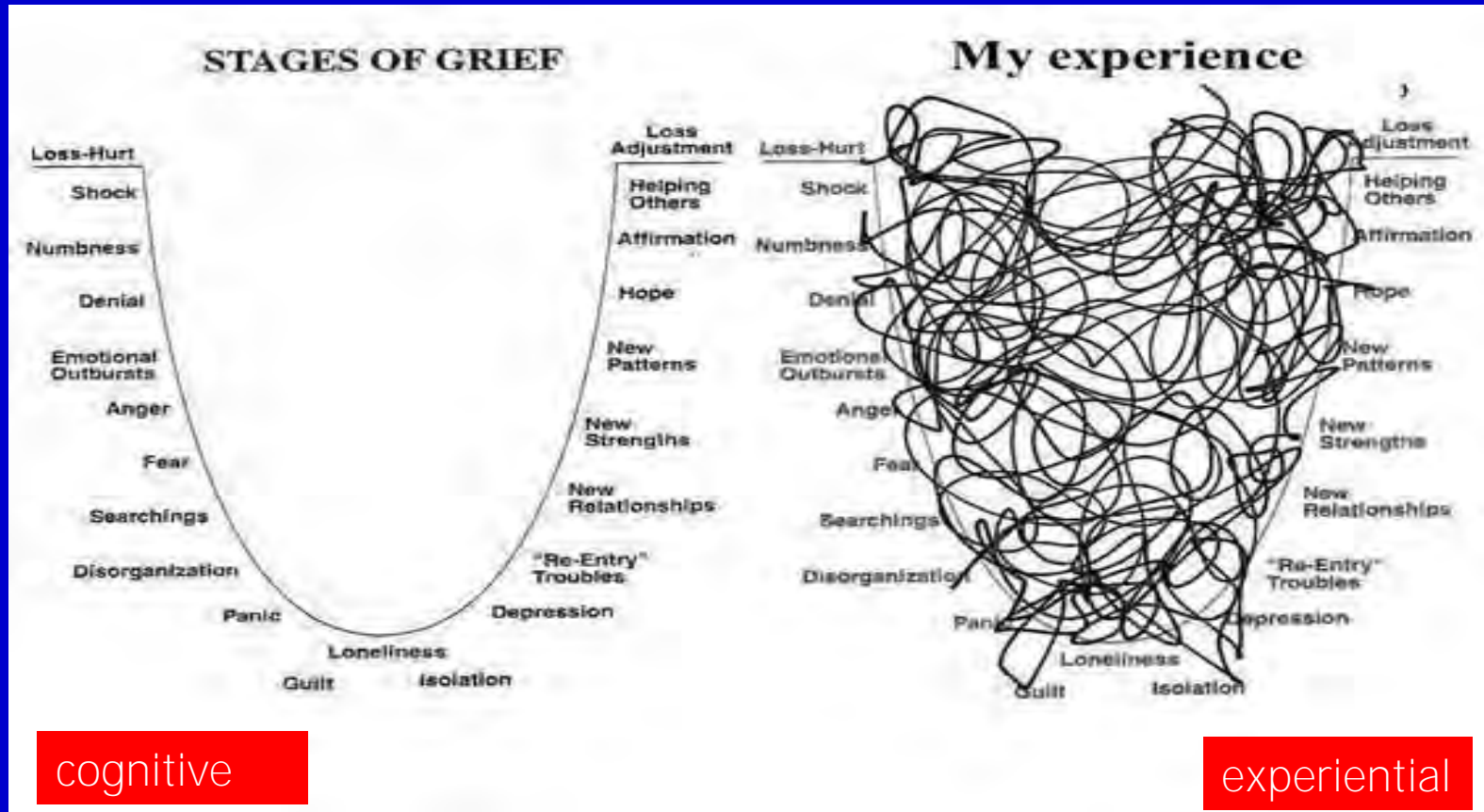


# *When Grief Comes to Work*



Yvette Perreault and Cathy Walker

*Good Grief Care Consultants*

[www.goodgriefcare.ca](http://www.goodgriefcare.ca)

# Land Acknowledgement



I am deeply thankful to live on the Traditional territory of the Wendat, Anishinaabeg & Haudenosaunee peoples – the contested Williams Treaty of 1923

Directly adjacent to the unceded territory of Kanienkeha:ka (Mohawk of Tyendinaga)

*Best Practices: Some of the tools we use come from Indigenous ways of knowing and are gifts of holistic approaches to life, connections and loss. We gratefully acknowledge these teachings.*



# Intros: Yvette Perreault

Thanatology  
&  
Traumatology  
Certifications

Management in  
the Not for  
Profit Sector  
&  
Leadership &  
Training (MA)

- ❖ **Good Grief Care Consultants-** team lead
- ❖ Member of the **Grief, Loss & Wellness Initiative** at Breakaway free supports to harm-reduction workers
- ❖ **ECMH Hastings County** (*Traumatic Grief Specialist*)
- ❖ Retired Director of provincial agency: ***AIDS Bereavement and Resiliency Program of Ontario***
- ❖ **Director of Support Services** – *AIDS Committee of Toronto* – in the death years
- ❖ **Violence Against Women and Children** (*Rape Relief ; Women's Habitat*)
- ❖ **Psychiatric Nursing** (*Brandon MB*)
- ❖ **Bee shepherd** (current)

Leafcutter bee cocoons



# Cathy Walker



# Capacity for managing ongoing Loss

- Appreciate *what* you are dealing with regarding loss and the workplace
- Enhance strategies *for responding* effectively (holistically) to diverse grief/loss responses- as an agency, as a team, as an individual
- *Grief Resilience as Self awareness, Self care and Collective Care*



# This session:

## **Part I - Intros and Warm Up**

- Coming into the workshop-
- Grounded Presence as foundational tool

## **Part II- Presentation and Discussion**

- Framework for Grief, Loss and Impact in the Workplace
- Diversity in grief responses
- Breakout room: Impact- *How am I doing- really?*

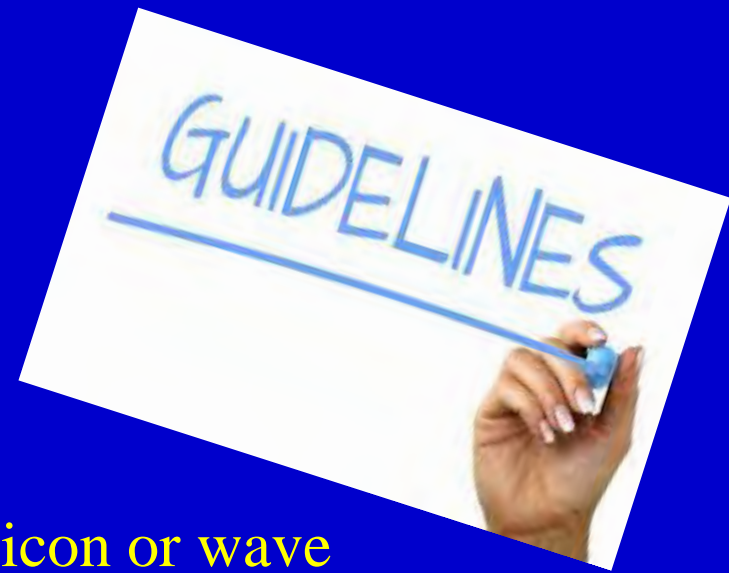
**BREAK- 10:50- 11:00**

## **Part III- Support for working it through**

- Ideas about self and collective care: agency, teams, individuals
- Holistic Care: Plants as Medicine
- Wrap-Up : Reflections about our own loss and resilience

## For this session:

- ✓ Space for you to participate
- ✓ Chat function open
- ✓ Can unmute yourself – use raised hand icon or wave
- ✓ If you are able, please use your camera so we can relate to each other more personally
- ✓ Share the air
- ✓ Emotions welcomed
- ✓ Differences of opinion welcomed
- ✓ Protect those who do speak- no identifying details outside of this session unless you are singing someone's praises
- ✓ *Anything else?*



# Grounding as we come into today



# Heart for the Work



\* Grounding ourselves in our own stories/identity. *What brings you here?*  
*What keeps you here?*

What I brought to human spirit and human suffering was...



*My nurse's heart....*

Brandon Mental Hospital 1971





Rape Relief 1975

Me 1978  
Vancouver

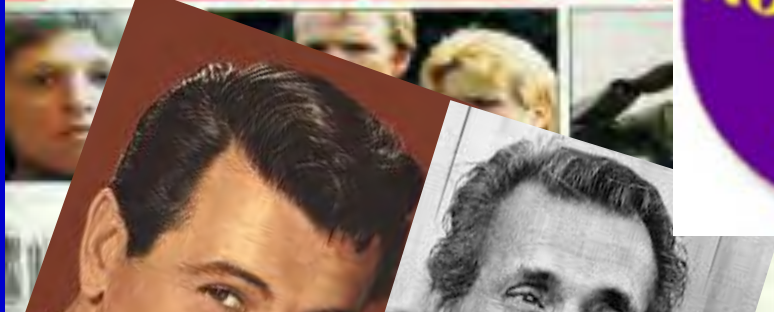


Social Justice as driver



EDMS/83.50

# NOW NO ONE IS SAFE FROM AIDS



# No road maps for the AIDS journey- 1980s

- Waves of losses
- Stigma of AIDS / gay
- Heart for community
- A desperate need not to suffer alone
- Activism as fuel
- Need to right wrongs
- *Not service-provision, but survival*

# Proud Lives

*we mourn  
we celebrate  
we remember*

CHRISTINE LOUISE  
HINDSON  
Mar 18, 1963 -  
Sep 8, 1990



GARY JOSEPH PILON  
Jul 16, 1956 - Aug 25, 1994



DOUG WEILAND  
Jul 3, 1931 -  
Nov 19, 1994



RODNEY LEONARD  
JAMESON  
May 1, 1960 -  
Dec 18, 1994



RALPH JAMES BROWN  
Apr 10, 1957 -  
Dec 31, 1994



REV. DON McRAE  
Jul 2, 1944 - Jun 2, 1995



DANNY ROY OGIEVIE  
Apr 16, 1960 - Jun 7, 1995



SKOT MCAULAY  
Aug 14, 1964 - Jun 9, 1994



N ERIC NOBES  
AUG 20, 1947 -  
SEP 23, 1994



JEAN-CLAUDE  
BOURGAULT  
Mar 26, 1957 - Dec 1, 1994



JOHN  
MACCRIMMON  
Feb 9, 1968 - Dec 21, 1994



RICK SAVOYDAVIS



JERRY COLWELL  
Jul 9, 1957 -  
Jun 4, 1995



ALFRED ELI  
Sep 30, 1951 - Jun 10, 1995



DAVID ADAM KARNICK  
May 27, 1965 - Mar 19, 1994



KEN WEBSTER  
Jun 5, 1968 -  
Oct 20, 1994



JAMES CECIL  
MURRANT  
Aug 1, 1962 - Dec 2, 1994



DAVID WILLIAM FARMER  
Jun 22, 1956 - Dec 22, 1994



BEN



DAVID  
Jul 7, 1947 - Jun 6, 1995



SCOTT ASSELIN  
Oct 9, 1963 - Jun 12, 1995



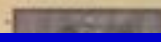
LUC FERLAND  
Apr 22, 1963 - May 14, 1994



COLIN WARD



RON CELKOWSKI  
"MISS KITTY"  
1941 - 1995



RON JEAN-PAUL  
MARCE  
Oct 25, 1958 - Jun 6, 1995



PAUL ASTON  
Apr 12, 1965 - Jun 14, 1995



# There are important distinctions



## *Way death is experienced:*

- *Time to say goodbye and to shape a dignified death vs sudden/tragic.*
- *Unpreventable vs Preventable.*
- *Anticipatory loss vs Expected losses.*



I started out with a full radiant heart- my activist/community/nurse identity



Then a broken heart



A shattered heart...



