

Moving Forward:

INTEGRATING LOSS, GRIEF, AND
BEREAVEMENT INTO DAILY LIFE

Part One:
*Understanding
and integrating
the experience of
loss...*

Understanding
Loss

Living Loss and
Communal Grief

Essential
Processes of
Grief and
Mourning

Distinguishing
Complicated
Grief from
"Normal" Grief

Considerations
for Integrating
Loss



**Part Two:
Tools, Resources,
and Activities for
the Journey
Forward**

Tools for Assessing and Supporting
Oneself and Others

Writing Your Story: Accessing Personal
Power through Narrative

Mindfulness and Other Supports

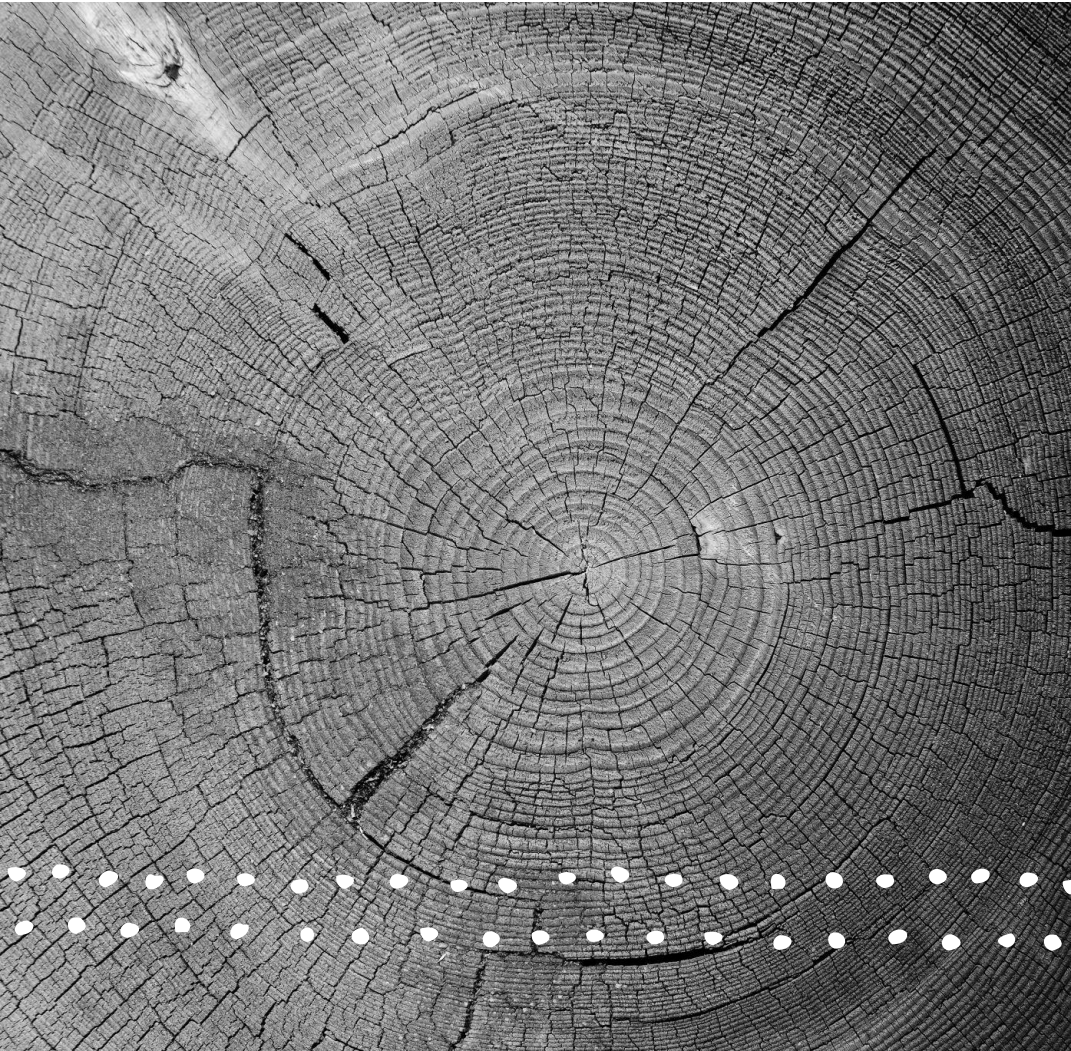
Discussion



Grief is a universal as well as a personal experience...it is the natural response to the loss of someone or something that is an essential part of one's life.



