



Northwest (HHS Region 10)

MHTTC

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network

Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

# The Well-Being Series

Connections During COVID-19:  
Mental Wellness Webinars for Families & Educators

*Presented by:*



*Disclaimer: The views, opinions, and content expressed in this presentation do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions, or policies of the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).*



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## THE WELL-BEING SERIES

### Connections During COVID-19: Mental Wellness Webinars For Families & Educators

- ★ All sessions are FREE and being recorded.
- ★ Additional supports for parents, educators, and kids to be announced shortly.

*A collaboration between the Forefront Suicide Prevention Center, Northwest MHTTC, University of Washington SMART Center, DBT in Schools, NWPBIS Network, and WellEducator.*



**Website (Registration, Materials, Recordings):**  
<https://bit.ly/Well-beingNW>

**Questions:** Megan Lucy  
[mlucy@uw.edu](mailto:mlucy@uw.edu)

**LEARN MORE ABOUT THE FULL SERIES HERE: [BIT.LY/WELL-BEINGNW](https://bit.ly/Well-beingNW)**

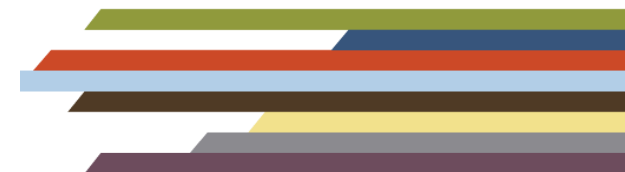
#### Upcoming Events

- Educator Wellness Webinar Series
- School Leader Webinar Series
- DBT in Schools Lessons for Parents and Live Q&A with Drs. Jim and Lizz Mazza
- Ambiguous Loss: Grieving in the Time of COVID-19
- Psychological First Aid

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Services Administration

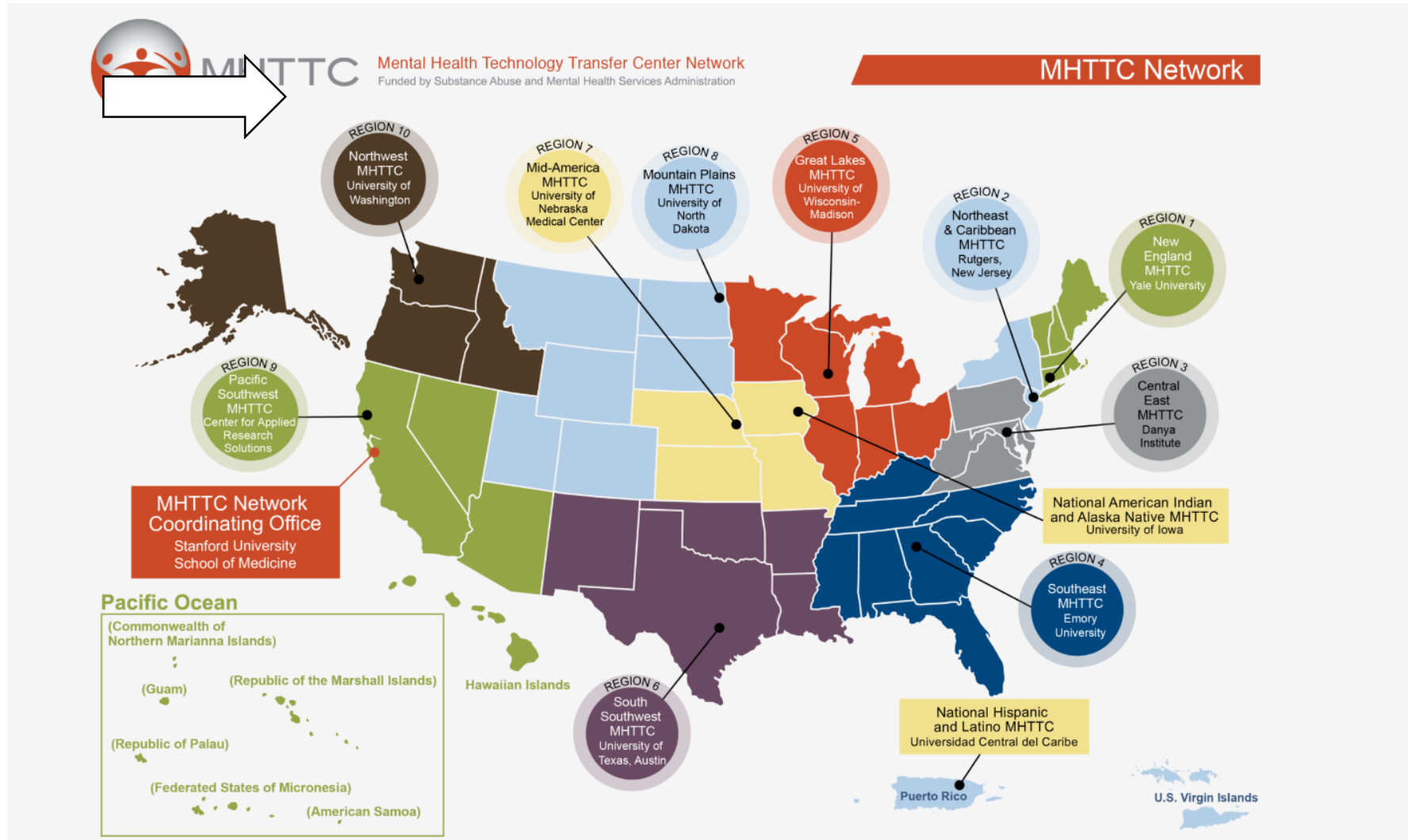
*This work is supported by grant SM 081721  
from the Department of Health and Human  
Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
Services Administration*



# Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (MHTTC) Network

## ***SAMHSA***

Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
Services Administration



Visit the MHTTC website at <https://mhttcnetwork.org/>





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## SMART

School Mental Health Assessment  
Research & Training Center



## Get in touch!

Email: [kelcey1@uw.edu](mailto:kelcey1@uw.edu) and [mlucy@uw.edu](mailto:mlucy@uw.edu)

### Websites:

- MHTTC: <https://tinyurl.com/nwsmh>
- UW SMART Center:  
<https://depts.washington.edu/uwsmart/>

## Sign up for our Newsletter!

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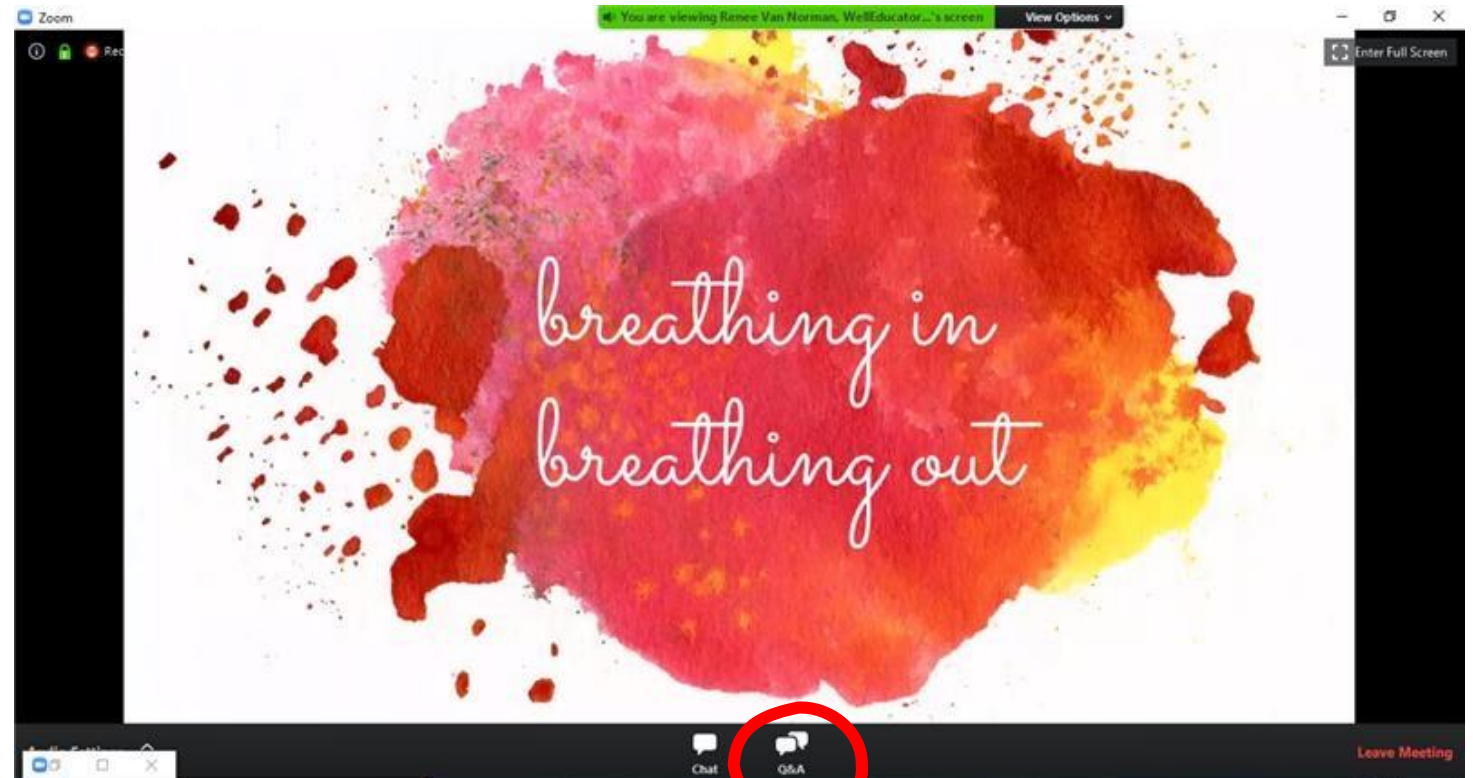
@NorthwestMHTTC