An inaccessible heart- impacting my personal life



And that became an angry heart



Then a blue heart... *it's not supposed to be like this...*



After years on the front lines, one very tired heart ...



With effort and determination and a lot of help....

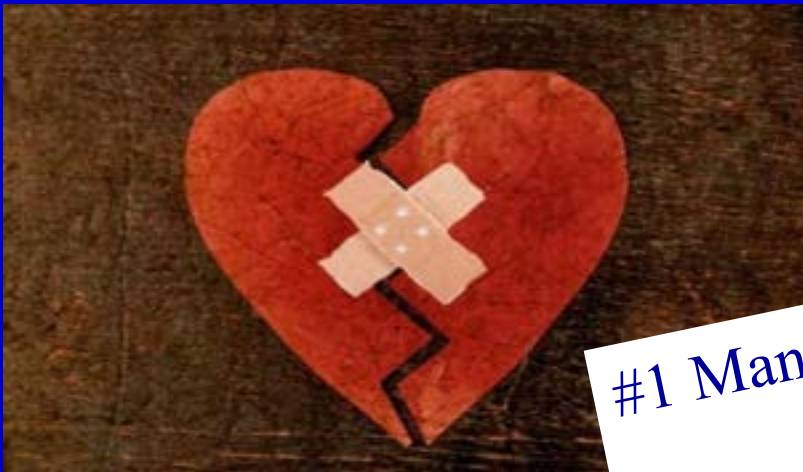


I found my own unique expressive, dynamic heart- one that could integrate the grief of losing- one that could lean into the pain so I could equally lean into joy, love and connection

# Five good lessons from earlier years~

“As Workers, the capacity for compassion and empathy seems to be at the core of our ability to do the work *and at the core of our ability to be wounded by the work*”

Charles Figley



#1 Many of us are Broken Hearted  
not Burned Out

#2

*not all  
wounds  
are  
visible*



#3

There are two kinds of pain  
in this world. The pain that  
hurts, the pain that alters.

Denzel Washington

© 2014 Denzel

*I think deep pain changes us, changes community-  
and hopefully, eventually that can be for the better*

#4



# #5



Seems to me like our social-justice /equity struggles need an army of energetic, smart, tough humans who know what needs to be done and who have the energy to sustain this work over time.

# Workers Experience of Traumatic Loss and Support in the Workplace- *supportive housing sector*

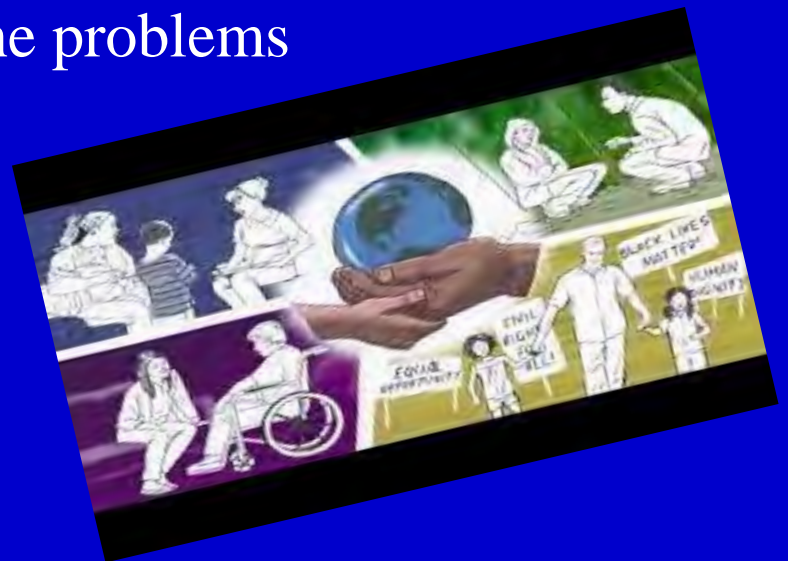


Good Grief Care Pilot – 2016-2018

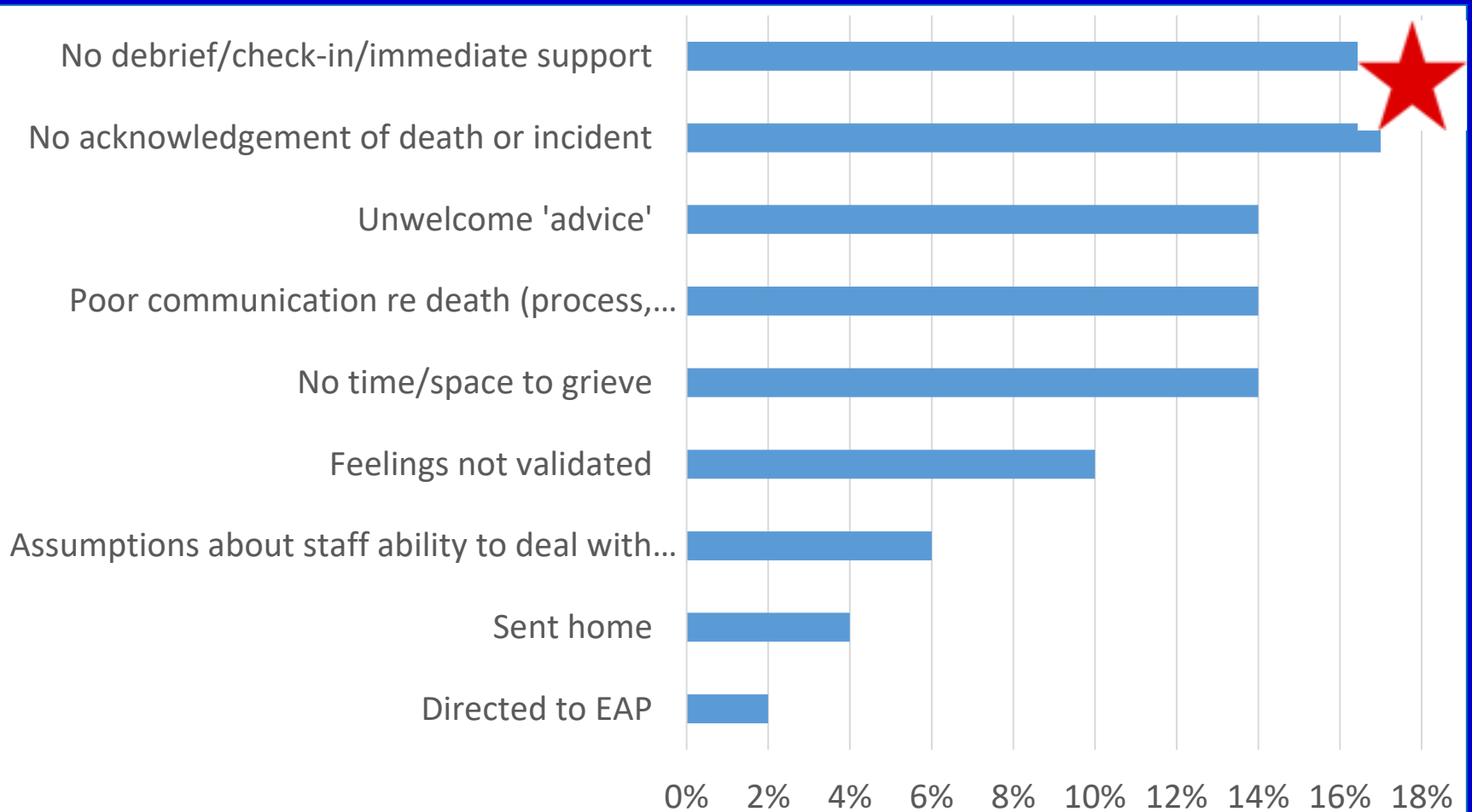
*Responding to Loss in 8 Supportive Housing Agencies- Toronto 187 staff  
Debriefing Circles, Training, Dialogue & Planning with Managers*

# Challenges For Front-line Workers

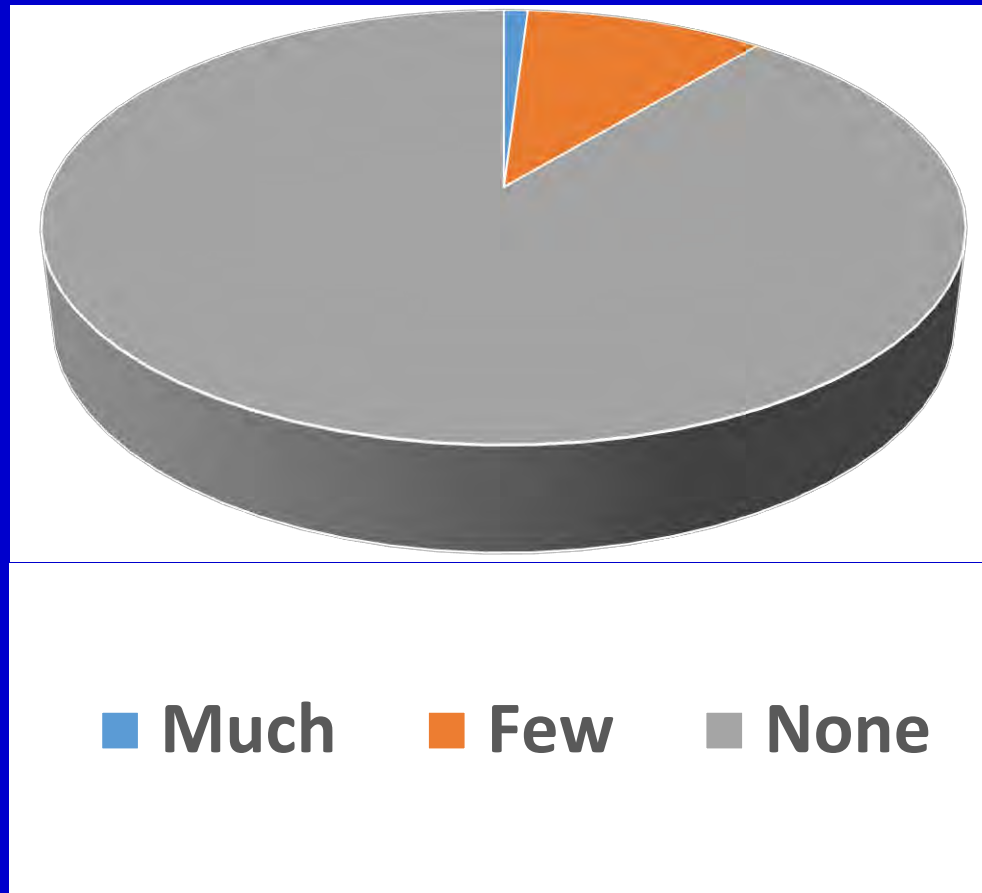
1. Seeing and Dealing with the Trauma
2. The Loss in community is immense
3. Under-resourced to deal with this crisis
4. Front Lines under-valued
5. Lack of will to address the problems
6. Resiliency has its limits
7. Stop the Stigma



