

Un-Happy Valentine's Day: Grief & Loss

SW 55+ Connect Society Learning Cafe

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Content

- What is Grief?
- Effects of grief
- How we cope
- How to help others
- Resources

Understanding Grief

Grief is a normal and even necessary response to loss.
Any loss can elicit grief response.

Experiences that can cause grief include:

- Loss of money
- Divorce
- Loss of a job
- Loss of a person
- Loss of control
- Loss of normalcy
- Loss of health
- Relocation
- Other life transitions

Understanding Grief and Loss

- There is no rule book, no time frame, no judgement
- Grief process takes energy
- Grief is as individual as a fingerprint
- There is no one size fits all intervention



Vocabulary

Grief: is a natural response to loss.

Mourning: is when you express the grief outside of yourself, it is *showing* and *doing*.

Bereavement: period of grief and mourning after a loss

Types of Grief & Loss

Disenfranchised Grief

Anticipatory Grief

Complicated Grief

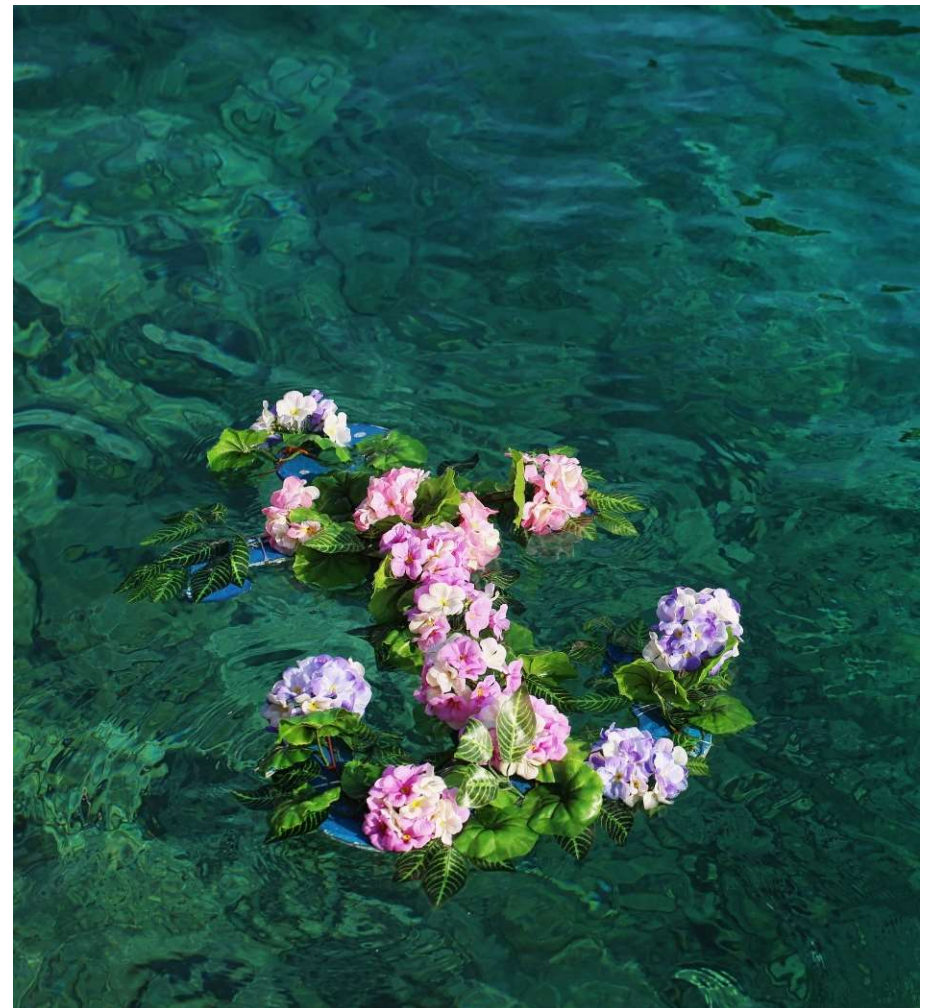
Prolonged Grief (DSM-5TR, 2022)

Collective Grief

Cumulative Loss

Ambiguous loss (Boss, 1970)