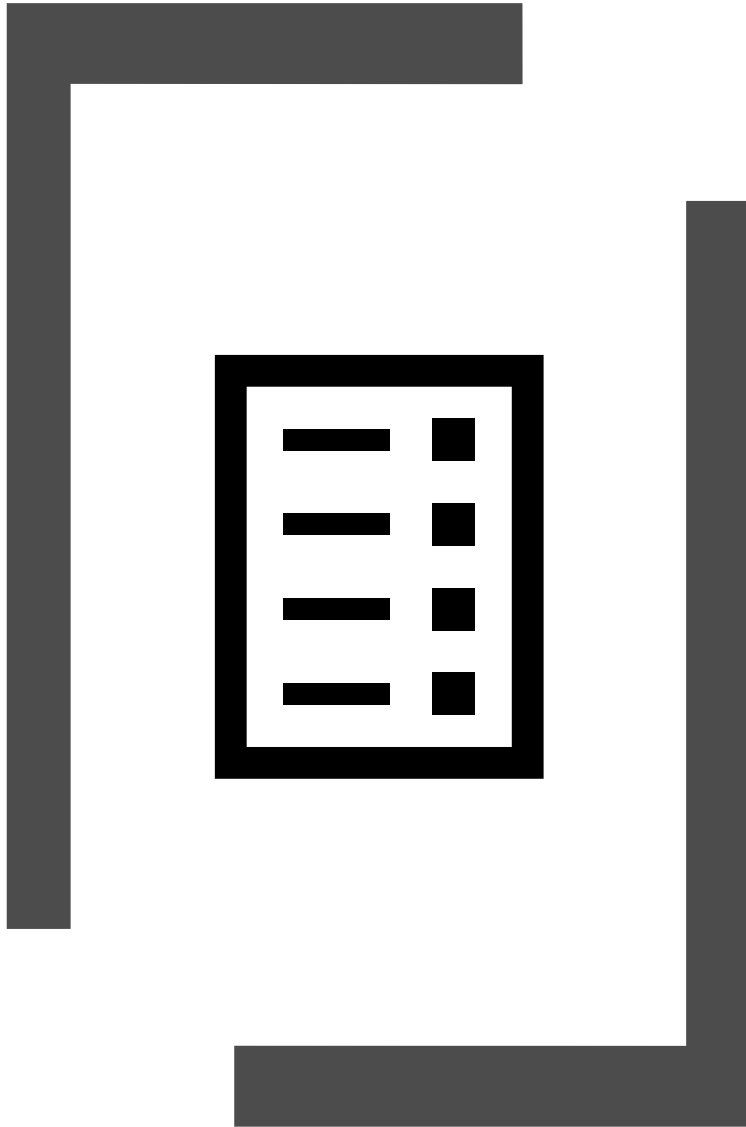


Northwest MHTTC

# Participant Information

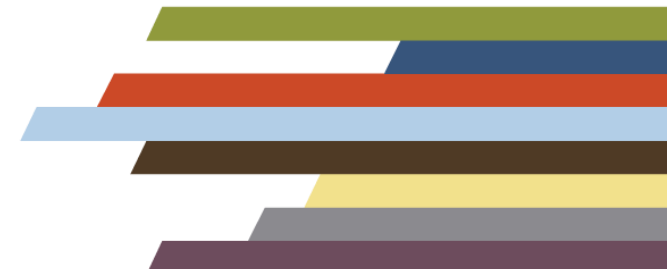
- This webinar is being recorded and will be posted.
- Participants are muted with videos off.
- Take note of the **toolbox** located at the top or bottom of your screen.
- Use Q & A feature to ask questions. Questions will be answered at the end of the presentation.
- Chat feature only allows you to discuss with presenters.





# Evaluations

- Required by our funder
- Used to inform, refine, & enhance future events/activities
- Helps communicate the need for this type of support
- Voluntary and anonymous
- **Very important!** *We will end a few minutes early and ask that you please take a few moments to complete.*



# Ambiguous Loss: Grief in the Time of COVID-19

Charlene Ray, MSW LICSW

Forefront Coach, Trainer, and Grief Specialist



# OUR MISSION

Forefront Suicide Prevention is a Center of Excellence at the University of Washington focused on reducing suicide by empowering individuals and communities to take sustainable action, championing systemic change, and restoring hope.







# Taking care of yourself

- This webinar covers a topic that can be emotionally challenging – if possible, talk to someone you trust about your experience today
- Self-care after this training is important
- If you can, avoid multi-tasking today

# Learning Objectives



To define  
ambiguous loss



To identify the signs  
and symptoms of grief



To understand the  
difference between  
grief and mourning



To identify ways of  
coping with grief



To know when and how  
to ask for support

# What is grief?

“As human beings, whenever our attachments are threatened, harmed, or severed, we naturally grieve. Grief is everything we think and feel inside of us when this happens. We experience shock and disbelief. We worry, which is a form of fear. We become sad and possibly lonely. We get angry. We feel guilty or regretful. The sum total of all these and any other thoughts and feelings we are experiencing as a result of the coronavirus pandemic is our grief.”

*Alan Wolfelt, Grief Expert*





# Is this ambiguous loss?

Much of what we are experiencing during this pandemic is ambiguous:

- Lack of closure
- The future is unknown
- Searching for answers
- Feelings can be complicated and difficult to identify
- We may feel stuck, living in limbo

...or is this  
just loss?

What is not ambiguous about this loss:

*This loss is affecting everyone; it is a  
global grief pandemic*

Are we recognizing this loss? Are we  
aware that some of our feelings may  
be stemming from grief?