What losses do we mourn?



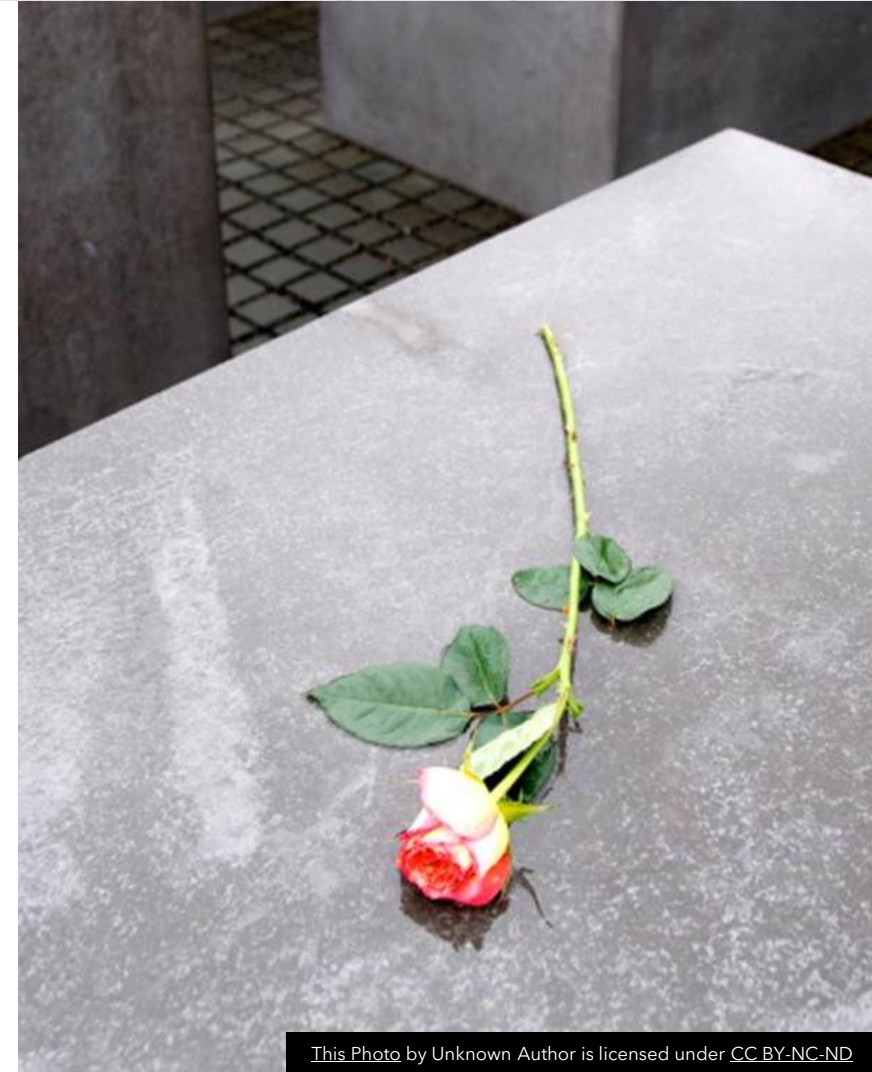
- Loss of a loved one: a beloved family member: a parent, a sibling, a child
- Loss of a cherished friend or co-worker
- Loss of a job or a home
- Loss of the familiar: a routine, a way of life, the comfort of the predictable
- Loss of a significant role or identity

All losses are significant

A loss is a loss

Many people minimize personal losses as: "I know others have lost more"