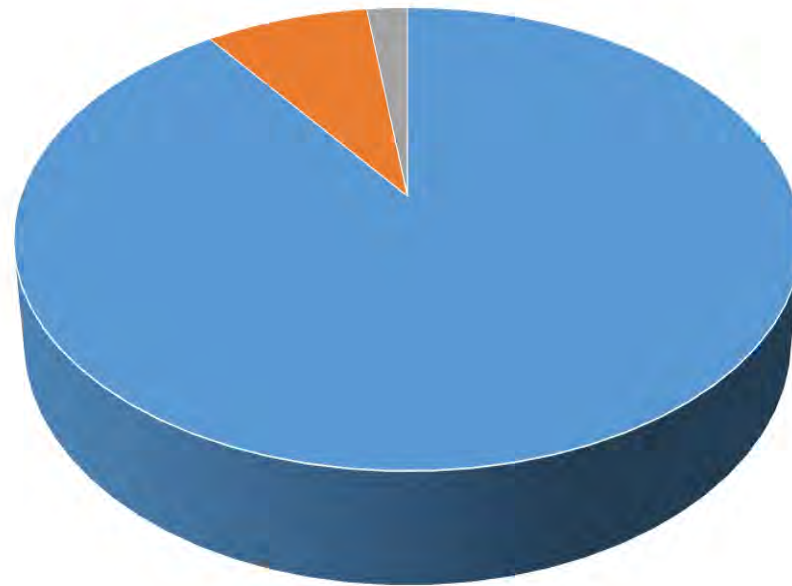
What has a Manager said or done that *has not* been helpful when you had a death or non-fatal overdose of a client? (n=48)



How much support do you get from your managers?



How much support do you get from your peers?



■ Much ■ Few ■ None

As a Front Line worker



*I am not an Energizer Bunny....who just need new batteries. Workers become replaceable. Get a new bunny. But workers themselves are the tools. The resource we bring to people is based in our ability to connect as we stay emotionally regulated. Not easy when we're overwhelmed.*

# State of today's world



I. I AM WASHING MY FACE BEFORE  
BED WHILE A COUNTRY IS ON FIRE.

IT FEELS DUMB TO WASH MY FACE,  
AND DUMB NOT TO.

IT HAS NEVER BEEN THIS WAY, AND  
IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN THIS WAY.

SOMEONE HAS ALWAYS CLINKED A  
COCKTAIL GLASS IN ONE HEMISPHERE  
AS SOMEONE LOSES A HOME IN  
ANOTHER WHILE SOMEONE FALLS IN  
LOVE IN THE SAME APARTMENT BUILDING  
WHERE SOMEONE GRIEVES. THE FACT  
THAT SUFFERING, MUNDANITY, AND BEAUTY  
COINCIDE IS UNBEARABLE AND REMARKABLE.

How are you doing – *really???*

- ☐ Physically?
- ☐ Emotionally?
- ☐ Mentally?
- ☐ Spiritually?



10 minutes



Pick report- back  
person- we'll hear  
from some groups

Questions?  
Comments?

Transition to break

**TIME** 😊  
FOR A  
**BREAK**



# Grief and Loss Processing

## Types of Grief:

Prolonged,  
Anticipatory,  
Masked,  
Disenfranchised,  
Secondary,  
Cumulative,  
Inhibited,  
Ambiguous,

Complicated,  
Normal,  
Traumatic,  
Abbreviated,  
Exaggerated,  
Absent,  
Collective...

# What's in *your* grief-aware toolkit?



- Tools that help you understand what's happening *and* how to work with loss comprehensively – *updated Kubler-Ross's model! Holistic Framework*
- *We use William Worden's Task model, Parkes & Bowlby's Attachment theories, Neimeyer's Continuing Bonds, and Rando's Traumatic Grief framework*
- Must include both complex loss and traumatic bereavement *and* a process that offers grieving people *possibility and purpose*

# Grief and Loss



- A Human Experience- *about attachment/meaning making*
- We attach, we lose = we mourn.
- Tangible & Intangible
- No timetable; not linear
- Current loss will resurrect old losses

# GRIEF ISN'T JUST FOR DEATH

it's also for

*FRIENDSHIPS THAT HAVE ENDED*

1

*LOSING YOUR COMMUNITY*

2

*MISSING THE CERTAINTY  
YOU ONCE HAD*

3

*QUESTIONING YOUR JUDGMENT*

4

*RELEASING WHO YOU ONCE WERE*

5

*FEELING LOST AND UNANCHORED*

6

*LOSING TRADITIONS YOU LOVED*

7



**Social Context for loss**

**Rituals of Mourning**

**Grief Responses**

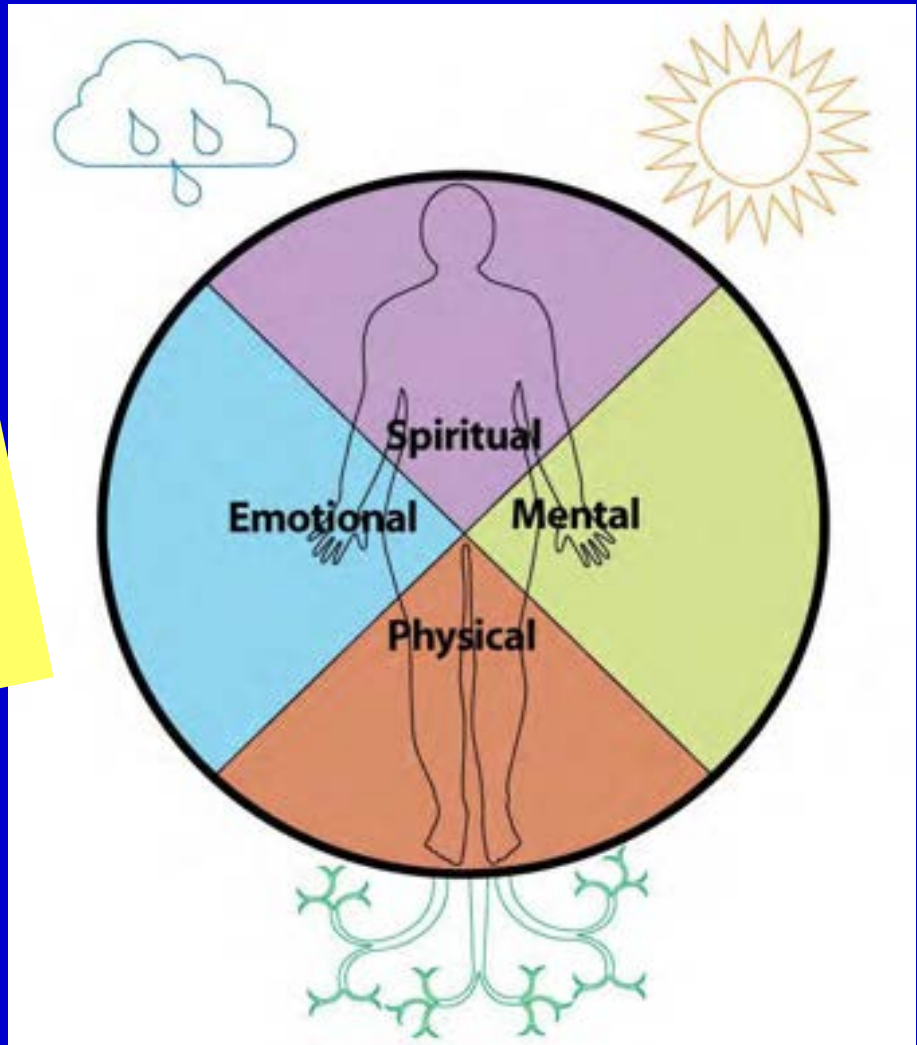
**Fact of Being Bereaved**

**Loss Responses are Layered**

-  
-  
-  
-  
-

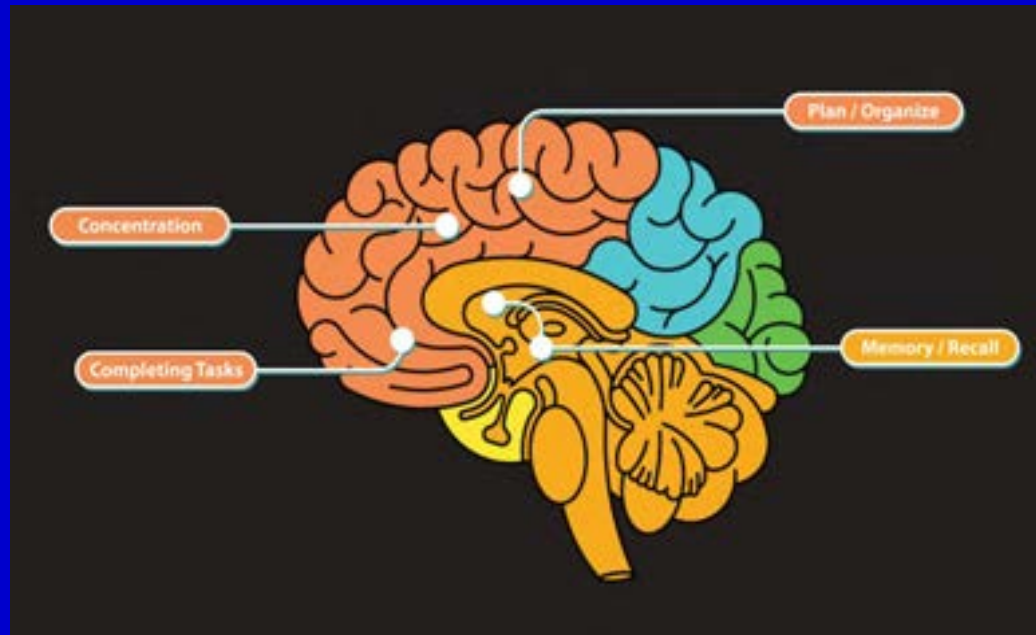
Grief is disruptive and traumatic.