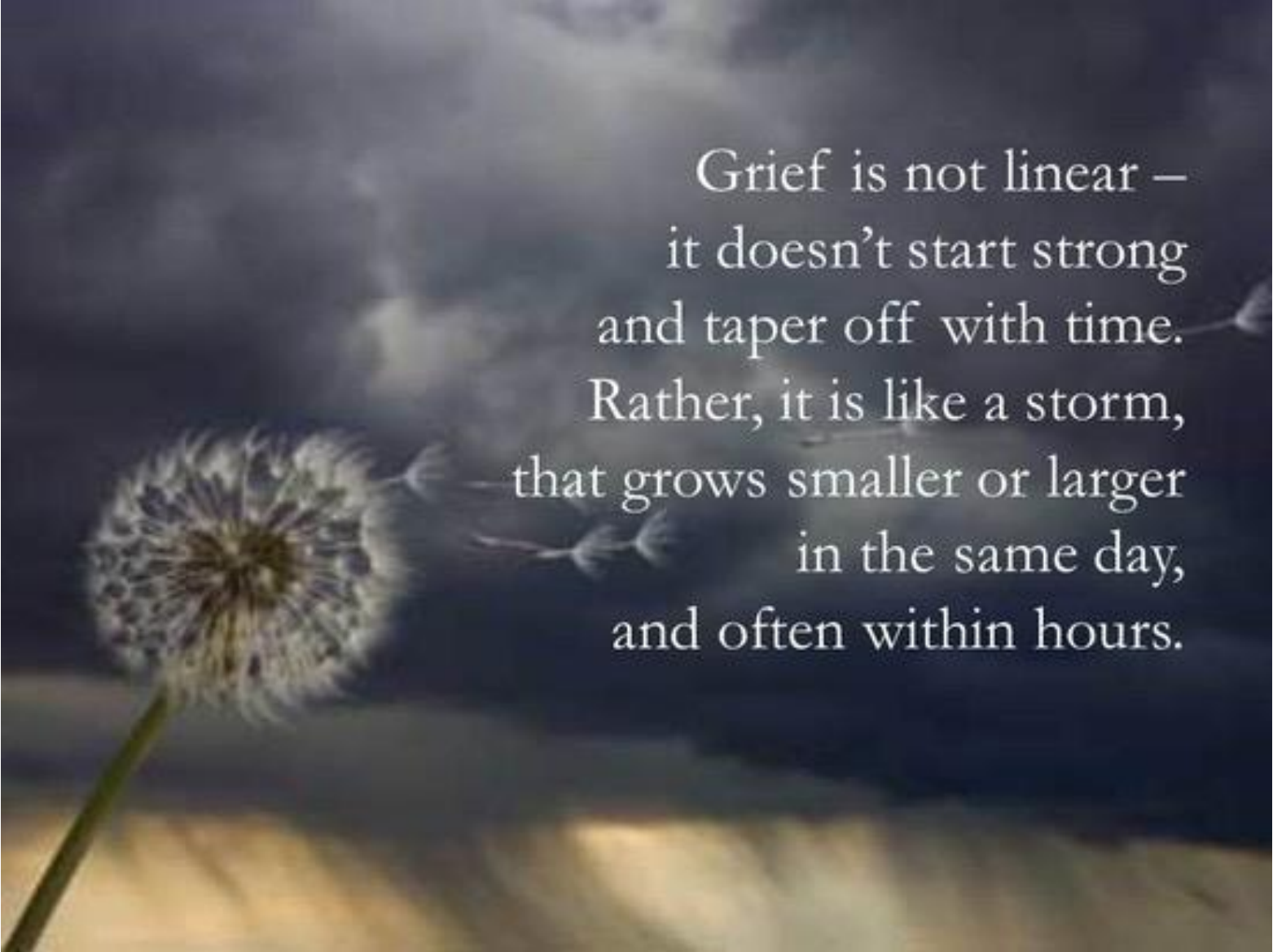


# Are we really grieving?

What are the feelings that fill our hearts and minds as we look at the news, experience a shift in our day-to-day activities, and socially isolate from our friends and family? Collectively, our lives have been abruptly and dramatically changed.

We may experience a sense of dread, anxiety, fear, sadness, uncertainty, anger and disbelief.

Could this all be grief?

A close-up photograph of a dandelion seed head in the lower-left foreground. The seed head is white and fluffy, with several seeds already blown away, appearing as small white specks against the sky. The background is a dramatic, dark blue and grey sky with wispy clouds. The lighting is soft, suggesting a sunset or sunrise, with a warm glow visible at the bottom of the frame.

Grief is not linear –  
it doesn't start strong  
and taper off with time.  
Rather, it is like a storm,  
that grows smaller or larger  
in the same day,  
and often within hours.



Grief is the feeling of loss and pain following the death of a loved one.



Mourning is the outward expression of that grief



Mourning is essential for healing

The difference  
between grief  
and mourning



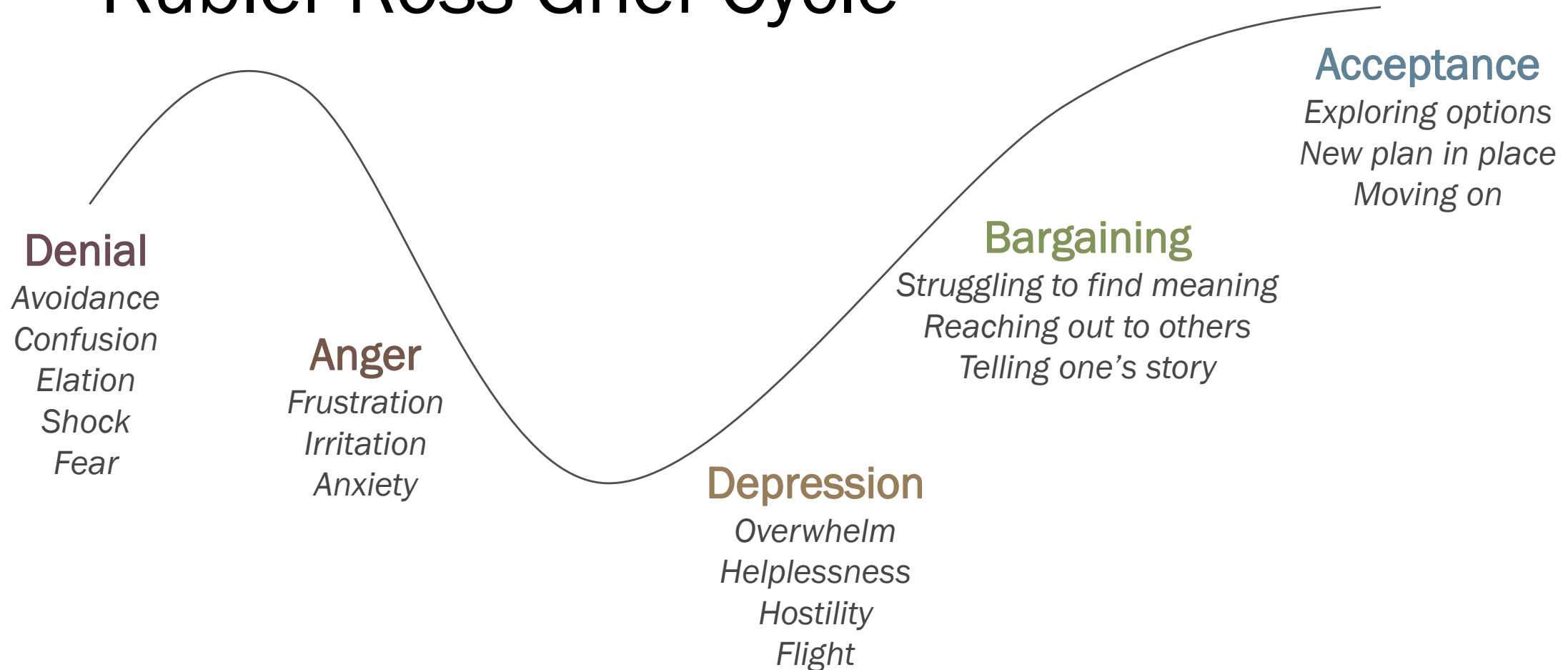
# Death during COVID

When a loved one dies and we can't be with them what can we do?

