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THE CENTRE
FOR AWARENESS
& RESPONSE TO
END OF LIFE

Bereavement, grief and loss: supporting yourself and others

One Croydon Training Programme

Check in

My name...

My role ...

Right now I'm feeling...

At the end of this session I would like to
feel...



Session Agenda

What we will cover today

- An Introduction to Loss
- Supporting someone through loss
- Tender conversations
- Looking after ourselves



Group Agreements

- I will allow for silence when others are speaking
- I will accept you are you are, just as I welcome myself as I am. I understand there is no pressure for anyone to share.
- I will listen to you deeply and attentively.
- I will share from my personal experience and not assume anything of yours.
- I will choose my words with care, aware of power and privileges in the space.
- I will keep what is shared in this space confidential.



Understanding Loss, Grief and Bereavement

Loss

- Loss is an inevitable part of life-everyone will experience it in some form
- Loss includes a lot of different things including: relationship, health, income, family, friend, faith, home, employment...
- Loss causes different reactions in different people
- Any loss can cause grief

Grief

- Grief is a feeling or emotion felt when we lose something
- Grief is a normal and healthy response to loss
- There is no right or wrong way to grieve

Bereavement

- Bereavement is a specific type of grief related to someone's death
- Bereavement is a state of being in grief
- Bereavement process involves accepting the loss and learning to continue in life whilst carrying it.

How we experience loss



Thoughts

Disbelief
Confusion
Preoccupation
Sense of presence
Hallucinations



Behaviours

Sleep disturbance
Loss of appetite
Absent mindedness
Dreams/
Nightmares
Searching
Sighing/crying
Hyperactivity
Treasuring objects
Avoiding reminders



Feelings

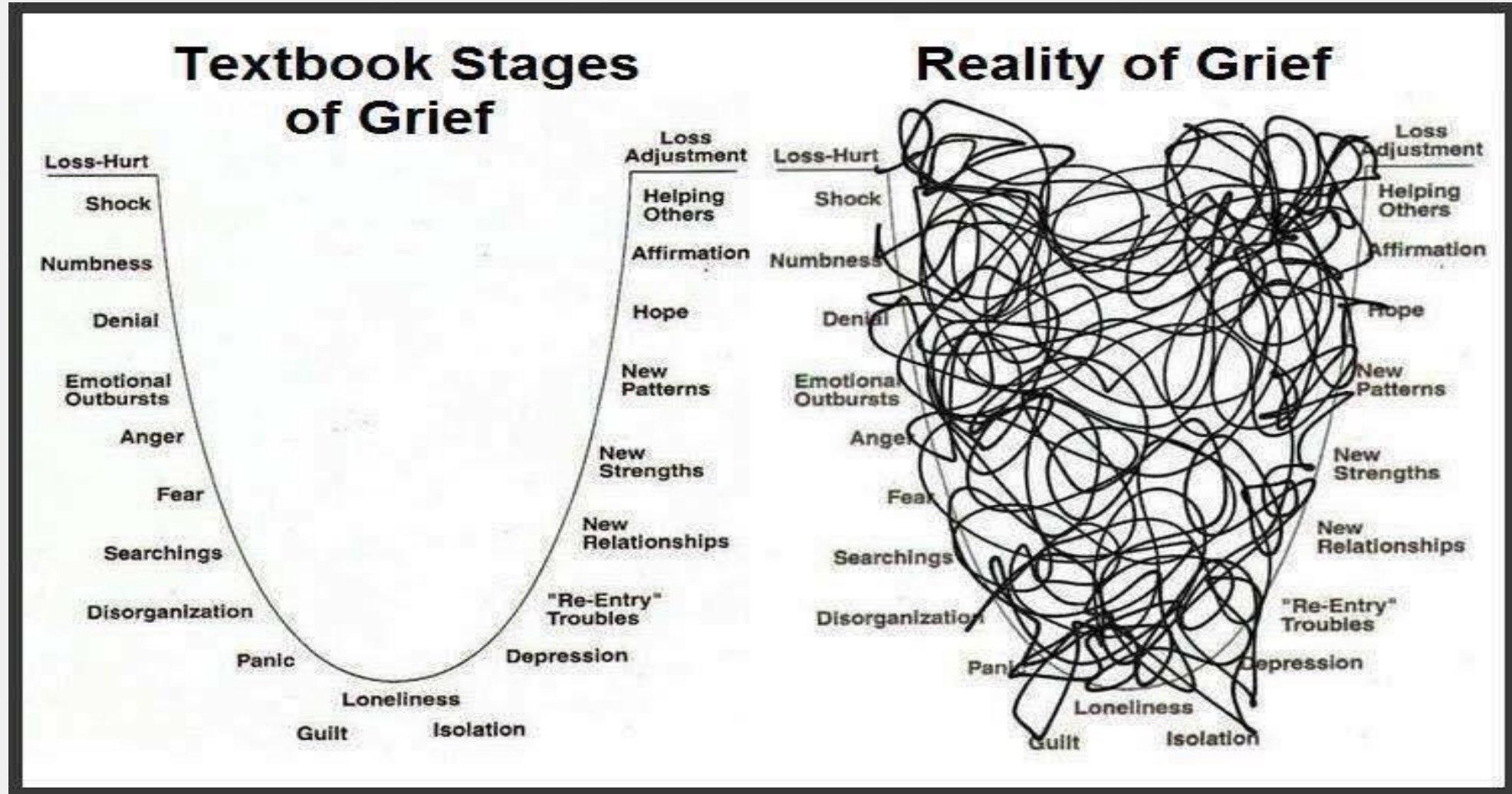
Sadness
Anger
Helplessness
Anxiety/fear
Yearning
Numbness
Shock
Jealousy
Social loneliness
Guilt
Depersonalisation
Tiredness
Relief
Worthlessness
Emancipation