For a period of time, a significant loss/grief results in dysregulation at all levels of one's being- some aspects more intensely than others



# Important to Know....

## How Grief affects our whole being



Grief results in a “broken brain” as much as in a “broken heart”

Video *6 ways Grief Impacts Us* (7 minutes)

- Grief as a Holistic Experience:
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tFf3cRT4lnk>

# Determinants of Grief

- ❑ Who was the person?
- ❑ Nature of the attachment?
- ❑ Mode of Death: NASH /M
  - ❑ *Natural; Accidental; Suicide; Homicide; Maid*
- ❑ Geographical location?
- ❑ Historical: how person grieved past losses
- ❑ Social variables: cultural, ethnic, religious subcultures; rituals; social supports

*There is a process.....*



*That we move through uniquely*

**But the impact of prolonged avoiding?**



**Multiple Loss Journey**

**Complexity of Losses**

- Self
- Significant people, places, things, hopes, dreams (tangible and intangible)
- Community of Meaning
- Social/political context of routine and marginalization

**Loss of Identity & assumptive world**

**Attaching**

- Acknowledge difficulty in attaching

**Anticipating Losses**

**Ongoing Loss Events**

- Disruption of assumptions
- Numb
- Flailing
- Disorientation

**Shock**

**Anger/Depression**

- Toxic emotions
- Withdrawal
- Negativity of focus/anger

**Despair**

- Normalise confusion
- Give language/help make "it" real (write 1-1, peer, professional support)
- Synthesize meanings/rituals
- Full range of feelings
- Help express anger

**The Pit**

- Meaninglessness, hopelessness
- Depersonalization
- Toxic self thoughts

**Searching & Yearning**

**Protest**

**Loss/Death**

**Who am I?**

**Tasks**

1. Tell the story
2. Experience the pain
3. Make necessary adjustments
4. Able to reconcile/make meaning reorient towards new beginnings (if relevant)

**Reinvestment**

**Who am I becoming?**

**Reorganization**

**Who have I been?**

**Victim to agent**

- Improving resilience
- Self-compassion
- Resilience
- Empowerment/control
- Offense impact/loss

**Ongoing Self-Creation**

- No resentment will
- No cognition of place of challenge
- Increased capacity is required

**Go Big or Go Small**

**Transformation**

- Reconnection to self/peoples
- Meaningful/purposeful engagement in life
- Constructing a narrative that includes meaning of loss in new relation to the world

**What is Possible?**

- What has meaning for you?
- What is your soul's desire?

**What is Lost? What is Left?**

- Explore what you believed to be true about yourself
- Support shift to agency
- Which part of self needs to "die" - help process
- Help reflect on survival discovery and growth to this point
- Identify *embrace* challenges and capacities

**KRM Bereavement and Resiliency Program of Ontario**

*Bereavement Companion Chicago*

[www.ohpvt.org](http://www.ohpvt.org)

*What's Lost? What's Left? What's Possible?*

# How we actually process grief

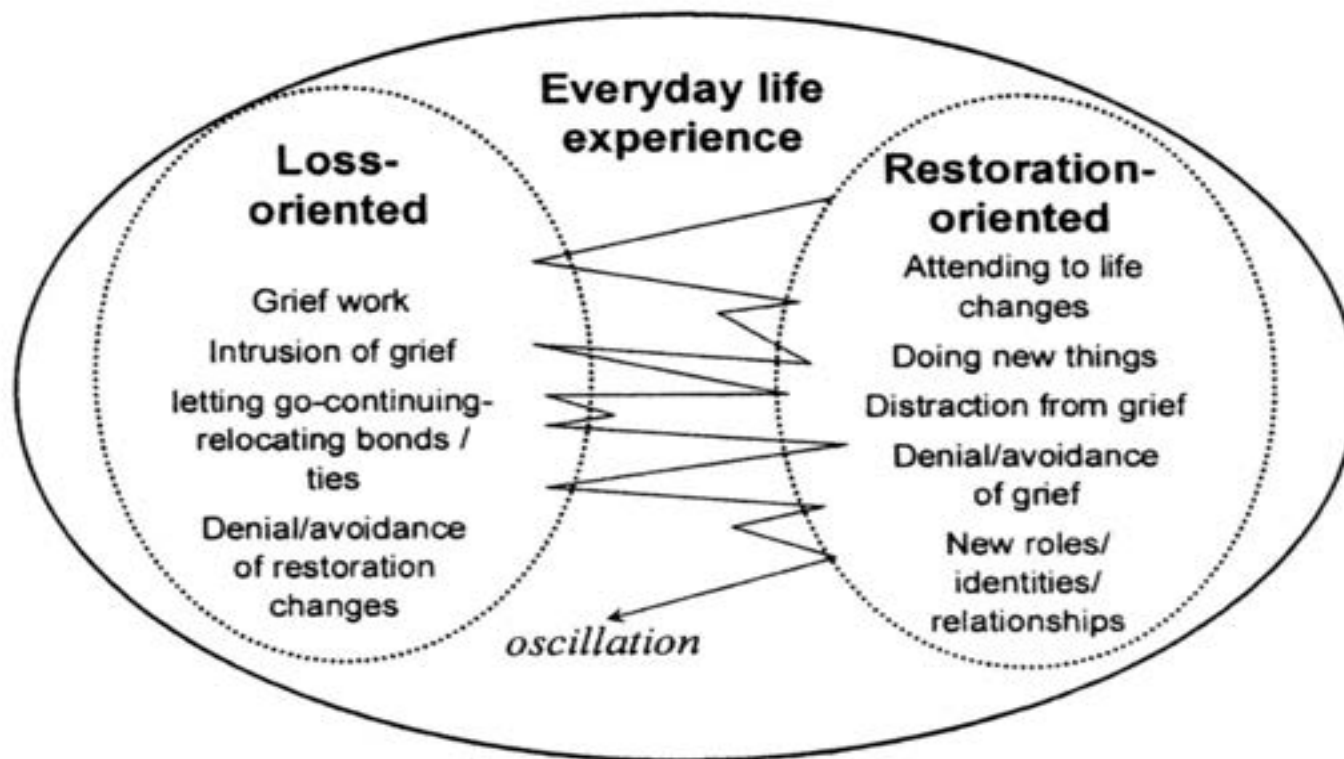


Figure 1. The Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement (Stroebe & Schut, 1999).