How do we create ritual and ceremony to honor the one we have loved and lost?

How do we mourn?

# Kübler-Ross Grief Cycle



Information & Communication

Emotional Support

Guidance & Direction



# A few words about the stages

It is important to remember that these stages don't happen in a linear fashion. We cycle back around in no particular order many times during the grieving process.

In our current grief pandemic, many people were in denial for a long time and many still are.



Where do you see yourself in these stages?



How is this grief similar to or different than grief that you have experienced in the past?

# Reflection



HOW WE  
WANT  
GRIEF TO  
WORK



HOW GRIEF  
ACTUALLY  
WORKS



# Common Signs and Symptoms of Grief

Exhaustion

Confusion

Trouble  
making  
decisions

Difficulty  
coping with  
feelings

Immovable  
sadness or  
irritation

Anxiety about  
the unknown

Numbness

Physical  
aches, pains  
and soreness

Overwhelm

A couple is seen from behind, sitting on a low stone wall. The man is wearing a dark puffer vest over a light-colored long-sleeved shirt, and the woman is wearing a grey sweater and blue jeans. They are hugging each other. The background is a dark, overcast sky and a body of water. The text "What do we need right now?" is overlaid in white.

What do we need right  
now?

# Coping with ambiguous loss

Ambiguous loss fosters a sense of uncertainty in our day-to-day lives.

To respond to this lack of control, we may attempt to control what areas of our lives that we can, perhaps so that we do not have to feel the intensity of the loss.



# Grief Guideposts



Acknowledging  
that this is grief



Permission to feel  
all your feelings



Honoring the  
uniqueness of  
your grief



Nurture yourself



Reaching out for  
help



Finding hope

# Acknowledging that this is grief

Once we identify what we are feeling as grief and acknowledge the presence of the losses we are experiencing, we can honor our feelings and begin to make sense of this new world.





We grieve because we love.  
What have you lost that you  
love?

- Loss of a loved one to death
- Loss of an important celebration (wedding, graduation, etc.)
- Loss of a job or home
- Loss of a relationship
- Loss of social gatherings (with friends & family, vacations, participation in sports, etc.)
- Supporting someone else through a loss

# Reflection



Reflect for a few minutes on how your life has changed in the past month.



Make a list of the losses that you have experienced.



Allow yourself to acknowledge the presence of loss.



# Permission to Feel your Feelings

Every feeling you can imagine can be a part of grief. It is common to feel disorganized, confused, exhausted, afraid, anxious and overwhelmed.

Or maybe you feel restless, agitated, impatient, or angry.

You may notice a myriad of feelings all in one day—this is “normal”



A person's hands are shown from the chest up, forming a heart shape with their fingers. The heart is positioned in the center of the frame, and through it, a sunset over the ocean is visible. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm, golden glow across the sky and water. The waves are visible in the foreground, and the overall scene is peaceful and contemplative.

# Your Grief is Your Grief

We each experience grief in a unique way.

# The Uniqueness of this Grief

There are many factors that influence the uniqueness of our grief:



Your unique  
personality



Whether you are  
living alone or  
isolated



Cultural, spiritual  
and religious  
background

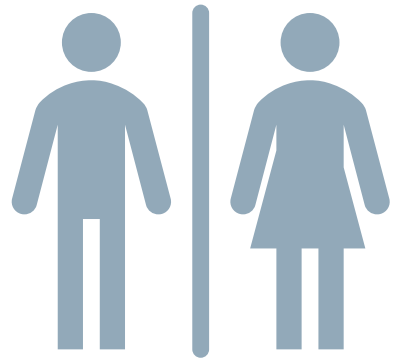


Other stresses in  
your life right now



Your experience  
with loss in the  
past

# Reflection



Grief is not meant to be experienced alone. How do we grieve in community when we are socially isolated?



What ideas do you have?



# Nurture Yourself

Right now it is important to give ourselves far more space and time than we usually do. When we are grieving, normal day-to-day self care may not be enough.

We need to give ourselves permission to rest and to say no when we need space to feel, think, and be.



# Nurturing Your Body

Your body will often let you know that it is experiencing grief before your mind even registers this fact

You may be tired, aching, have stomach upsets or headaches – sleep troubles and low energy are two of the most common ways your body tells you that something is not right and needs tending to

Remember to eat well, move your body, slow down, and rest more

Drink plenty of water and create breaks to be outside during the day



# Nurturing Your Mind

It may be difficult to think clearly right now or you may be easily overwhelmed – you may have a lot of thoughts and ideas or your mind may be filled with confusion

This is a good time to ask yourself, “What do I need right now?” and “What is being asked of me today?” It can help you focus when your mind is scattered

You can make a list of goals and actions to take, but it is also good to take time to just be

Many people cope with grief by doing, and sometimes it is good to just stop and allow the mind to rest