Secondary Grief



Grief and Older Adults

- Years of cumulative experience
- Non-death losses (physical/senses health)
- Social/family circle may shrink
- Secondary losses: financial, mobility, housing stress, regret, life choices, amplified medical challenges
- Suicide risk
- Changes to roles, perceived worth
- Overlap of symptoms (confusion, depression)
- + Opportunity to revisit past relationships that were ruptured/boundaries

Theories about Grief

- Brain & Biology
- Stages & tasks (Kubler-Ross, Worden, Wolfelt)
- Meaning based (Kessler)
- Theories for non death losses
 - 7 stages of chronic illness ([Martin](#))
- Dual Process Model (Stroebe & Schut, 1999)
- Continuing Bonds

Five Stages of Grieving

by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross

Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance (adjustment)

- The pain of grief is a natural reaction but don't become trapped in guilt and suffering
- Finding a way through the unexpected
- Grief can be transformed
- Stages are not linear, nor required

The Sixth Stage of Grief: *Finding Meaning*

by David Kessler

After the stages of grief, accepting/adjusting to the loss it is essential, but what comes next?

How can we transform grief into a more peaceful and hopeful experience

Identify what is meaningful to you

Do the things you never had time to do before

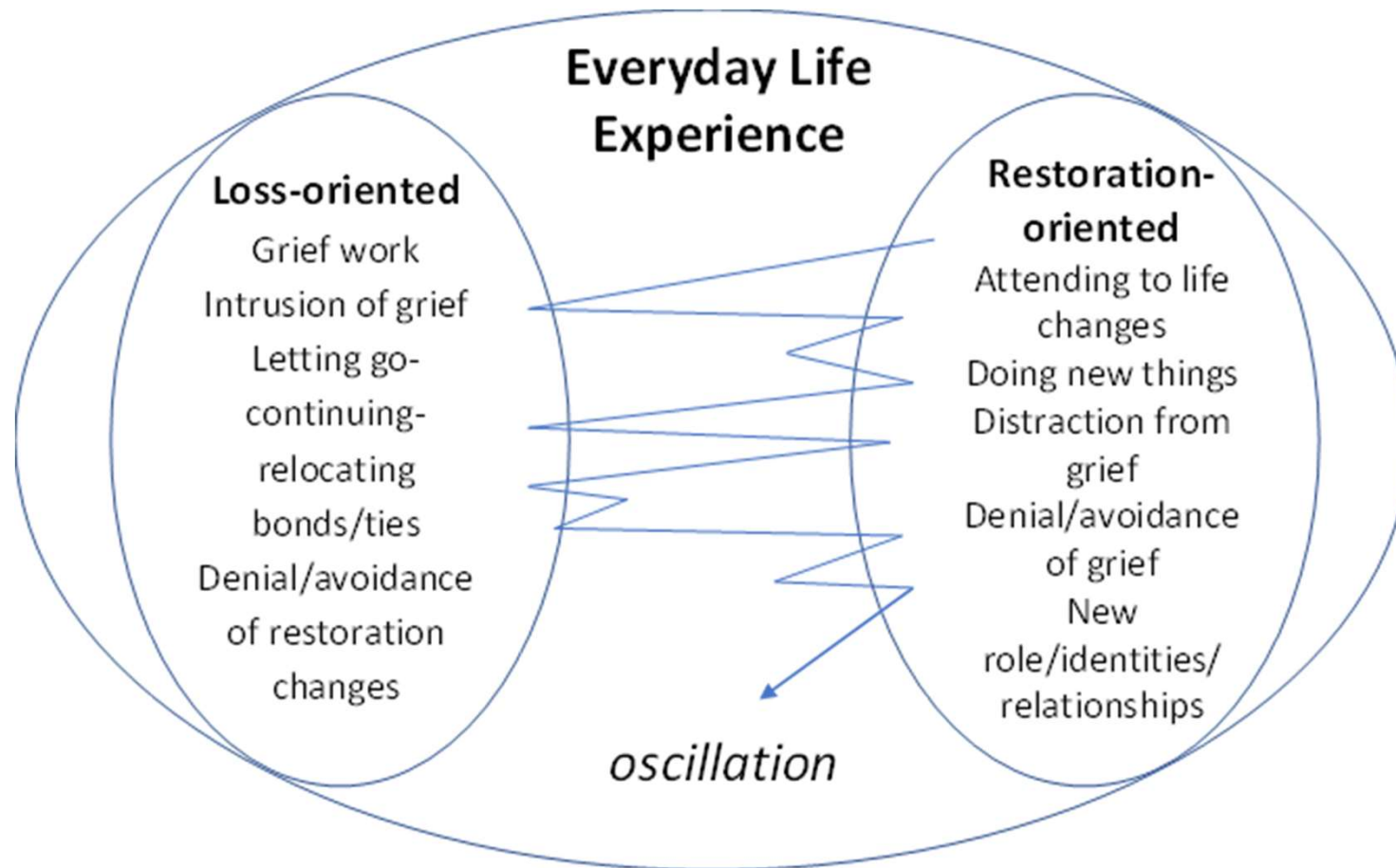
Provide purpose to your life

Find a sense of control over your life



Dual Process Model

by Stroebe & Schut, 1999



GROWING AROUND GRIEF

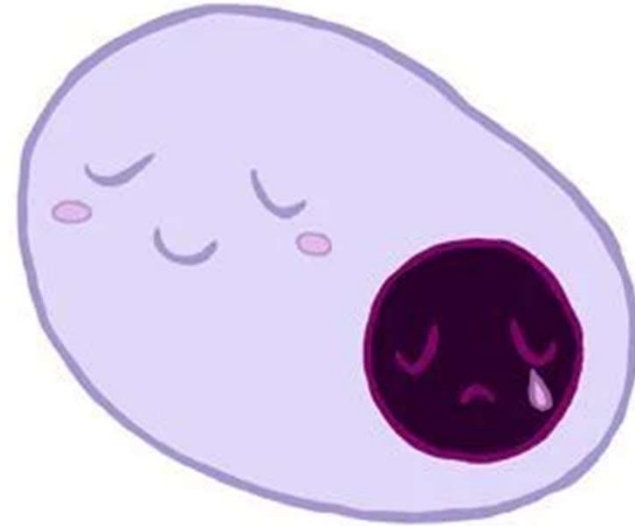
HERE IS A NEW WAY OF THINKING ABOUT GRIEF AND RECOVERY:



THIS CIRCLE REPRESENTS A LIFE THAT IS TOTALLY CONSUMED BY GRIEF.



ONE SHOULD ACCEPT THAT THE GRIEF WILL NEVER ENTIRELY DISAPPEAR, BUT OVER TIME IT WILL BECOME A SMALLER, MORE MANAGEABLE PART OF LIFE.