*Grief work involves change and anxiety as dominant themes*

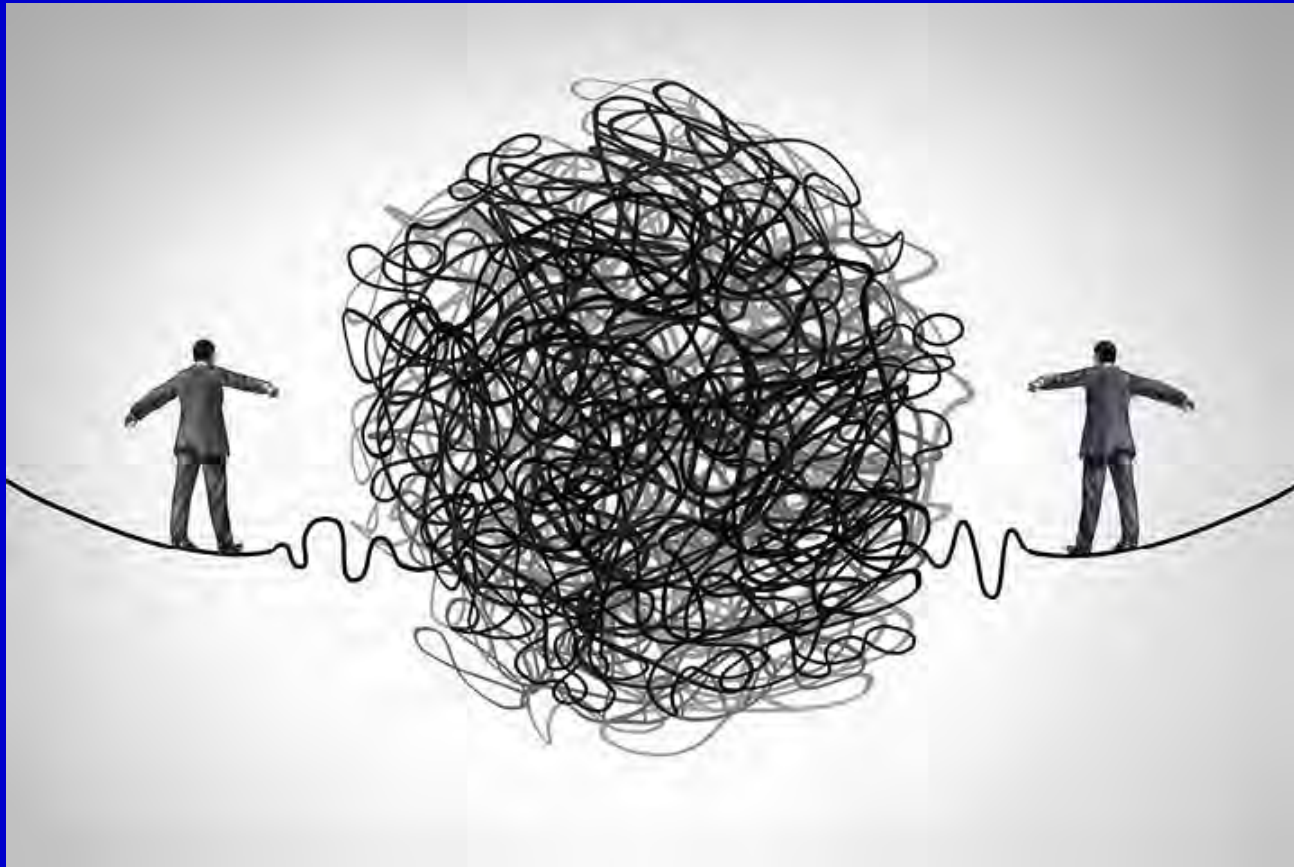


People tend to believe grief  
shrinks over time

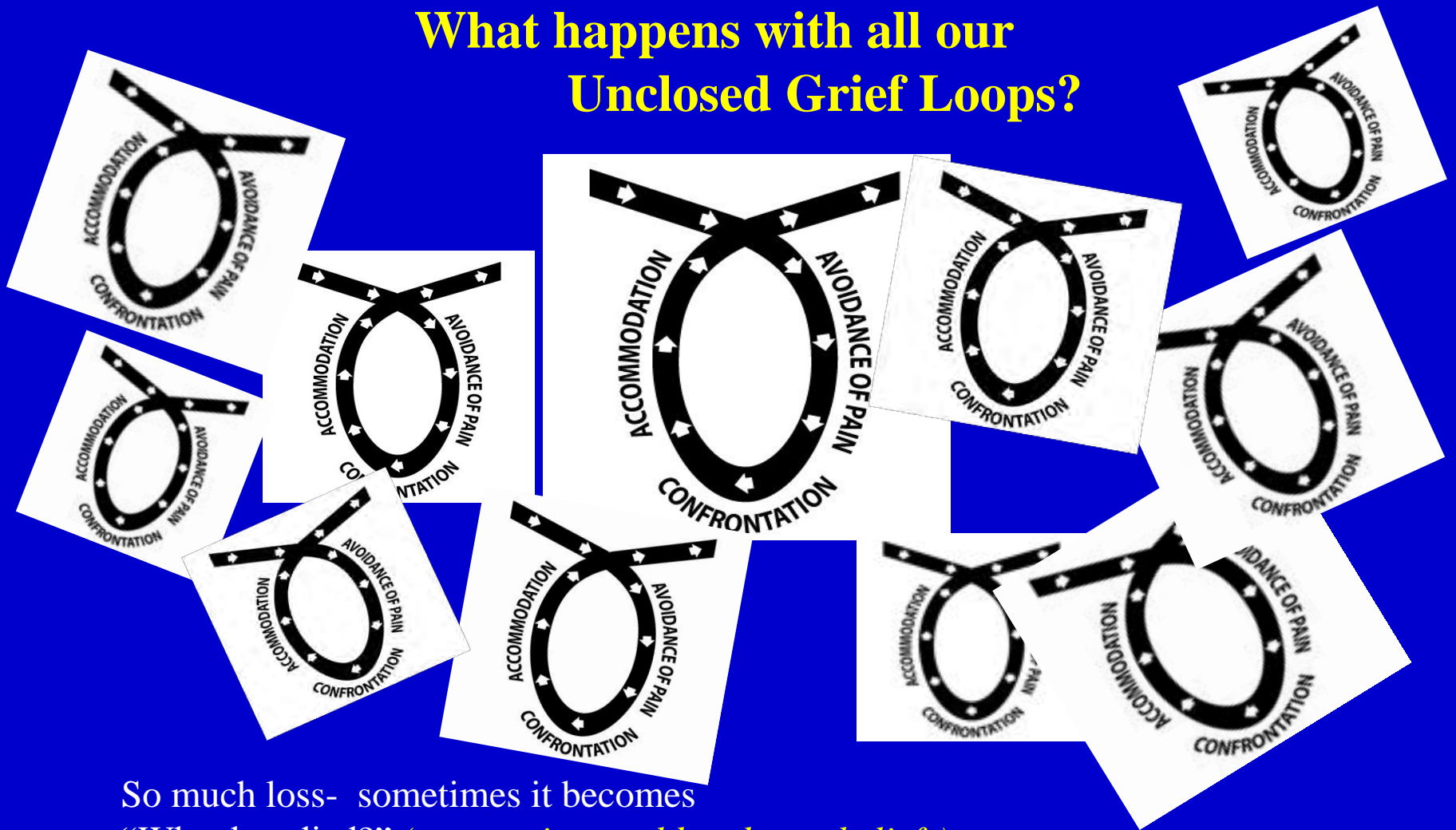


What really happens is we  
learn to grow around our grief

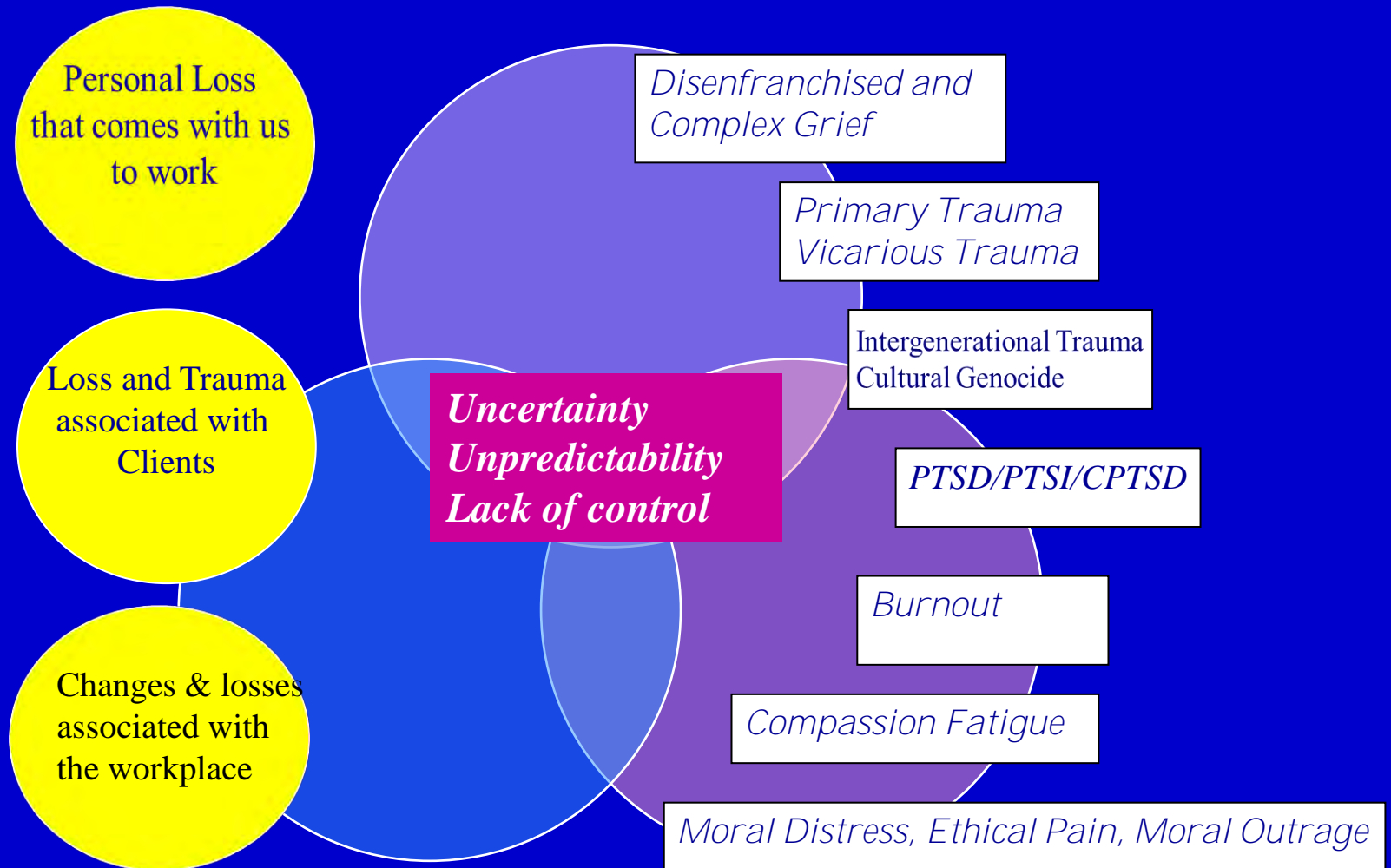
# When Grief is Complicated



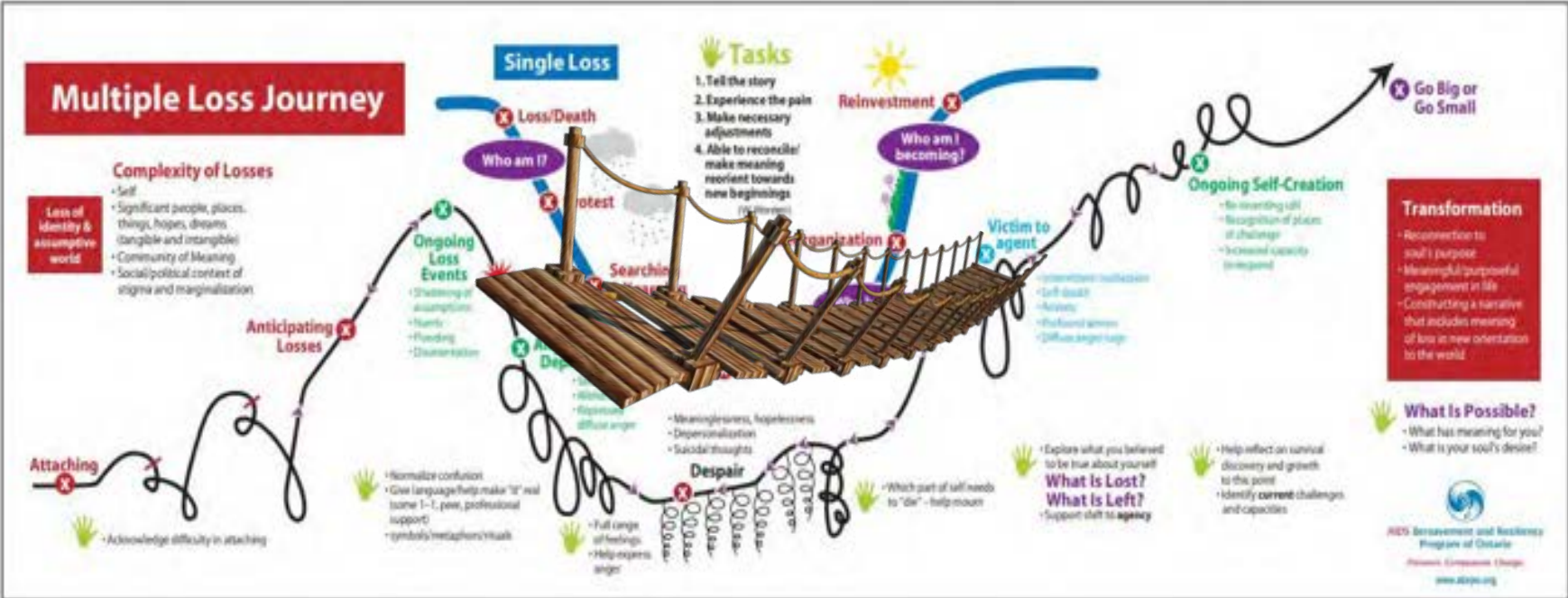
## What happens with all our Unclosed Grief Loops?



So much loss- sometimes it becomes  
“What has died?” (*assumptive world and core beliefs*)  
rather than a list of “who has died?”