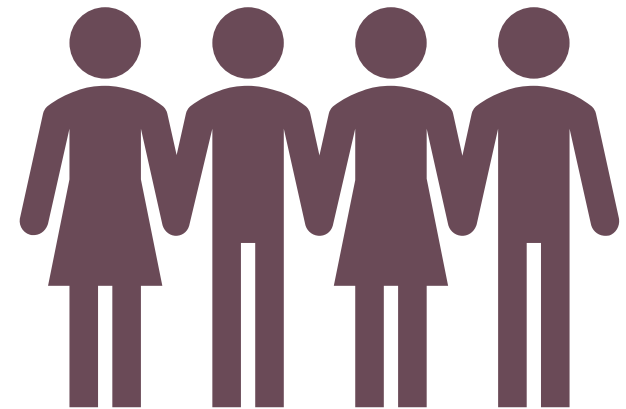


# Nurturing Your Social Self

Physical touch is important - hugs or a hand on our shoulder can give us much needed connection

Many of us have technology and we can see family and friends on Zoom, FaceTime, and other media – a phone call and a good old-fashioned card or letter can also be helpful

Introverts tend to do better in isolation because they are recharged internally, but extroverts need others to recharge and this can be especially challenging for them





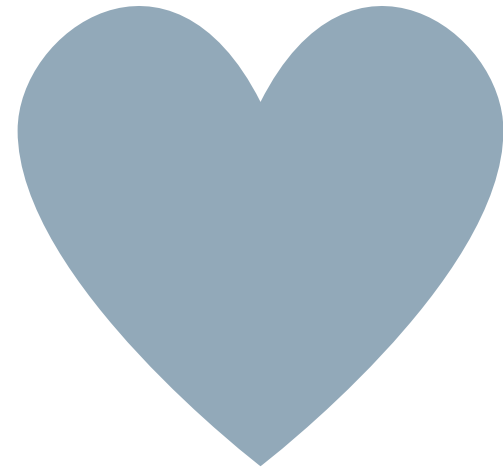
# Nurturing Your Heart and Soul

Mindful self compassion is one of the best ways to nurture your heart and soul. Offering kindness and tenderness toward yourself is important and beneficial.

It is also good to reach out for support when you need to talk.

Making sure you do one thing each day that gives you pleasure can be helpful:

- Read poetry
- Listen to music
- Pray and/or meditate
- Get outside!



# Healing Power of Nature

Nature can be a powerful support when grieving.

Nature is stress-reducing, increases oxytocin, and relaxes the nervous system.

Nature is big enough to hold your grief.

## *Nature Prescription:*



*Take a 10 minute walk once a day to look for signs of hope in nature, stand with your back against a tree and feel its steady support, walk or sit at the beach, close your eyes and listen to the waves, in your imagination allow them to wash over you, soothing your soul.*

x A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'A' or 'H' shape followed by a horizontal line.

# Reflection

On a piece of paper or on your computer, create a plan to nurture yourself using some of the suggestions offered.



A close-up photograph of two hands reaching towards each other. The hand on the right belongs to a person wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt and a purple wristband. The hand on the left is partially visible, wearing a grey sleeve. The background is blurred, showing other people in a dimly lit indoor setting. The text "Reaching Out For Help" is overlaid in white, centered across the hands.

Reaching Out For Help

# Finding Support

A good friend can be a lifeline. Someone who listens and supports you, someone who does not want to "fix" your feelings or situation. Perhaps an "isolation buddy" is just what you need right now. You can agree to check in, send funny pictures or a morning text, or have a Zoom coffee/tea time.

There are also wonderful counselors and support groups online.

Looking for a counselor? Try:

- [psychologytoday.com](https://www.psychologytoday.com)
- [zencare.com](https://www.zencare.com)
- [betterhelp.com](https://www.betterhelp.com)



# Resources and Hotlines

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline  
1-800-273-8255
  - Press 1 for Veterans services
- Ayuda En Español (24/7)  
1-888-628-9454
- Crisis Text Line: Text “HEAL” to 741741



**CRISIS TEXT LINE |**

TM

# Resources and Hotlines (con't)

- **Trans lifeline:** 877-565-8860 (24/7)
- **Trevor project:** 866-488-7386 (24/7)
- **Sexual assault hotline (RAINN):** 800-656-4673 (24/7)  
(or use live chat feature)
- **National domestic violence hotline:** 800-799-7233  
(24/7) (or use secure chat feature)
- **Addiction hotline (SAMHSA):** 800-662-4357 (24/7)
- **Disaster Distress Helpline (SAMHSA):** 1-800-985-5990  
(or text TalkWithUs to 66746)
- **Eating disorder hotline:** 800-931-2237  
(or text NEDA to 741741)





Who can I turn to for support  
right now?

Make a plan to reach out to  
them.



It can also help to support others.  
Who will you check in with today?


## Reflection

A pair of hands, one on the left and one on the right, are gently holding a small, vibrant green seedling. The seedling has two leaves, one of which is slightly larger and has a small notch at the top. The hands are positioned as if they are carefully supporting the plant. The background is dark and out of focus, making the hands and the seedling the central focus of the image. The overall mood is one of care and hope.


Finding Hope

# The Path To Hope


The path to hope begins by acknowledging our losses and allowing space for our feelings.



We eventually catch a glimpse of the light in the darkness as we nurture ourselves and reach out for support and to listen and be present for others.



We are more able to enjoy life and become more able to adapt to the changes.



Eventually, we may even begin to find meaning and gifts in the experience.



*“Hope is the feeling  
you have that the  
feeling you have isn’t  
permanent.”*

*Jean Kerr*





What are the signs of hope that you can recognize?



Have you noticed any gifts that have come from this time of change?

## Reflection

# Companioning children through grief

Let them lead

Encourage  
questions

Welcome all  
feelings (yours  
and theirs)

Be patient

Include them  
in  
conversations

Be honest and  
direct

Attend to your  
own grief

# Factors influencing grief



- Does the child have a support system?
- Are the adults in a child's life emotionally available to them?
- Is the child open to seeking support from the family?
- Is the child allowed to talk about the loss?
- Does the child's support system allow and encourage them to mourn?

