a “prolonged grief disorder.”

How Can You Help? Bear Witness

When we honestly ask ourselves which persons in our lives mean the *most* to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a warm and tender hand. The friend who *can be silent with us* in a moment of despair or confusion, who can *stay with us* in a hour of grief and bereavement, *who can tolerate* not knowing, curing, not healing and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is a friend who cares.

When someone is going through a rough timejust sit with them. No preaching, no advice. Just be there



What not to say...

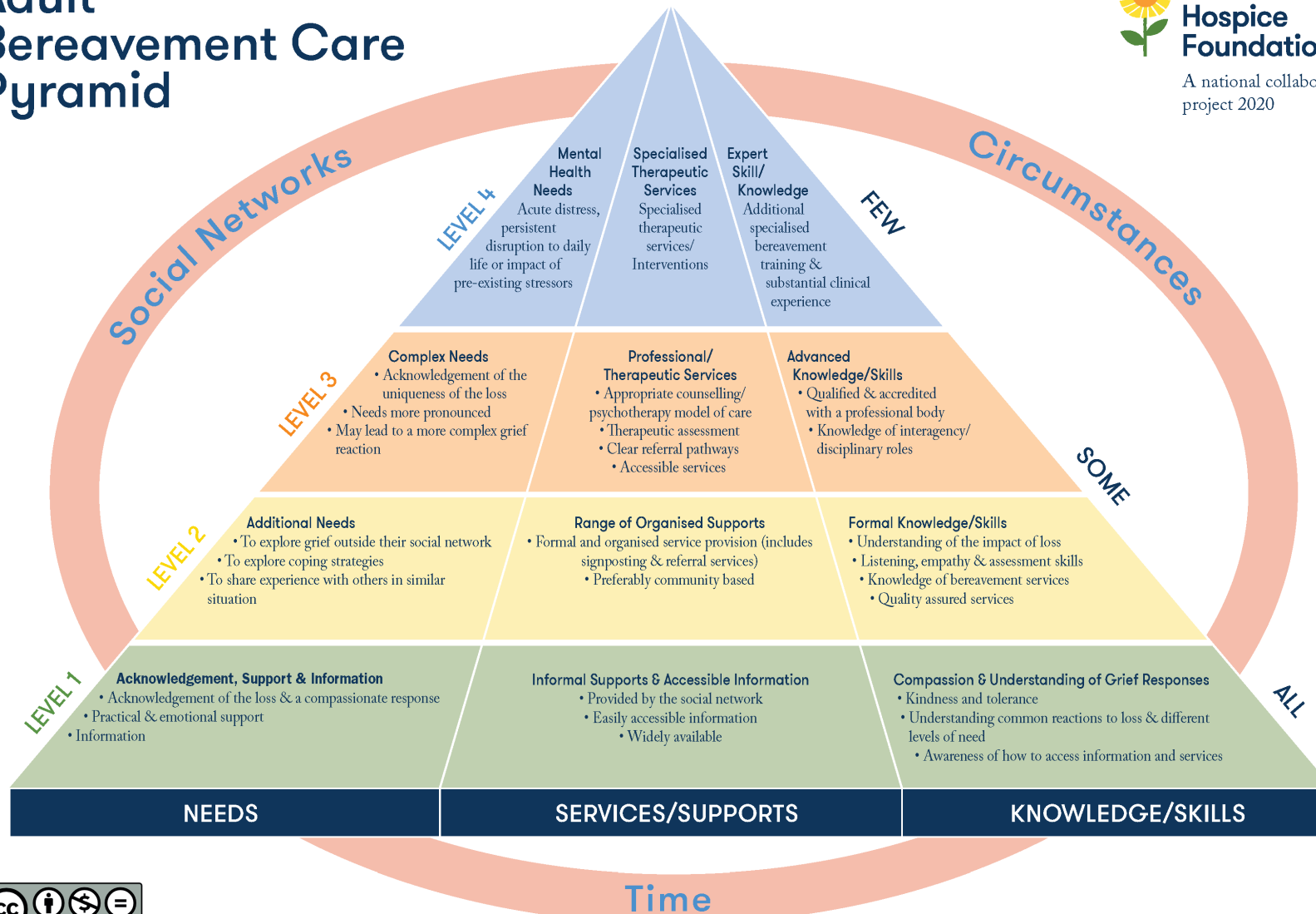
- It is time to move on
- Everything happens for a reason
- Are you over it yet? She's been gone a long time
- Others have it worse than you
- I thought you would be more upset
- You must be strong
- Why are you still crying?
- They wouldn't want you to be so sad
- Heaven needed another angel
- I know just how you feel
- Don't cry in front of the children
- You are still young; you can always remarry
- God will never give you more than you can handle
- You do have other children
- Anything that starts with ***at least...***