EVEN THOUGH THE GRIEF IS STILL THERE, A NEW LIFE EXPANDS AROUND IT; ONE IS ABLE TO GROW AROUND GRIEF.

Grief, Stress, and Anxiety go Together

- Research shows that things like sleep, mental health, healthy relationships, exercise, nutrition, and mindfulness are critical for healing
- If we don't take care of ourselves we may end up with a dysregulated stress-response system, and as a consequence, biological and immune system disruptions

What helps?

- Expression of emotions (shock, confusion, anger, sadness, regrets, guilt, relief).
- Expression of thoughts about the loss
- Loss being acknowledged/witnessed
- Caring for self
- Rituals

Rituals/Ceremony

- Annually, significant dates
- Create/art
- Write a letter of loved one
- Plant something in remembrance
- Use an item of theirs
- Play a song that reminds you of them
- Connect to the person that is gone
- Review photos of them and talk about them with others
- Create a memory box
- Perform acts of service they would appreciate
- Visit their favorite place and think of them while you are there

A word about Culture

- We adapt to grief depending on our beliefs, values and assumptions
- Some cultures expect a quiet response to loss while in other societies griever/mourners are expected to openly display their raw emotions
- Different religions have different rituals for their losses
- Watch for assumptions about their culture; be observant and ask how you can help



Emotions: a Big Part of Grieving

- Attend to your nonverbal emotions (pain, guilt, anger)
- Learn about the language of emotions (very personal)
- Address the fear of emotions
- Establish emotion management skills early on
- Connect emotions, thoughts, and behaviors
- Promote acceptance of all emotions
- Allow time for emotional processing
- Respect differences regarding emotions