# Other things to know about grieving children

- Children and youth want to share their experiences, and need permission to do so.
- Do not impose your beliefs on children and do not tell them what they should feel.
- Don't say, "I know how you feel".
- Each child is unique and each experience of grief is unique.
- If a child doesn't show their feelings it doesn't mean they don't care. Just like adults, they want to avoid pain.



# Other things to know about grieving children (cont.)

- Children often “act out” to get our attention.
- Grief is ongoing and doesn’t go through specific stages or end at a specific time.
- School is important to a child, but it doesn’t have to be too rigorous at this time.
- Answer questions as honestly and as simply as possible.
- Recognize that laughter and play are part of grieving

# Reflection for children and families

- That day – Sometimes everything changes all at once. Sometimes it changes slowly over time. Draw or write about a day that made things different. What is important about that day?
- Me Time – write or draw things that make you feel better when you feel sad

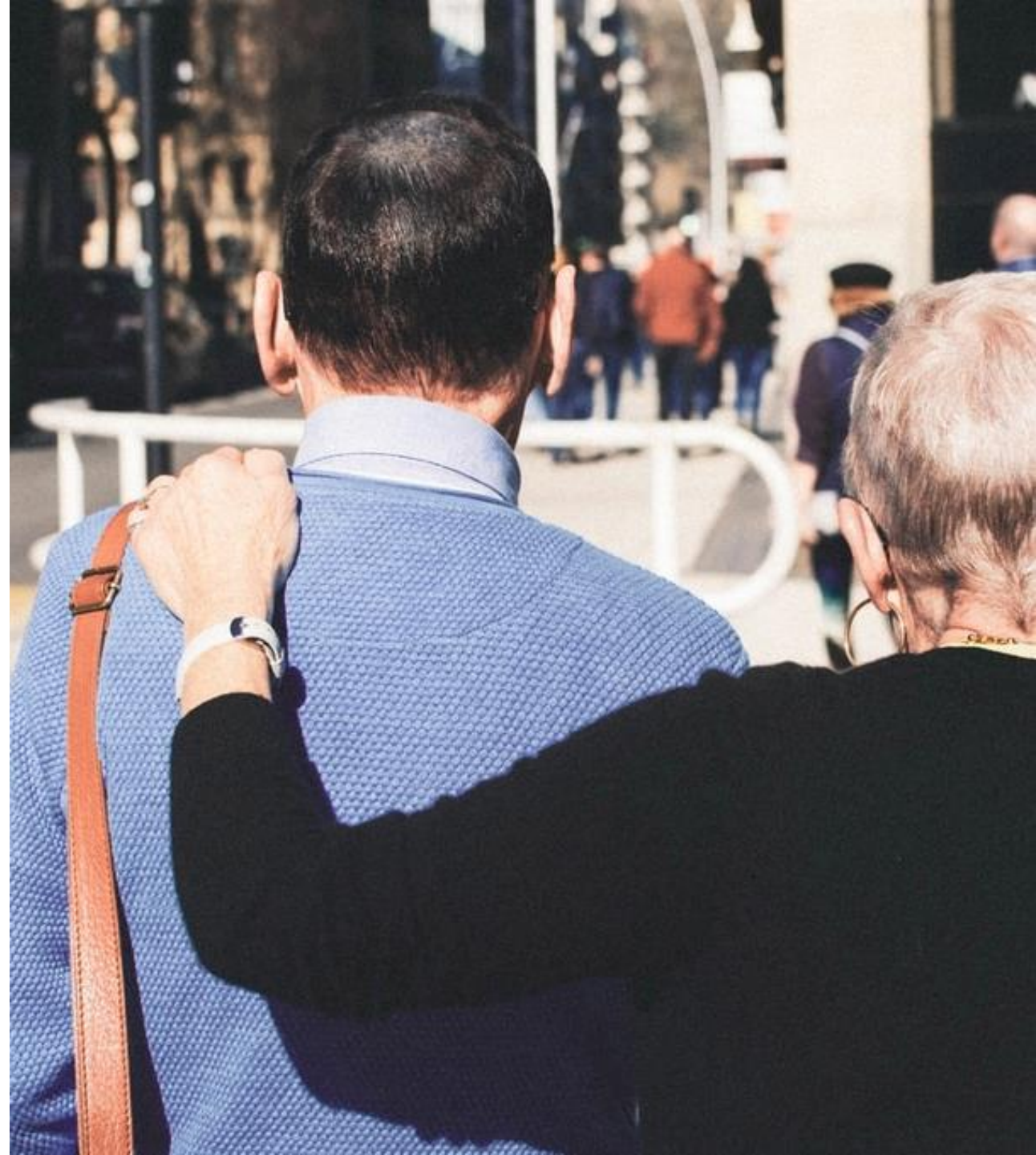


Sample activities from *Draw it Out (Art with Heart)*

<https://shop.artwithheart.org/products/draw-it-out>

*“Grief and gratitude are kindred souls, each pointing to the beauty of what is transient and given to us by grace.”*

*Patricia Campbell Carlson*



# 5 needs we all have right now



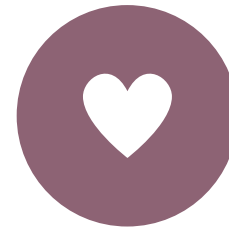
To acknowledge our  
feelings



To have support and  
be witnessed



To practice good self  
care and nurturing



To practice kindness  
with ourselves and  
others



To have hope for the  
future



# Guided Meditation for a Steady Heart



# Making changes for the future

How then shall we live?

When loss happens, there always seem to be gifts that appear over time. What are some of the gifts you are already noticing?

When the pandemic is over and many parts of life begin again, will you choose to live differently? What are some ways you hope that life will be different?