No judgement around the grief process



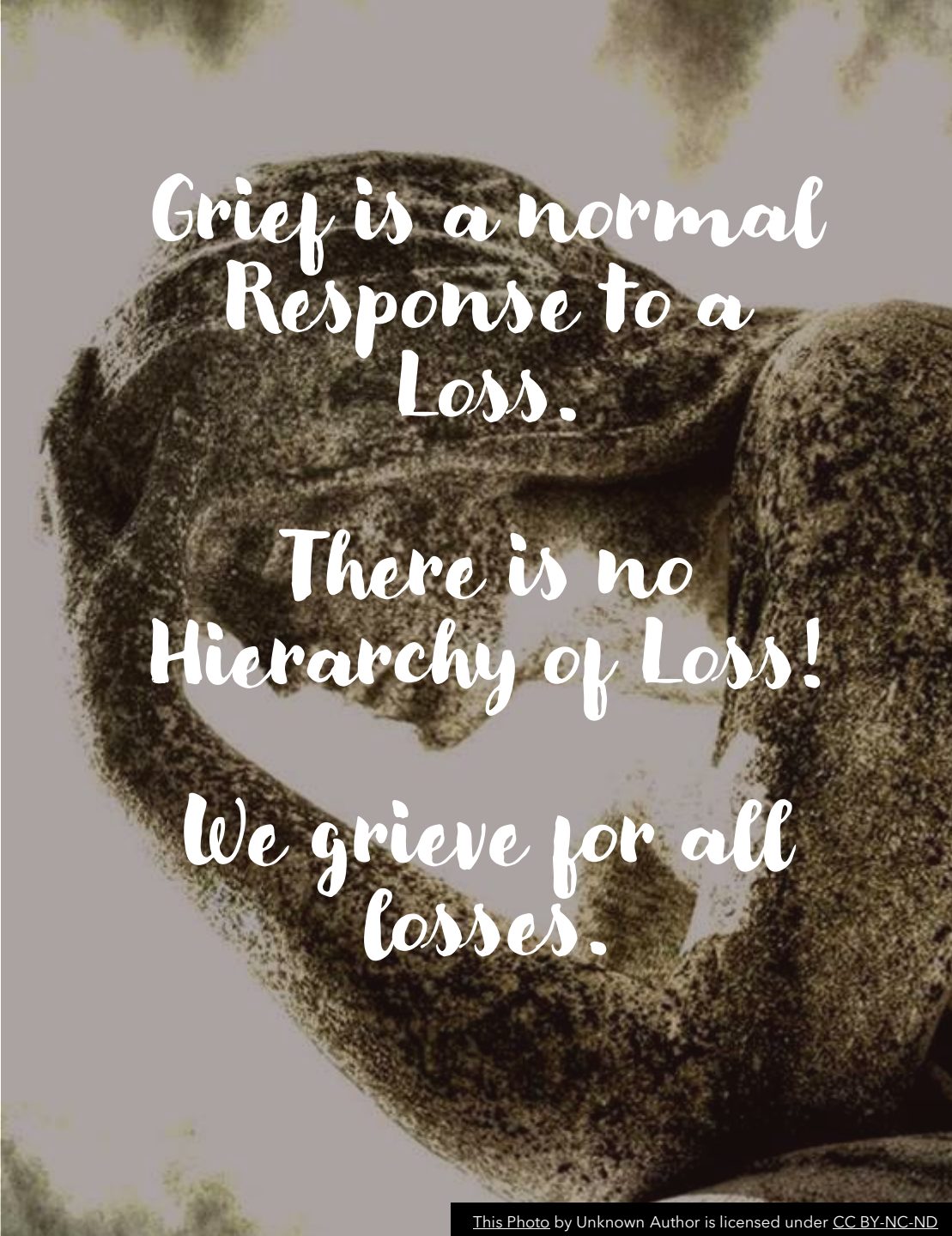
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Grief & Mourning are as unique to each person as their fingerprints...

Grief is a normal part of life: it is an organic process in response to loss

It is a personal experience: your own journey and response to loss

Grief is not an illness or a disability – it needs to be supported – but not **“fixed”**



Grief is a normal
Response to a
Loss.