Physical Sensations

Hollowness
in stomach
Tightness in chest
Tightness in throat
Breathlessness
Lack of energy
Dry mouth
Oversensitivity
to noise

Realities of Grief



Tonkin's Theory of Grief

'GROWING AROUND GRIEF' (LOIS TONKIN, 1996)

WHATSYOURGRIEF.COM



“Grief has been colonized by the clinical world, taken hostage by diagnoses and pharmaceutical regimes. For the most part, grief is not a problem to be solved, not a condition to be medicated, but a deep encounter with an essential experience of being human. Grief becomes problematic when the conditions needed to help us work with grief are absent.”

- *The Wild Edge of Sorrow*, Francis Weller

Various experiences of loss

- **Anticipatory loss** – Grief that is felt in anticipation of someone's death-often starts when someone receives a diagnosis
- **Secondary loss** – Loss we might experience after someone dies (such as a loss of community, worldview, faith, sense of self, finances etc..)
- **Ambiguous loss** – Grief that we experience when grieving someone who is still living
- **Cumulative loss** – The experience of suffering a new loss before you have a chance to grieve the first loss, or experiencing multiple losses in quick succession
- **Disenfranchised loss** – Grief that is not or cannot be openly acknowledged, socially validated, or publicly supported

Secondary loss after someone dies

- **Loss of identity**
- **Loss/change in relationship**
- **Loss of home**
- **Loss of memories**
- **Loss of finances**
- **Loss of friendships**
- **Loss of traditions**
- **Loss of faith**
- **Loss of hope, dreams, plans**