In a time of relentless losses, uncertainty and being “in the trenches” : smart practice of building a suspension bridge



*Purpose: support and stabilization*

Through predictable, consistent, meaningful supports & rituals that acknowledge loss and help people regroup and move forward

*“Is It Okay for You to Be Okay?”*

*“Is it Okay for You NOT to Be Okay?”*



- To remain connected while moving into the new
- **Resilience:** *Doesn't mean it didn't matter*

Give people realistic expectations

When a reaction seems to come out of nowhere

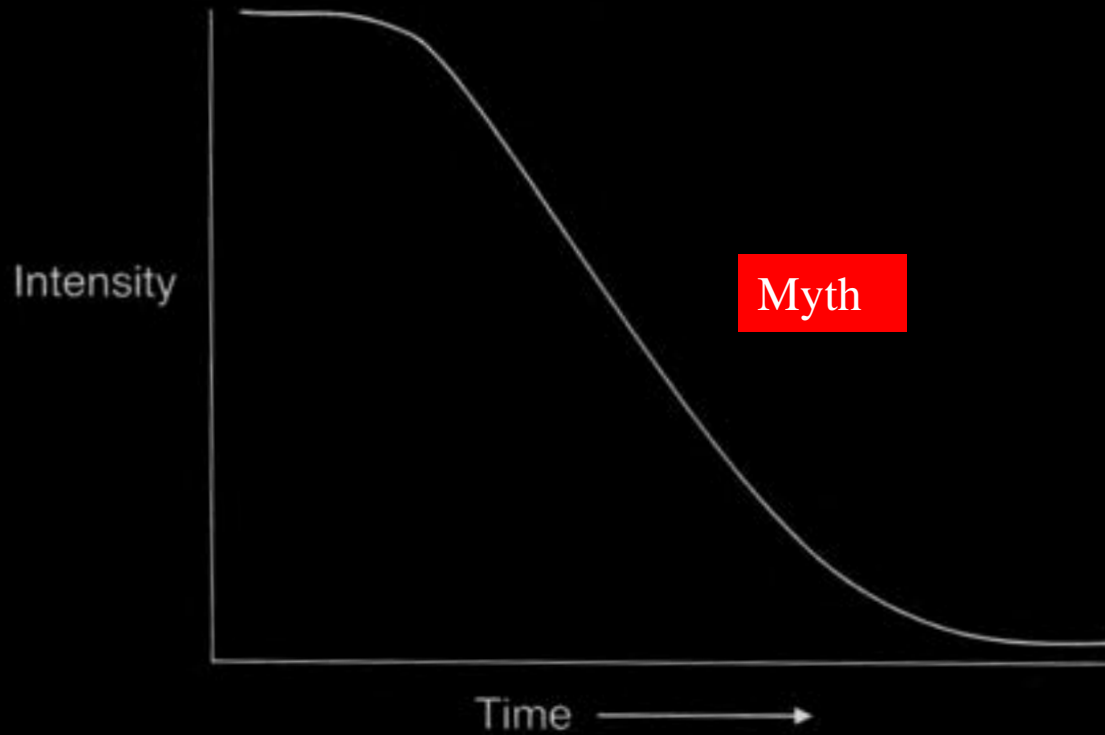
# *STUG*

Sudden/Subsequent  
Temporary  
Upsurges of  
Grief

*Therese A. Rando*

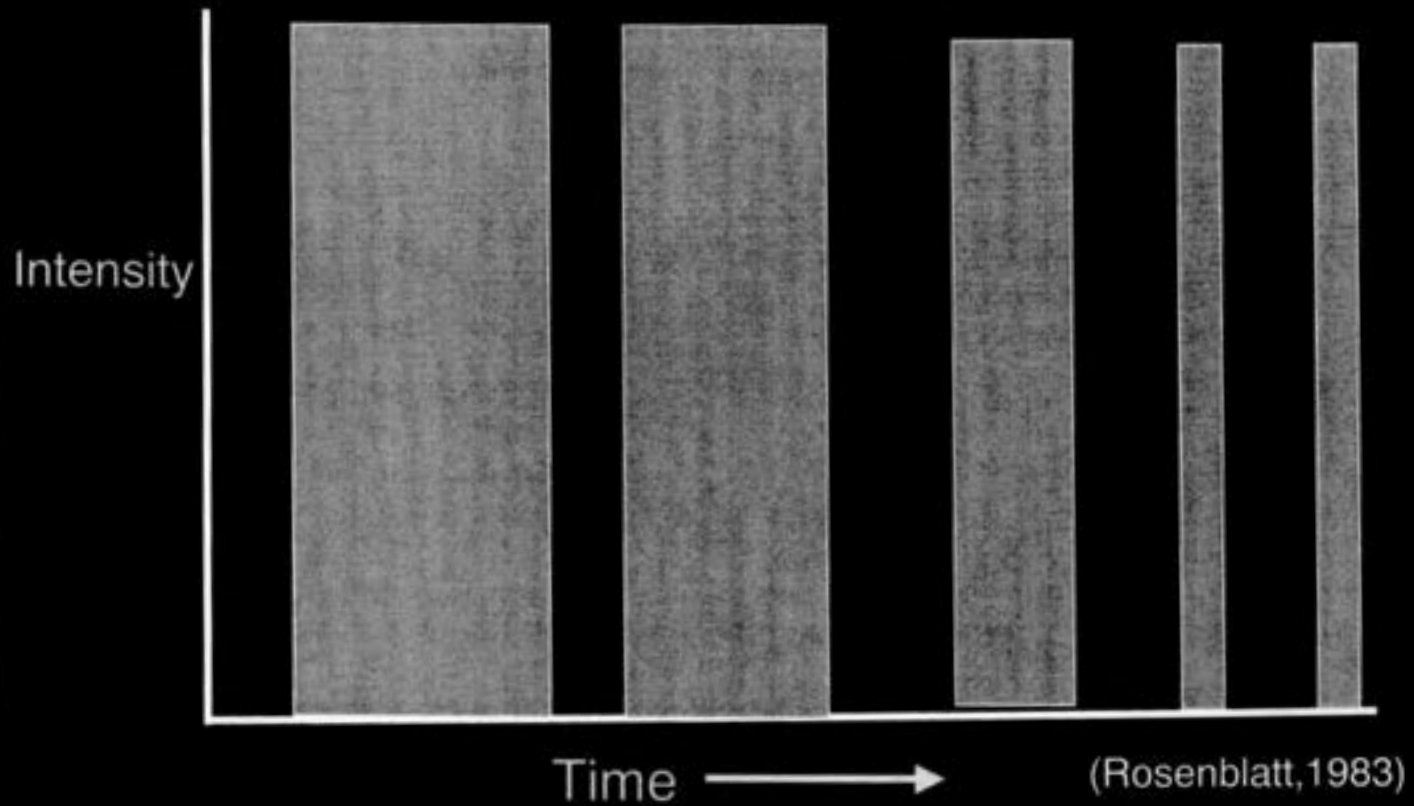


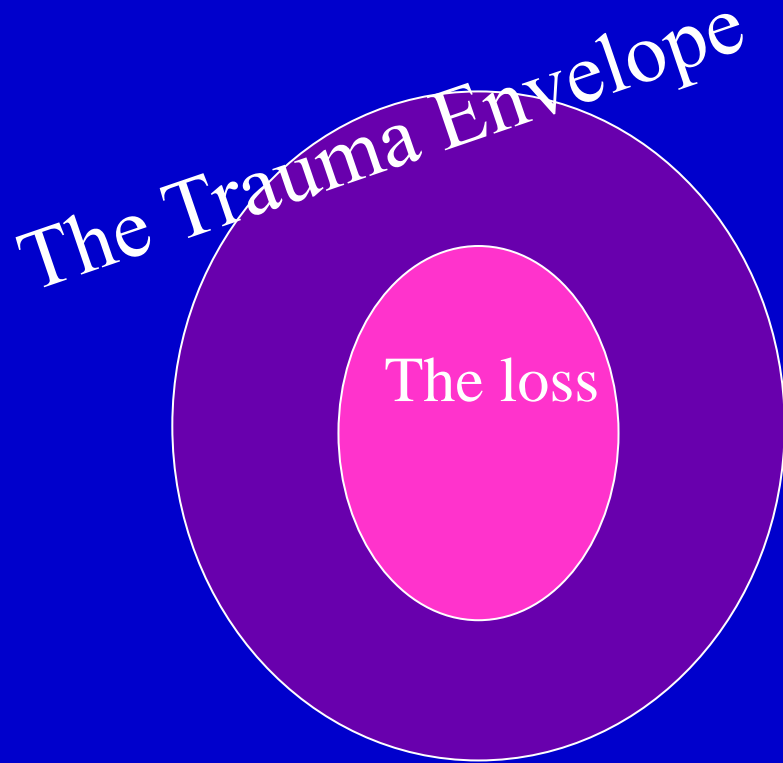
## Grief and Time



# Grief and Time

STUG





## Traumatic Grief

Not only *who* died  
but *how* they died

Grief resulting from loss in a traumatic situation-  
“how” the loss occurred has traumatic elements:  
*natural, accidental, disaster, violence, terrorism, etc*

# Trauma and the Nervous System: A Polyvagal Perspective

<https://youtu.be/ZdIQRxwT1l0>

<https://thetraumafoundation.org/>

***Support:** work with the ANS to help people be in present time and able to manage symptoms. Our own emotional regulation, tone of voice, compassion, grounded presence helps settle/regulate others' ANS. Unconsciously.*

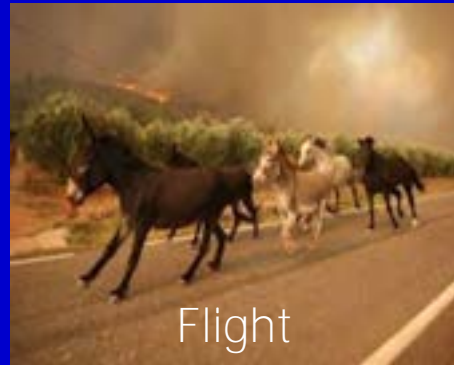
Traumatic Grief shows up as an activated ANS  
(autonomic nervous system) How do we respond?  
*Overwhelmed? Numb? Enraged? Brittle? Catastrophic Thinking?*  
*Fear? Flashbacks? Protective Coping Denial?*



Minimize



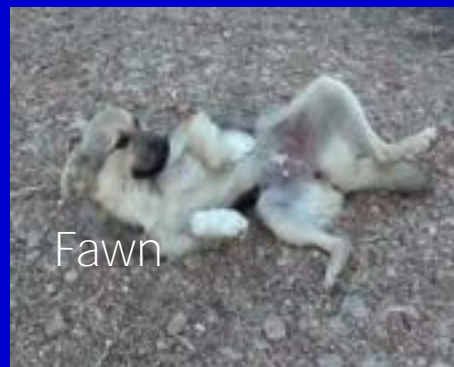
Fight



Flight



Freeze



Fawn

Enforced  
Positivity



# *Disenfranchised Grief*

*“A loss that cannot be socially sanctioned, openly acknowledged or publicly mourned”*