There is no
Hierarchy of Loss!

We grieve for all
losses.

- **Primary Loss**
- **Secondary Loss**
- **Multiple Losses**
- **Ambiguous Loss**
- **Stigmatized Loss**

Zhai, Yusen, and Xue Du. "Loss and grief amidst COVID-19: A path to adaptation and resilience." *Brain, behavior, and immunity* vol. 87 (2020): 80-81.
doi:10.1016/j.bbi.2020.04.053

Primary Loss

- Death of a loved one, someone who has been an integral part of one's life: death of a spouse, a parent, a child
- Results in a major life change: a wife becomes a widow, a husband becomes a widower, a daughter/son becomes an "orphan"
- We consider it "reasonable" to mourn this kind of loss: we don't tend to judge ourselves or others for engaging in the grief process

Zhai, Yusen, and Xue Du. "Loss and grief amidst COVID-19: A path to adaptation and resilience." *Brain, behavior, and immunity* vol. 87 (2020): 80-81. doi:10.1016/j.bbi.2020.04.053



Secondary Loss

Secondary losses evolve from the primary loss. There is grief over the primary loss as well as grief as the result of

- loss of companionship
- loss of identity as a wife, sibling, parent & the activities that are a part of this role
- loss of a sexual relationship
- loss of a role in the community





Multiple Losses

- Multiple losses are connected to each other or occur within a short period of time: losing friends and family members during a natural disaster such as a storm, earthquake, or the COVID-19 pandemic
- Loss of a personal capability or role that creates disconnection from social contacts, physical activities, daily routines (examples: loss of a job, sudden physical impairment, COVID-19 pandemic)
- Multiple losses have the potential to create “Bereavement Overload” - compassion fatigue, burn-out, increased alcohol & substance use

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Ambivalent Loss

- Experienced frequently during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Nurses/doctors/caregivers often needed to self-quarantine from family to avoid making them sick: loss of physical contact despite continued psychological connection
- Stigmatized loss: being blamed for contracting/transmitting illness leads to alienation and loss of support networks



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Stages of Grief – Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (1969)

A decorative horizontal line composed of small, light purple dots, spanning the width of the slide below the title.

Denial

Anger

Bargaining

Depression/Despair

Acceptance

What is the "Normal" Process of Moving through these Stages?

- Stages of Grief are not linear -- do not need to be experienced as a sequence
- Grief is part of the human experience, not an illness. One doesn't "recover" from grief because the loss is forever
- Each stage may be iterative – experienced again and again in the process of learning and understanding

Denial

- Inability to accept what has occurred: unable to grasp that the world has changed, a prevailing sense of disorientation and disbelief
- Process of absorbing and understanding what has happened ... mind tries to slow down the recognition/awareness of what has occurred so that it does not become overwhelmed
- Things seem unreal and confused
- Not a pathological process!





- An effort to regain a sense of **control** over one's world – to identify who/what is responsible & understand **why** the loss has occurred
- A way to mitigate/manage feelings like sadness, vulnerability, and powerlessness
- Anger can provide a structure for managing more overpowering feelings
- May be characterized by outbursts, behavior that is aggressive and harmful to self or others

Bargaining

- Adjunct effort to re-establishing a sense of autonomy and control
- The mind attempts to alter the outcome of the loss; thoughts of “If only...what if” are common
- Bargaining is often accompanied by feelings of guilt: obsessively seeking things that could have been done better or differently to create a different outcome
- Guilt is a frequent partner in this process



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Depression



- An essential part of the natural evolution of the grief process
- Feelings of hopelessness, even despair common
- Reduced energy, low motivation
- Sadness, crying, lack of interest in everyday activities
- **Not** pathological or a sign of mental illness: what has happened is sad and depression is a normal, expected response: it's how the mind processes and integrates what has happened

Acceptance

- Final stage in the Kübler-Ross Model
- Beginning to live within the context of the “new normal”
- Being mindful, living in the moment, engaging with reality
- There may be more “good days” than “bad days”