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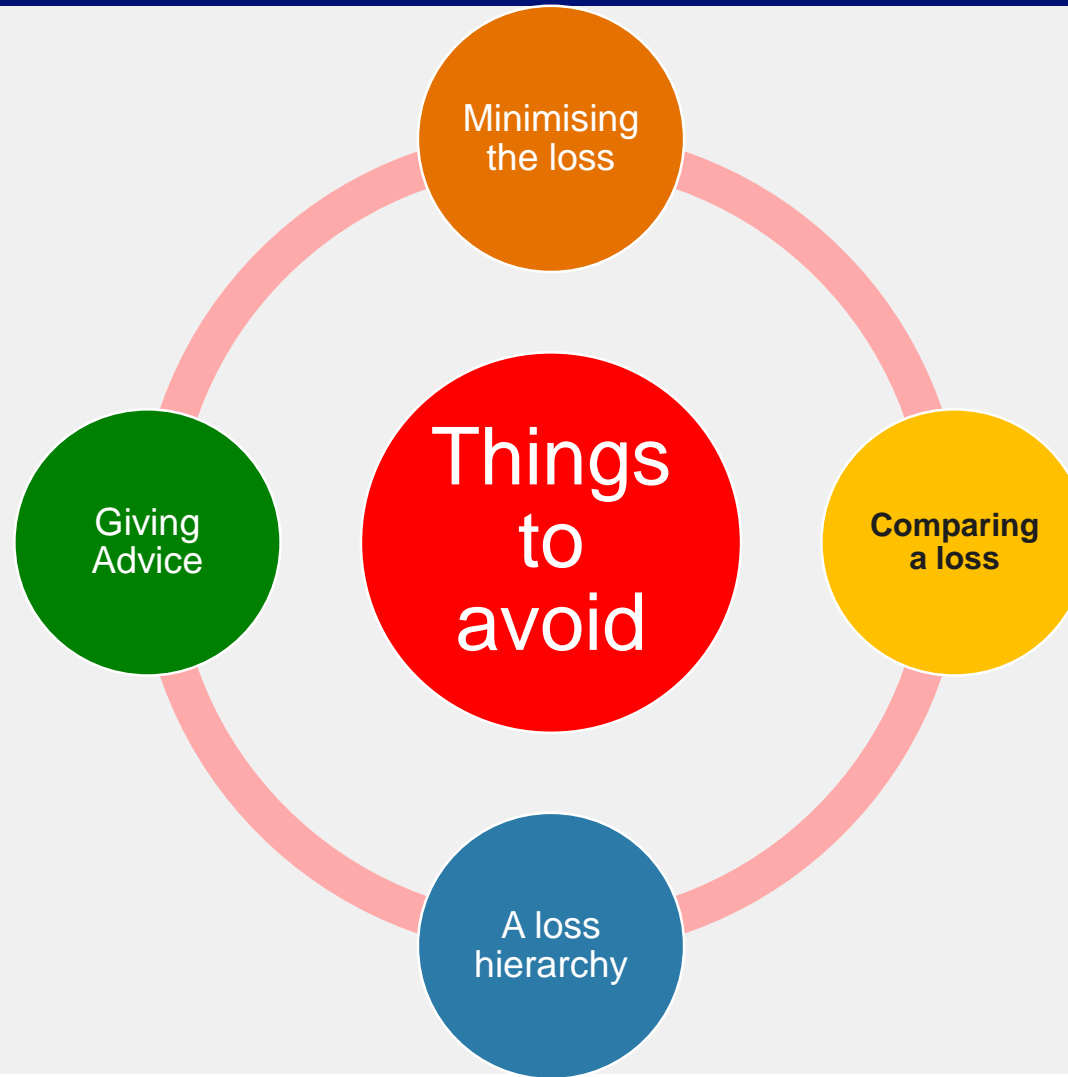
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Supporting someone through loss

What to avoid when supporting someone through a loss



Some things to be mindful of..

What can be helpful	What might not be helpful
Respect their choices	Resort to platitudes (everything happens for a reason, they're in a better place...)
Give someone space to feel whatever it is they need to feel	Expect people to "get over it"
Include others in your plans	Ignore a loss
Encourage them to go out	Avoid talking about the loved one who died
Offer to help out with practical things or take me out for a walk	Tell people not to cry
Respect someone's choice if they don't want to talk about them	Avoid them because you're awkward
Mention the person who died and ask questions	Take things personally (e.g. if someone is behaving in a certain way)

Common reasons we might not actually be helping

We know what helped us and think it will help someone else

We might find certain beliefs we hold are comforting to us (but they may not be to others!)

We may have our own values that we live by but that don't align with somebody else's values

We might not know what to say so fill silences out of awkwardness

What we can do to support

Give time and space if they need

Let them know you are thinking about them and are there to listen when they are ready

Talk about their person

Reach out even if they don't respond immediately

Things you may hear people saying...

- When will I stop grieving?
- I think there's something wrong with me as I feel relief that X died...
- I don't think it's helpful to talk about my grief/loss. I need strategies to move on
- I should feel "normal" by now, shouldn't I?
- I feel depressed do you think I should ask my GP for antidepressants?
- I can't seem to move on...When will my life return to 'normal'?
- It sounds crazy, but I still talk to them/her/him.
- When will I stop feeling sad/depressed/angry?
- I don't want to live without them/her/him.

Have you ever...

...avoided a conversation because you thought:

Oh no, this is going to be tough. I don't know what to say.

Have you ever...

...had the feeling that someone avoided a conversation with you because you were grieving or bereaved?

Have you ever...

...felt frustrated when you want to talk about something and the person kept suggesting solutions to the situation while you just want to talk about how you were feeling?

Or said: “at least...” “look at the bright side...”