*~ Kenneth Doka*

## **Contexts**

- Loss is not acknowledged
- Relationship is not recognized
- Griever is not recognized
- Stigma around how someone died
- Ways individuals grieve



# NEURODIVERGENT UMBRELLA\*

ADHD  
ASPD  
BPD  
DYSLEXIA  
DYSPRAXIA  
SENSORY PROCESSING DISORDER  
PTSD  
DYSGRAPHIA

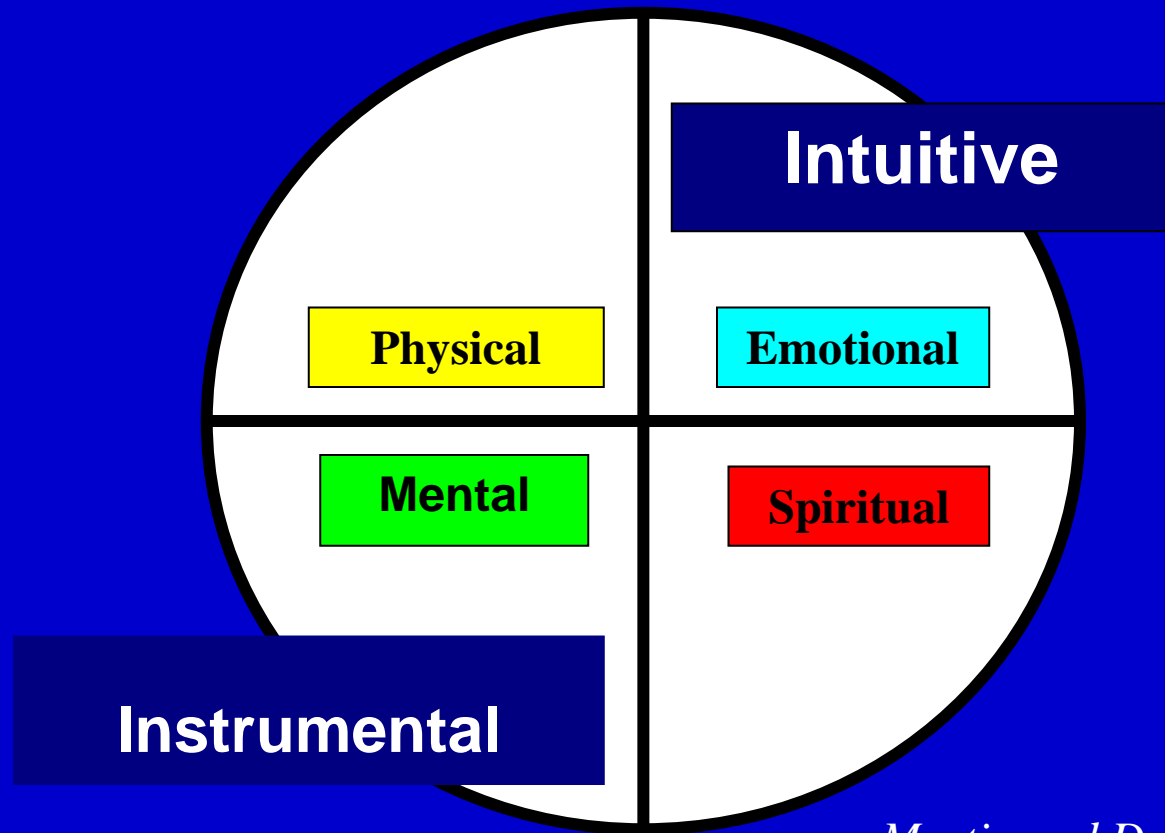
DID & OSDD  
NPD  
CPTSD

BIPOLAR  
AUTISM  
OCD  
TIC DISORDERS  
SCHIZOPHRENIA  
MISOPHONIA  
DOWN SYNDROME

EPILEPSY  
ABI  
HPD  
SYNTHESIA

\*NON-EXHAUSTIVE LIST [www.livedexperienceeducator.com](http://www.livedexperienceeducator.com) @livedexperienceeducator

We are not all the same in our responses



*Martin and Doka*





# Grieving Styles



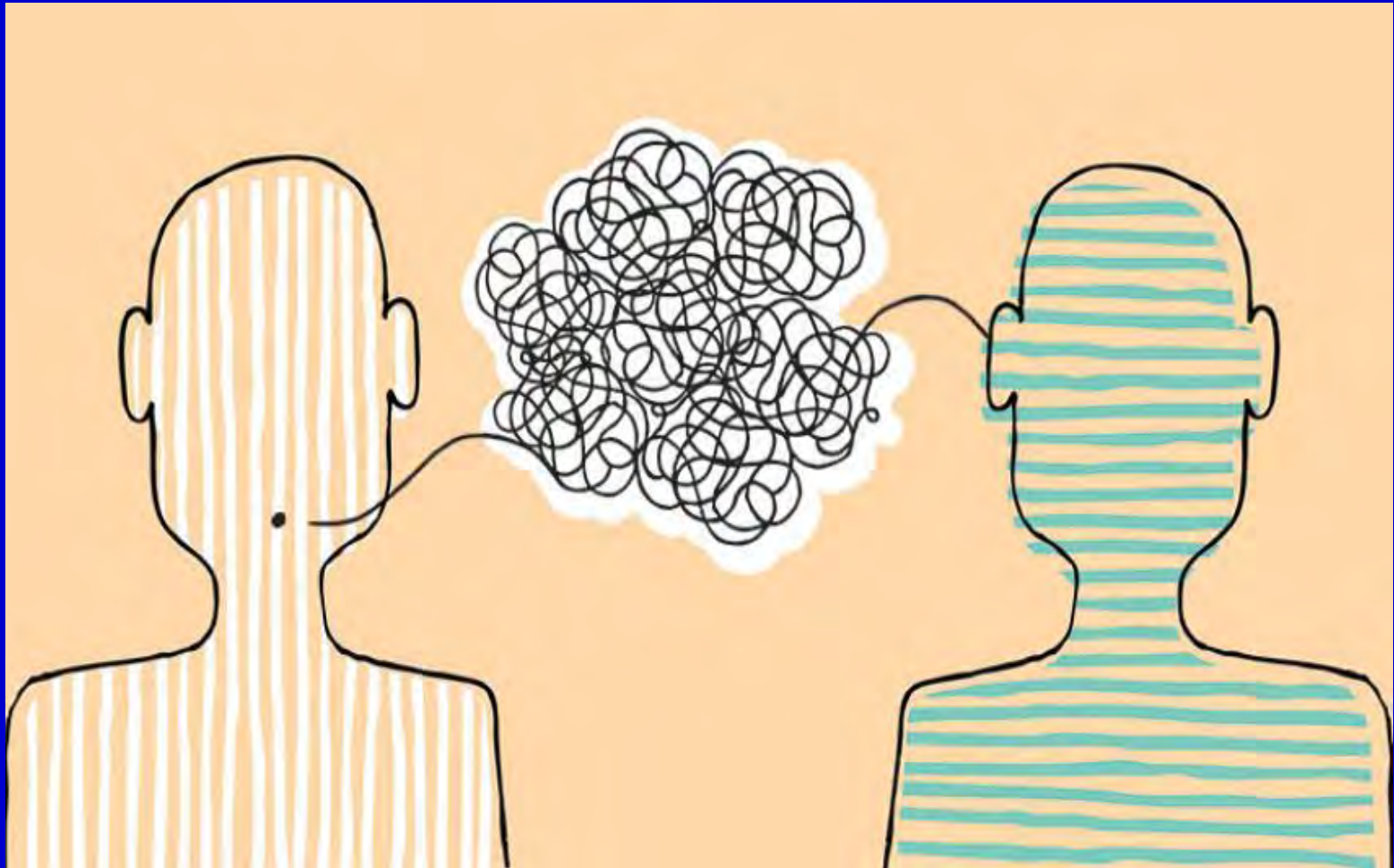
## Intuitive Grief

- Experienced as waves of emotion
- Expression mirrors inner feelings and emotions
- More feeling than thinking
- Focused on exploring and expressing feelings and processing emotions

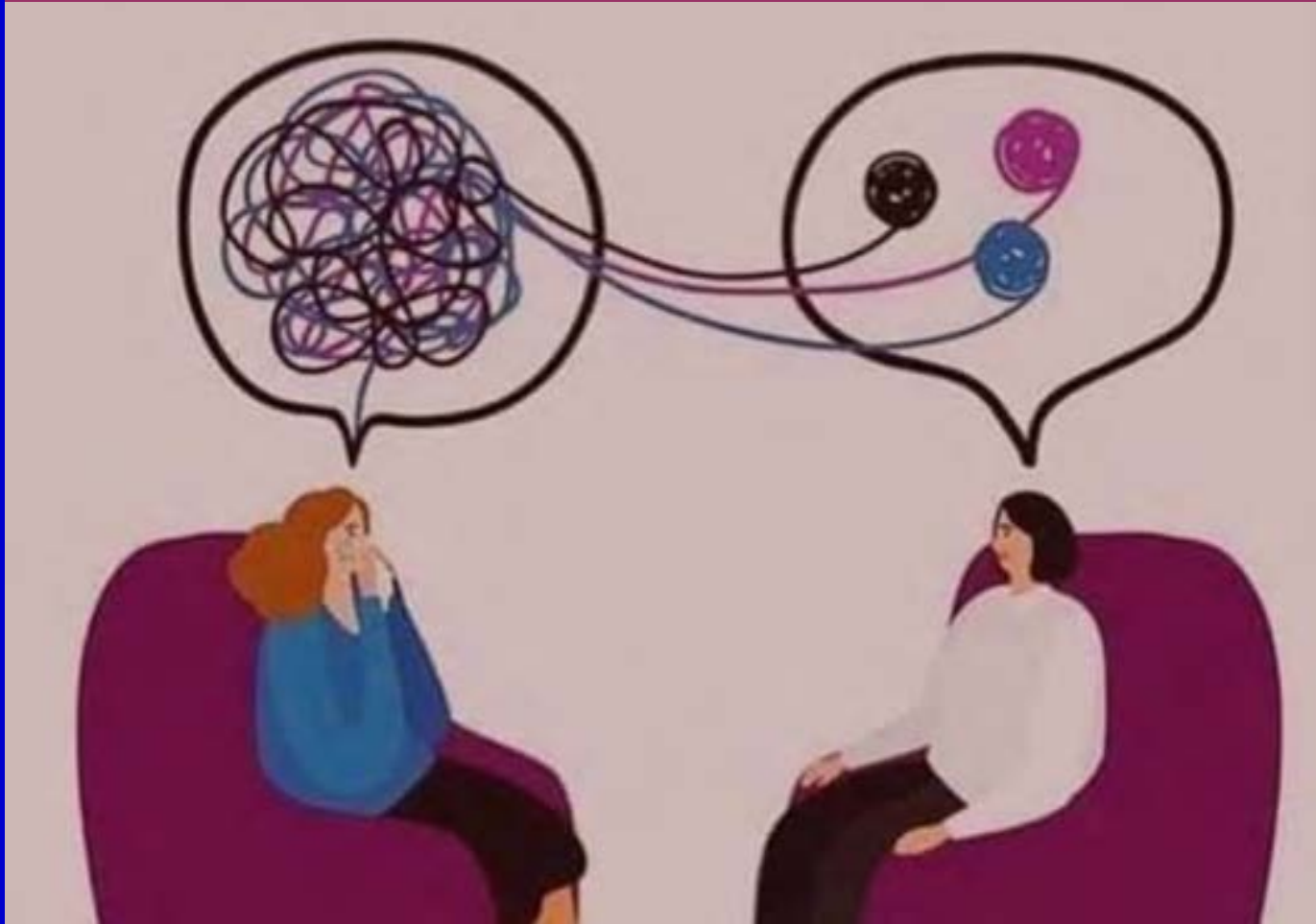
## Instrumental Grief

- Experienced in more physical or cognitive ways
- Expression is more physical, cognitive or behavioural
- More thinking than feeling
- Focused on doing and more actively responding to grief