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Complicated Grief

- Also called Persistent Complex Bereavement Disorder
- A matter of degree: normal grief process seems to stall, person continues to struggle intensely
- Ability to function in normal routines, work, or with friends and others is impaired
- Sadness is overwhelming, deep depression and/or guilt may be present
- Person may have concrete suicidal thoughts
- Seeking professional help through counseling and therapy indicated

Source: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/complicated-grief/symptoms-causes/syc-20360374>

Grief and the COVID-19 pandemic

An experience of “collective grief” – everyone is losing something

Loss of loved ones is complicated by inability to be near them during their illness and the absence of typical rituals of mourning

Loss of confidence in systems we believed were stable and reliable: health care, education, even government

Many losses are ambiguous-- hard to name or define, there is a communal sense of loss as our once-predictable way of life dissolves

A person is seen from behind, sitting in a kayak on a calm body of water. The scene is misty or foggy, with the background obscured by a soft, greyish haze. The water is dark and still, reflecting the light from the sky. The overall mood is quiet and contemplative.

Languishing: not grief but something else

- Adam Grant, organizational psychologist at Wharton calls languishing “the neglected middle child of mental health”
- Perhaps the most prevalent emotion of 2021
- A sense of stagnation and emptiness
- Mental foggiess – difficulty concentrating, feeling aimless
- The “absence of well-being”
- 2020 evidence from Italy indicates that individuals who languish may be at greater risk for developing PTSD



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Finding Meaning: Moving Forward

- David Kessler: Finding Meaning: the final step in the Grief Process
- Tools for Finding Meaning
 - Naming what has happened: a way to understand the experience
 - Writing about the experience, developing a grief journal
 - Mindfulness Meditation and Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction
- Supporting each other: assessing for and responding to Complicated Grief
- Support groups and other options for sharing experiences of loss

A wide-angle photograph of a coastal dune landscape. A wooden boardwalk, constructed from light-colored planks, starts in the foreground and curves gently to the right, leading the viewer's eye into the distance. The dunes are covered in a mix of green grasses and low-lying shrubs, with patches of exposed sand visible on the crests. In the far background, a dense line of evergreen trees marks the horizon under a heavy, overcast sky with soft, diffused light. The overall mood is serene and natural.

Part Two: July 29, 2021
Tools, Resources & Activities for the
Journey Forward

A decorative wavy graphic that spans the width of the image. It features a color gradient starting with bright yellow on the left, transitioning through orange and red in the middle, and ending with deep purple and magenta on the right. The waves are fluid and organic, creating a sense of movement and depth.

Moving Forward:

Part Two

**Integrating Loss, Grief, and Bereavement into
Daily Life**

Part Two: Tools, Resources, and Activities for the Journey Forward

Brief review of topics discussed in Part One

Tools for Assessing and Supporting Oneself and Others, including teens and children

Writing Your Story: Accessing Personal Power through Narrative

Mindfulness and Other Supports

Discussion



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A loss is a loss

Many people minimize personal losses as: “I know others have lost more”

No judgement around the grief process

*Grief & Mourning are
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Grief is a normal part of life: it is an organic process in response to loss

It is a personal experience: your own journey and response to loss

Grief is not an illness or a disability – it needs to be supported – but not **“fixed”**



A person stands at the end of a long, narrow wooden pier that stretches from the bottom left towards the center of the frame. The pier is made of weathered wooden planks. The person is seen from behind, wearing a dark jacket and pants, looking out over a vast, misty body of water. The sky is a pale, hazy blue, and the water reflects the light, creating a serene and contemplative atmosphere.

**Grief is a normal Response to a Loss.
There is no Hierarchy of Loss!
We grieve for all losses.**

- **Primary Loss**
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What is the "Normal" Process of Moving through these Stages?

- Grieving is unique to each person: as individual as our fingerprints
- The Stages of Grief describe the way the mind works to maintain equilibrium as it understands and integrates the unimaginable
- Grief is normal it is NOT pathological
- A loss is forever – it changes us forever. We don't recover from the loss but we learn to incorporate it into our experience of life
- People move through the Stages of Grief at their own pace and may return to a stage over and over



When Normal Processes Stall...