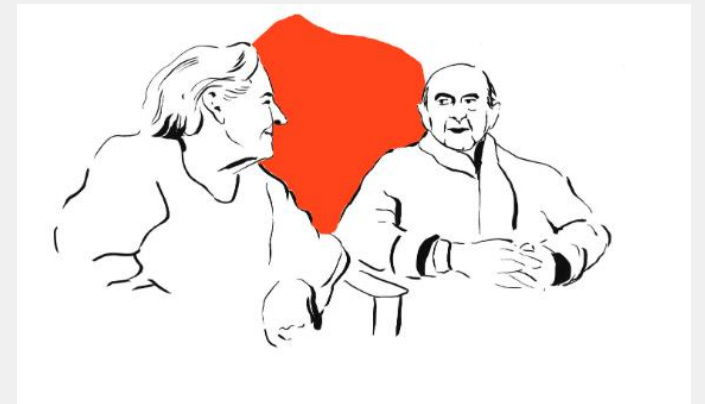
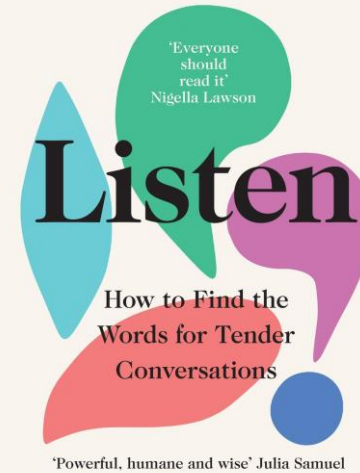
5 minute break



How can we talk about 'difficult' feelings and experiences?



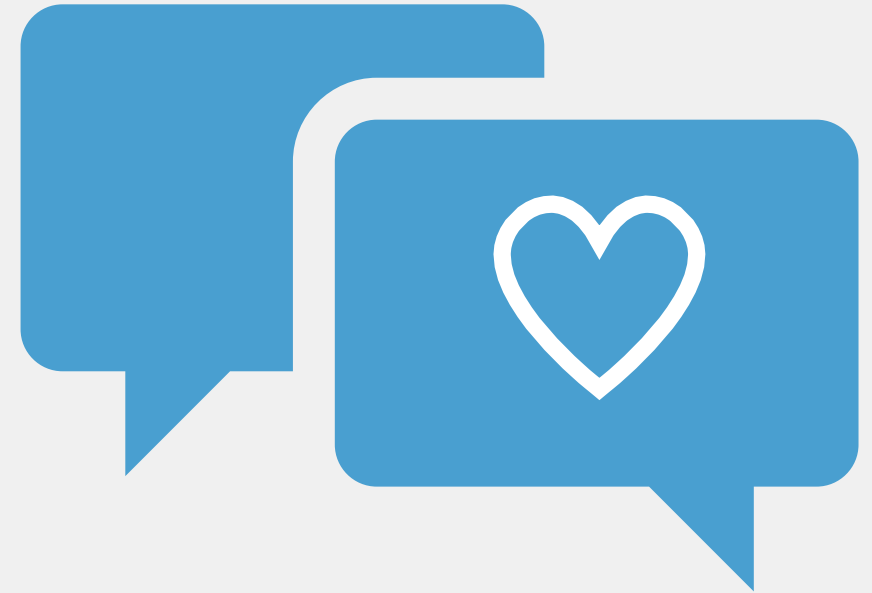
THE SUNDAY TIMES BESTSELLER
Kathryn Mannix
Bestselling author of *With the End in Mind*



Tender Conversations

Key principles

- **Invite, don't insist**
- **Be curious and not opinionated**
- **Sit with distress without trying to make it better**
- **Support, don't fix**
- **Listen**



The Compassionate Chats Model

What are the aims of the compassionate chats?

- To encourage people to think openly about death, dying and loss.
- To provide a space to ask questions and share.
- To build awareness, skills and knowledge in caring about and caring for each other and ourselves approaching the end of life.
- To help people support one another when approaching the end of someone's life.

Self-Care

**“How you are
is as important as
what you do.”**

- Dr. Jeree Pawl



**“CARING FOR MYSELF IS
NOT SELF-INDULGENCE, IT
IS SELF-PRESERVATION,
AND THAT IS AN ACT OF
POLITICAL WARFARE.”**

~AUDRE LORDE



“Grief is essential to finding and maintaining a feeling of emotional intimacy with life, with one another, and with our own soul...Grief work offers us a trail leading back to the vitality that is our birth right. When we fully honour our many losses, our lives become more fully able to embody the wild joy that aches to leap from our hearts into the shimmering world. ”

- *The Wild Edge of Sorrow*, Francis Weller

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QUESTIONS & REFLECTIONS

Feedback of your experience today

- <https://www.menti.com/alj3rqw6vskc>



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Thank you!

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www.stchristophers.org.uk/CARE