People have said, 'Don't cry' to other people for years and years, and all it has ever meant is, 'I'm too uncomfortable when you show your feelings. Don't cry.' I'd rather have them say, 'Go ahead and cry. I'm here to be with you.'

FRED ROGERS

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Adult Bereavement Care Pyramid



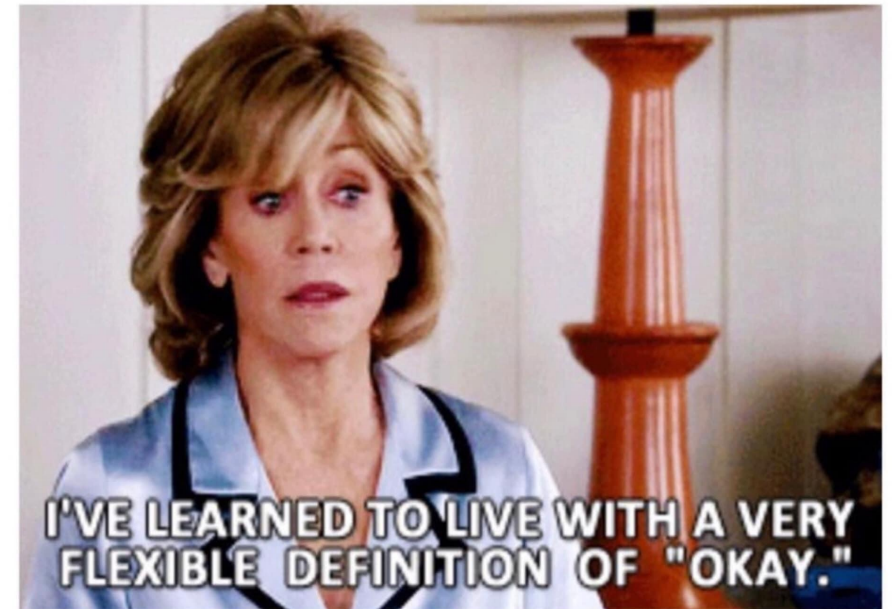
How Grief Affects Professionals

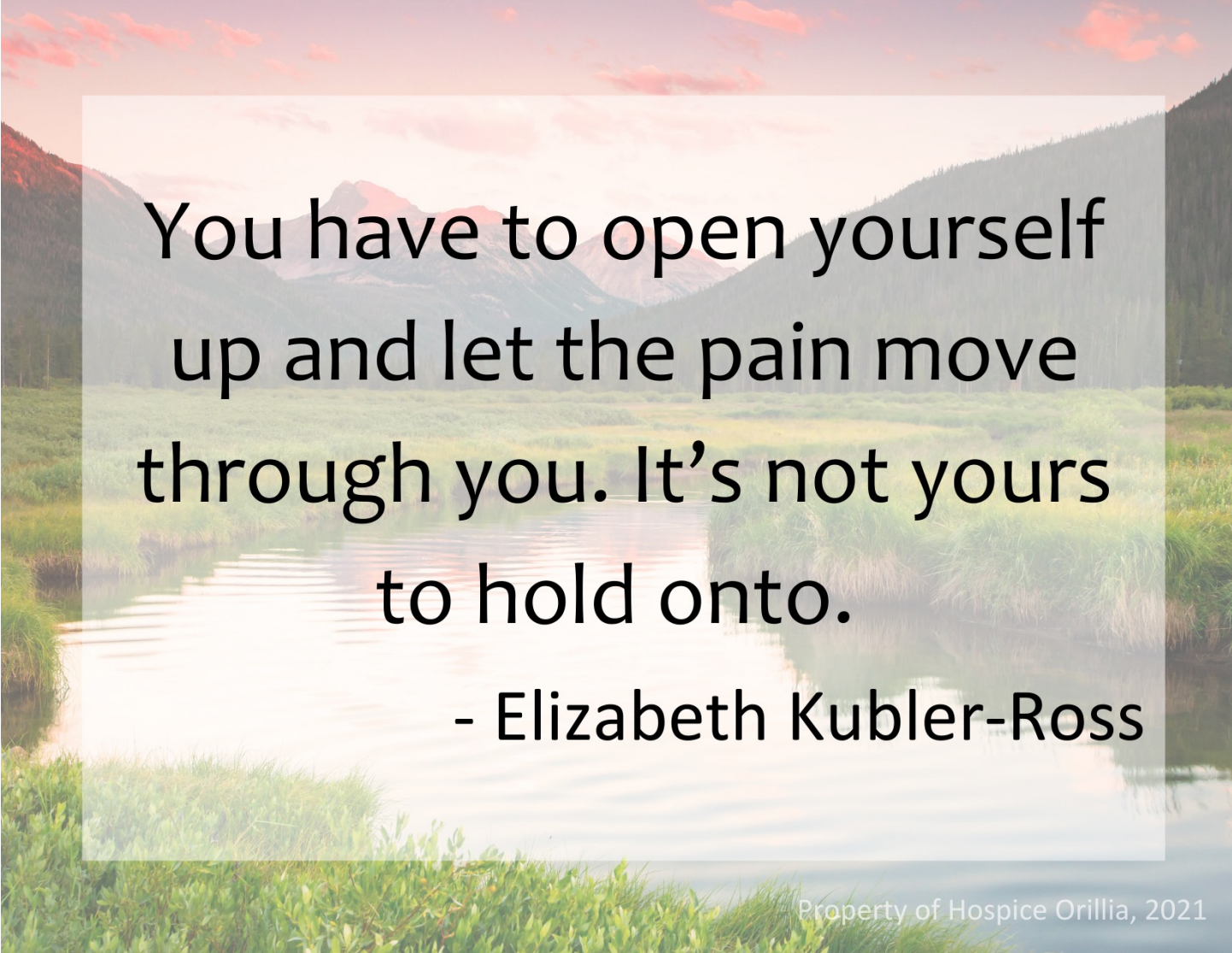
As professionals, we are all going to be affected differently by each person and death that we encounter. This often has to do with your past experiences, or things/people that you hold as important in your own life

“Are you okay?”

Me:

The Narcoleptic Goddess





You have to open yourself
up and let the pain move
through you. It's not yours
to hold onto.

- Elizabeth Kubler-Ross

Take the time to debrief, pause and reflect

Take the time, whether it be on the fly or scheduled – scheduled is preferable but be real as to whether everyone will have the opportunity. Find the time nonetheless. If it can't happen immediately, or even that same day, make a BRB (be right back jar/list) so that when the opportunity does present, the space is still being held for the person (s).

Take moment of silence to remember the person and the family that you have just cared for.

What came up for you, what hit home, what was difficult, what made you smile.

Could you perform a simple ritual, write a name on a rock, put a paper note in a jar etc.

What are you grateful for and what will you do to fill your cup after holding space and energy for that person. Acknowledge that it takes an enormous amount of personal energy to extend compassion to others for a living – rest and restore and do something to metabolize your grief. Move, be creative, laugh, cry – it's gotta come out one way or another!

Give yourself permission to do something nice for yourself, talking about what'll you'll do and sharing those coping tools will encourage others – we all need reminders for the healthy habits right. (Can you be accountable to your team and follow up after a particularly heavy day/loss/death and share what you did to fill your cup again?)

This is not your story (even if it's highly relatable), it's not your grief. You can hold space and then you have to let the grief come through you, it's not yours to carry with you.



Going Home Checklist

- ✓ Take a moment to think about your day.
- ✓ Acknowledge one thing that was difficult during your work day – Let it go!
- ✓ Consider three things that went well.
- ✓ Check on your colleagues before you leave – Are they ok?
- ✓ Are you ok? We are here to support you.
- ✓ Now switch your attention to home – Rest and recharge.



What saves your bacon?

Check out Burnout Burnout Burnout by Emily and Amelia Nagoski – don't have time to read it? Listen to the podcast where Brene Brown interviews them.