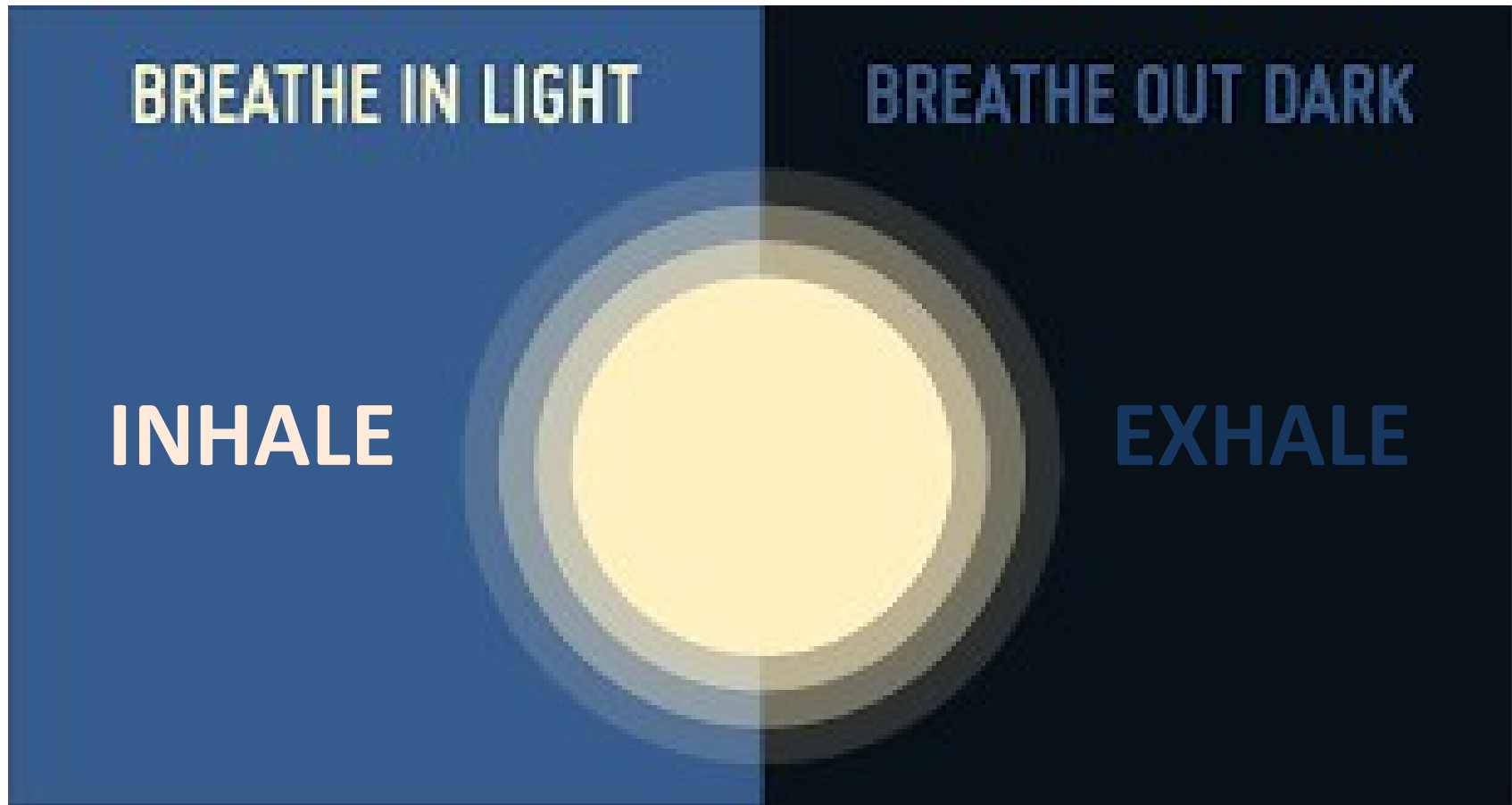
Not so helpful - Avoidance

- Isolation from people, places, things that remind us that the world's still turning
- Working, staying very busy, distraction
- Taking care of others who are grieving instead of your own grief
- Excessive negative coping: TV, sleep, alcohol/drugs
- Avoiding memories (good or bad) so emotions are less likely to be triggered
- Putting off tasks that remind of the loss
- Excessive rumination or worry