# Additional resources

- <https://whatsyourgrief.com/>
- <https://grief.com/>
- Additional links (sent in chat feature)



# Summary

- Grief is a normal response to loss and can be complicated in times of uncertainty, when a loss is sudden and traumatic, and when multiple losses occur
- Your grief is your grief
- Grief is the inner experience of loss; mourning is the outer expression.
- Mourning is essential for healing
- Grieving takes however long it takes; there is no timeline or linear stages
- Self care is important especially when grieving
- Children have unique needs when grieving
- Grief is not meant to be experienced alone

# What you can do today

- Acknowledge and feel feelings as they come up
- Give yourself space and time to grieve
- Practice kindness and compassion with yourself and others
- Connect with others that can offer support
- Be a supportive listener for others when you can
- Nurture yourself! Name one thing you can do for yourself today
- Spend time outside and enjoy the beauty of the world
- Share this message of hope







*“Hope” is the thing with feathers –*

*That perches in the soul –*

*And sings the tune without the words –*

*And never stops – at all –*

*– Emily Dickinson*

# THANK YOU!

Forefront Suicide Prevention  
UW School of Social Work  
4101 15th Avenue NE, Box 354900  
Seattle, WA 98195-4900



[intheforefront.org](https://intheforefront.org)



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***Have more questions?  
Want to provide feedback  
on this training?***

**Please contact  
Emma Mallonee at  
[emallone@uw.edu](mailto:emallone@uw.edu)**





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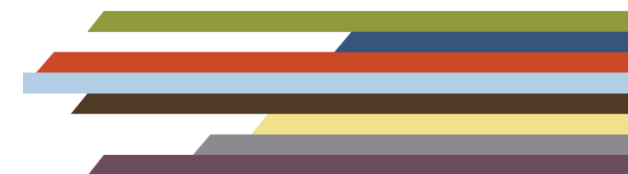
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### Websites:

- MHTTC: <https://tinyurl.com/nwsmh>
- UW SMART Center:  
<https://depts.washington.edu/uwsmart/>

## Sign up for our Newsletter!

<https://tinyurl.com/smh-news>



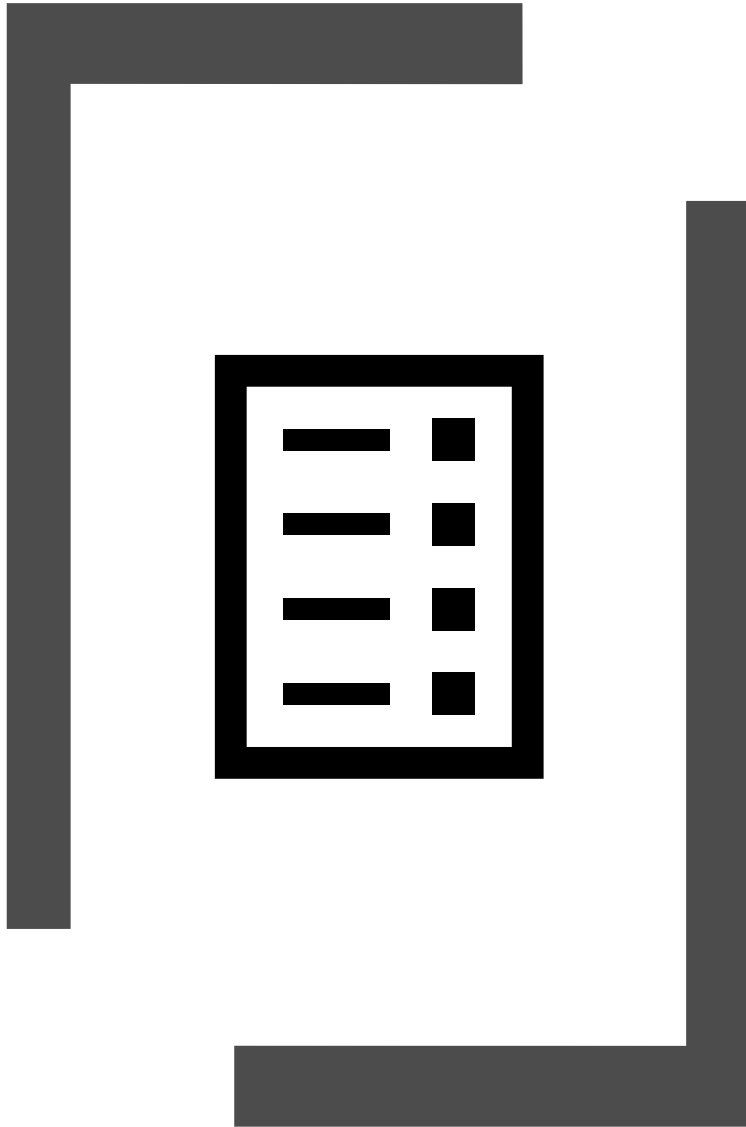
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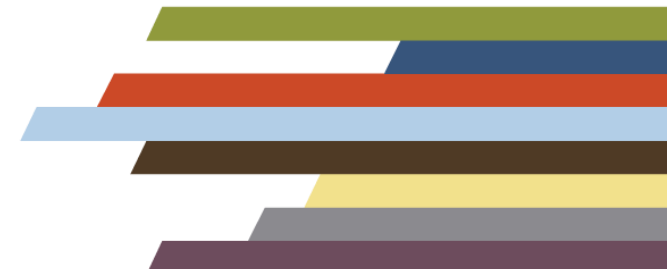


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# Q&A GUIDELINES

- We will answer unanswered questions from the webinar first
- Please enter your questions in the Q&A feature
- Please be respectful and courteous when asking your questions
- Remember – this is a public webinar! We cannot guarantee the privacy of your questions
- If you are concerned about yourself or loved one, please call the Suicide Prevention Lifeline and/or your primary care doctor.