- A matter of degree: grief process began to impact the ability to function in daily routines – self-care, work, interactions with families and friends
- Overwhelming sadness and/or guilt may be present
- Suicidal thoughts are common
- This is Complicated Grief, also known as Persistent Complex Bereavement Disorder (DSM V and ICD 11)
- Seeking professional help through primary physician and counseling/therapy indicated



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The Center for Complicated Grief

- Under the auspices of Columbia University
- Goals for professionals: to ensure that all health and mental health professionals are able to recognize prolonged grief and initiate interventions
- Goals for the public: to increase awareness of prolonged grief in the general populations
- Offer professional education and training in evidence-based treatment for prolonged grief
- Website: <https://complicatedgrief.columbia.edu>

Children and Teens Grief Experiences

- Children struggle with the loss of people who have been significant in their lives
- Their grief processes are as unique as the relationships: they grieve for the person whether the relationship was loving or difficult
- Just as with adults: grief is a normal process, it does not need to be “fixed,” but rather honored



Supporting Children and Teens as they Grieve

Children and young people need to know the truth: it is okay to use real words like death, dead, dying

Rituals are as important to children & teens as they are to adults: make accommodations if a child/teen is reluctant to attend a funeral: arrange something more personal

Continue to talk about the loss and encourage the person to share their feelings and thoughts as well

Grief is a lifelong journey: it doesn't go away!



Grief Extends Into Adulthood

- Grief “moments” may occur as children and teens move forward with their lives
- Grief may be “awoken” in conjunction with important events: graduation from high school/college, getting a drivers license, getting married, the birth of a child
- Encourage the person to tell their stories and name their experiences: grief is part of who they are
- Children and young adults often experience personal growth as part of their grief journeys: they become more compassionate, appreciate life more, value relationships more

Source: <https://childrengrieve.org/resources/about-childhood-grief>

A decorative tile pattern with various geometric and floral designs in black and white, located on the left side of the slide.

Honor the Grief Journey

- Your journey is your journey: honor your process
- Naming your experience of loss is can be the first step towards processing what you are feeling
- Journaling is a powerful place to begin
- Your journal is whatever you want it to be:
 - Something you write
 - Something you describe and record on a personal device
 - A collage of pictures from photo albums or collected from media
 - A collection of your own sketches, paintings, sculpture
- The space you are giving yourself is what is important

Benefits of Journaling

- You can “talk out” what you’re experiencing with yourself— you can engage in a completely personal and private process
- Journaling helps you recognize and name what has happened; it gives your mind a chance to integrate the experience
- Some research indicates that journaling supports improved physical health – lowers blood pressure & heart
- Offers the opportunity for a regular routine within the disruption caused by the loss



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Moving Forward with Mindfulness

- Mindful Meditation is a proven technique for managing stress, grief, and trauma
- Over 200 studies have noted that regular mindful meditation helps to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression





How Does Mindfulness Work?

- Mindfulness practice involves two steps: Attention and Acceptance
- Training your Attention: Focus on the present. Your breath. What you hear. What you smell. What you feel in your body. What you feel in your heart.
- Acceptance: Accept your feelings, sensations and thoughts *without judgement*. You are fine just the way you are. You are feeling what you are feeling. There is no right or wrong way to feel.

How & Where Can You Learn Mindfulness?

- Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR): 8 weeks of group classes and homework with a focus on increasing mindfulness meditation through meditation and yoga
- Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT): a therapeutic intervention combining elements of MBSR with Cognitive Behavior Treatment (CBT); specifically treats depression
- Many yoga studios, wellness centers, and even wellness-based spas offer mindfulness training
- Online mindfulness classes also available and have been found to be effective





Additional Resources and Supports

- Read and explore: remember that grief is a universal human experience, we all experience it, many of us write about it
- *Finding Meaning: The Sixth Stage of Grief*, by David Kessler
- *Five Stages of Grief*:
<https://www.psycom.net/depression.central.grief.html>
- Video: *Five Areas of Grief*, <https://grief.com/the-five-stages-of-grief/>



Discussion