[Burnout and How to Complete the Stress Cycle - Brené Brown \(brenebrown.com\)](https://www.brenebrown.com/podcast/burnout-burnout-burnout)



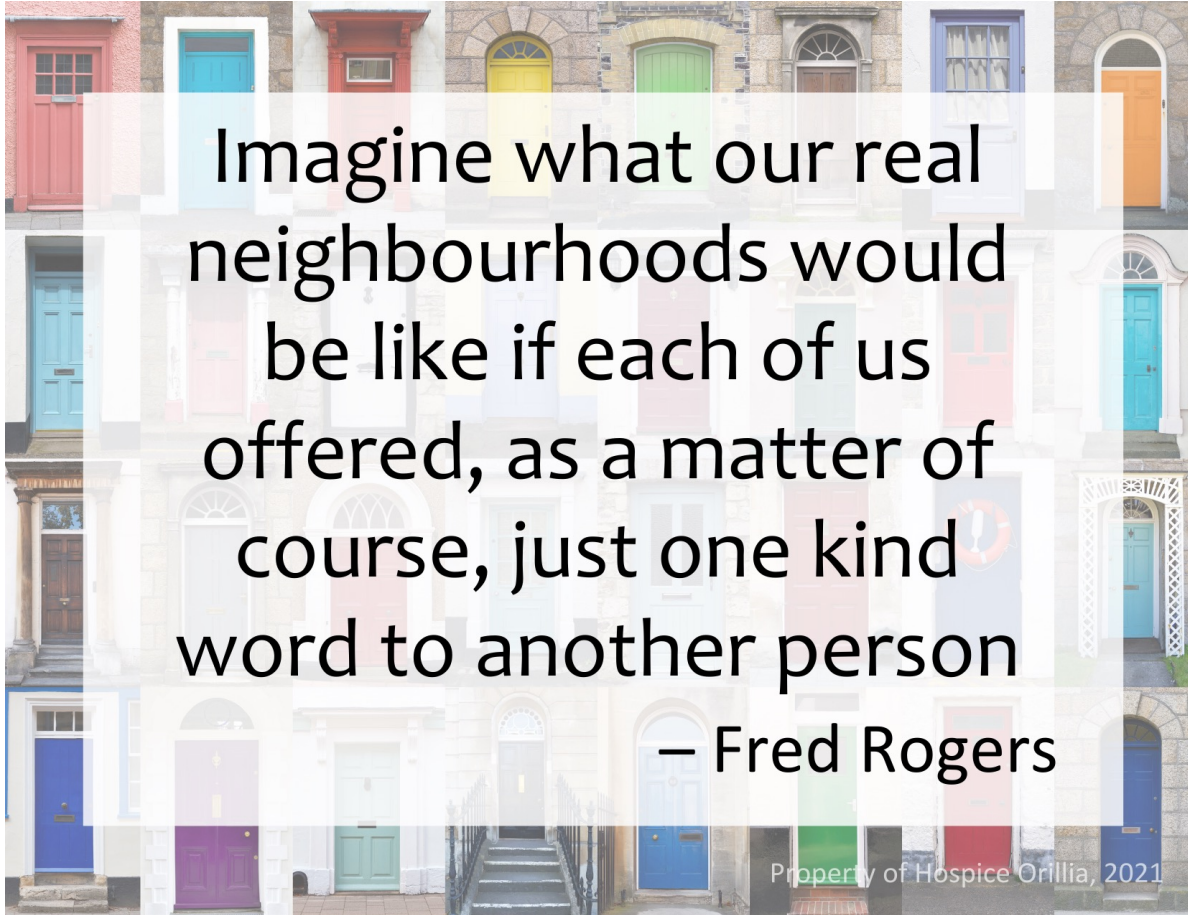
Q - Why do we still feel stressed even after the stressful situation has passed?

A – There is a stress cycle that needs to be completed.

This is completed in the following ways:

1. Movement
2. Breathing/Breath work
3. Positive social interaction
4. Laughter
5. Affection
6. Crying
7. Creative Expression

Thank you!



Imagine what our real
neighbourhoods would
be like if each of us
offered, as a matter of
course, just one kind
word to another person
– Fred Rogers

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Grief Happens References

Webster, B. (2021). *The Grief Journey During COVID-19* [PowerPoint presentation]. NSMHPCN Regional Conference, Virtual.

Wolfelt, A. (n.d.). The Six Needs of Mourning. Retrieved April 4, 2019 from <https://www.centerforloss.com/grief/six-needs-mourning>

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