How we cope- *we stay connected*



## Self care & Collective Care-including Agencies



# Caring for Workers- Structurally

## 1. Personal care practices:

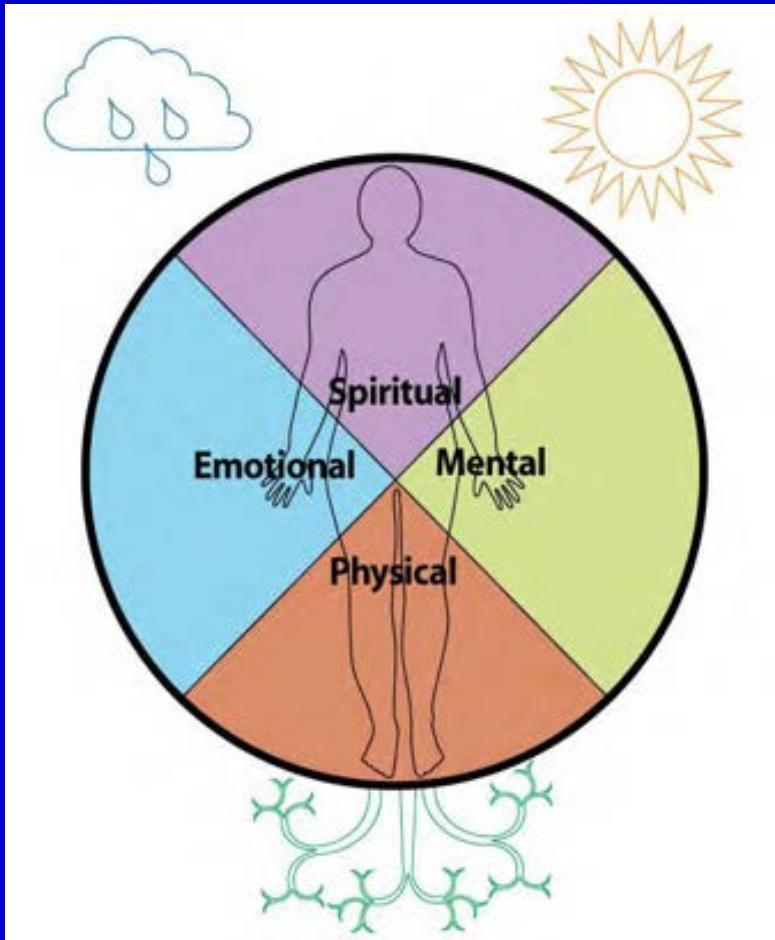
- Speaking *real*, listening, stress relief, rituals for saying goodbye, encourage peer supports, counseling
- Use workplace supports: training, debriefing, EAP (specialized)

## 2. Workplace:

- ❑ What are the structures in place:
  - ❑ death notification protocols;
  - ❑ support after critical events;
  - ❑ memorials?
- ❑ *Informal Debriefing* with peers at work
- ❑ *Impact Debriefing* after loss/stressful events
- ❑ *Incident Debriefing* after critical incidents
- ❑ ***Organizational Legacy: how do you remember?***



## ■ Supports:

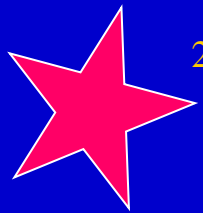


- ✓ That offer grief and trauma awareness
- ✓ That acknowledge complex attachments
- ✓ That offer a range of activities for the whole person
- ✓ That provide peer based mutual support groups
- ✓ That invite people to connect with larger meaning & purpose (social justice) activities as part of legacy

A foundational tool



1. Informal- *supporting colleagues in effective “discharge” of emotions & coming back into balance*



2. Impact – *low impact debriefing to help workers give and receive mutual support*

3. Incident – *version of CID: what did we do well? What did we miss? How can we improve our practice?*

# Debriefs work because:

They help teams learn from their experiences  
and self-adjust over time

In a sense, debriefs are *experiential learning  
accelerators*

Debriefnow.com

*They are practices of self and collective care*

# Group Debriefings not effective

- ❑ When there are outstanding grievances
- ❑ Team culture is toxic
- ❑ When significant organizational change is taking place



# Acknowledge Loss & Transition



**What are your personal  
memorial rituals/practices?  
How do You Remember?**

# Role of rituals

*“By doing something concrete and visible, such as engaging in ritual, we can begin to create symbolic mastery over events. Ritual allows a reorganization of community and continuity in a chaotic time.*

*Collectively, it offers a reassurance that while we cannot control the tragedy itself, we have reasserted control in its aftermath”.*

*Doka*



Saying a Good Goodbye to....



What are your personal, team, agency and Community Goodbyes? How do you Remember? *In remembering others, we remember ourselves ~ who we were with them*



Community memorials

## Role of arts-based activities

Kintsugi is the Japanese art of mending broken objects using gold or silver epoxy. The Japanese believe that when something has suffered damage and has a history, it becomes more beautiful.

*Modern Gypsy*  
*peddlersofdreams.wordpress.com*



# Body-based practices

A self-care tool for dealing with emotions

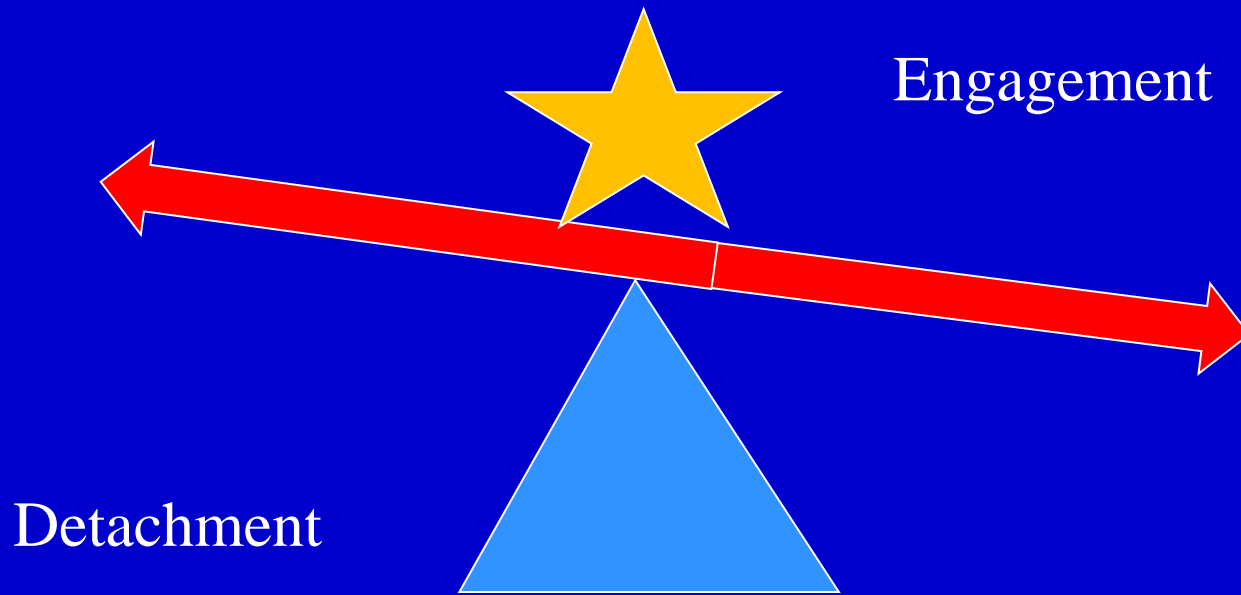
Self-Acupressure

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m3-O7gPsQK0&t=1s>



Our Smash Room

# Your goal: A Zone of Fabulousness (Vikki Reynolds)



Finding Functional Balance and

Zone of connection: collective ethics, collective care & hope

*What are you like in your Zone of Fabulousness?*





4 minute video **Grief support is and isn't**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l2zLCCRT-nE&vl=en>

# Principles of Emotional Harm Reduction

- ✓ I matter
- ✓ My well being matters
- ✓ It is okay to not be okay
- ✓ And it is okay to be okay
- ✓ I have a right and a responsibility to maintain my vitality
- ✓ I learn from experience
- ✓ I care for others



# #1. We Tell our Stories

“If you don't tell your story,  
who will?”

#2 We make space to hear one another



# #3 We acknowledge our individual & collective grief

## **COLLECTIVE GRIEF**

*When grief affects a  
whole community,  
city, country, or  
even the world*

Learn More at  
*[usurnsonline.com](http://usurnsonline.com)*

#4. We honour our fierce  
commitment to the work & we  
celebrate any & all successes



# Value of Mutual Support



Work mates in AIDS sector since 1985-  
*Windsor workshop 1994*



40 years of working together at life ....each other's "go to people"

*Who are your go-to people?*

# Our Lives Matter

We come together from the diversity of our grieving,  
to gather in the warmth of this community  
giving stubborn witness to our belief that  
in times of sadness, there is room for laughter.  
In times of darkness, there always will be light.

May we hold fast to the conviction  
that what we do with our lives matters  
and that a caring world is possible after all.

-- M. Maureen Killoran



# Personal Memorials & Community Goodbyes



Who are you  
Remembering  
Today?

# Closing Circle



One thing you are taking away?

# Collective Care



<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/XLE5EAteXZE> \*\*\*

Turtle Youtube  
16 seconds

Available from Good Grief Care

[www.goodgriefcare.ca/resources](http://www.goodgriefcare.ca/resources)





Thank you for the work you do!

Yvette & Cathy  
*Good Grief Care Consultants*

[www.goodgriefcare.ca](http://www.goodgriefcare.ca)