What to do instead

- Embrace your feelings.
There's no right way to grieve
- Avoid judgments
- Learn about your emotions
- Practice ways to manage reactions
- Take time out
- Increase self-care and sleep hygiene
- Practice calming strategies
- Do fun and or meaningful activities
- Practice helpful thinking: organize thoughts and feelings
- Reach out to others for support or be a support to others
- Be patient and understanding with yourself

Breathing and Visualizing



Healthy Choices

- Increase:
 - Nutrition
 - Sleep
 - Physical activity
 - Mindfulness
 - Humour
 - Social connection
 - Positivity
 - gratitude
- Decrease:
 - drugs/alcohol
 - Screen time
 - Declining invitations

Develop Social Connections

- Rebuild healthy connections
- Draw out a map of your most important social connections and relationships: what do those connections mean to you?
 - Who is currently in your network?
 - Who do you want to add to your network?
 - Who do you want to spend time with?
 - How can you improve your existing relationships?

Exercise: Gratitude Journal

- Something you are looking forward to?
- A simple pleasure you are grateful for?
- Something that you have today that you did not have a year ago?
- A place you have been?
- A happy memory?
- Something about your body or health that you are grateful for?
- Something you have been given?
- Something or someone that makes you feel safe?
- An accomplishment?
- Something that makes your life easier?
- Skills(s) that you have?
- An item that you have that you are grateful for?
- A mistake or failure that you are grateful for?
- Write 3 things that you are grateful for today

Carya Counselling & Groups

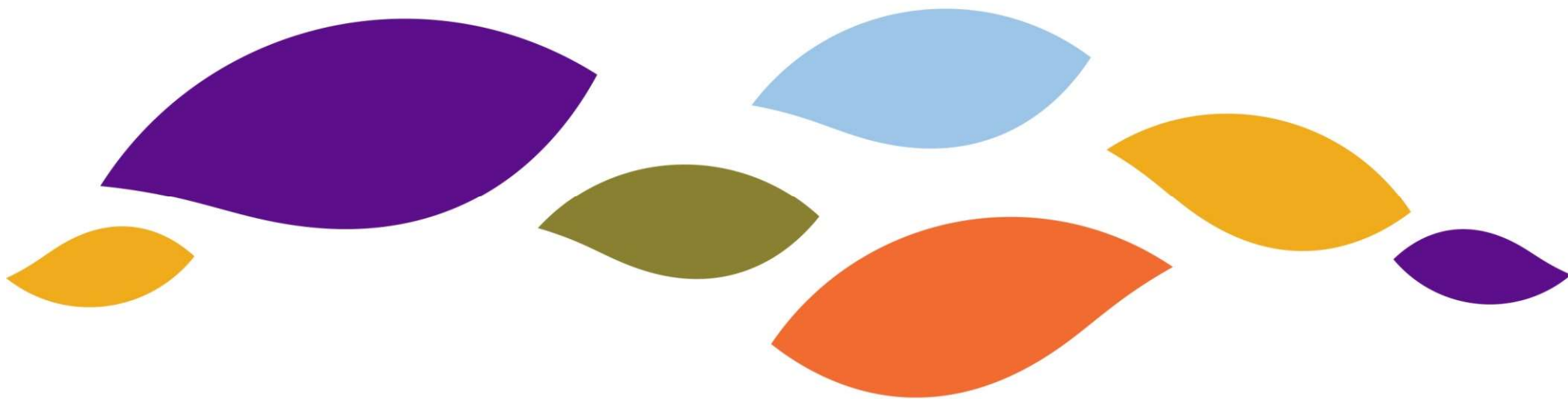
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Resources

- [Canadian Virtual Hospice](#)
- [MyGrief](#)
- List of books for people/grief: [Grief-Bibliography-by-Hospice-Calgary.pdf \(hospicecalgary.ca\)](#)
- [Education - www.hospicecalgary.ca](#)





THANK YOU!

