
"A Narrative Approach to Grief: Honoring Life and Storytelling in Grief Support."

Presented by
Kelly Russell

Objectives of this presentation



DEFINE LOSS, GRIEF, AND
MOURNING



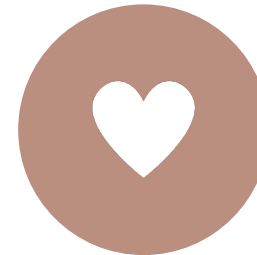
REVIEW THE STAGES OF
GRIEF AND SEE THEM AS
“PHASES”



SECONDARY LOSSES



EXPLORE FOUR
TRADITIONAL STRATEGIES
FOR ADDRESSING GRIEF



ADDRESSING GRIEF
THROUGH STORIES



SPECIFIC STRATEGIES FOR
ADDRESSING GRIEF IN
GROUP SETTINGS

Defining Loss, Grief, and Mourning

- Loss - the reality that something that we sense as normal has been shaken or changed.
 - Grief - internal thoughts and feelings that we personally associate with the loss. Grief is unique to the individual but can also be shared by a group of people.
 - Mourning - occurs when we take grief and express it outwardly in some or multiple ways.
-

Stages “Phases” of Grief (Ross)

Denial: happens when we don't recognize or acknowledge the death/loss.

Anger: is a response that is counter to vulnerability. (which we do not like to be because we are afraid of getting hurt again, and no one really understands our grief like us)

Bargaining: Occurs out of a feeling of helplessness. It may involve wanting the patient back and may also be a time when we focus on personal faults or regrets.

Depression: In this stage/phase, we often retreat. We allow sadness to grow and become less sociable or numb when we are social. Depression can even ooze out of us (leakage).

Acceptance: This stage/phase does not mean that we do not feel the loss, instead it means we accept the reality of the situation, and we have decided to embrace some sense of new self.

Secondary Losses

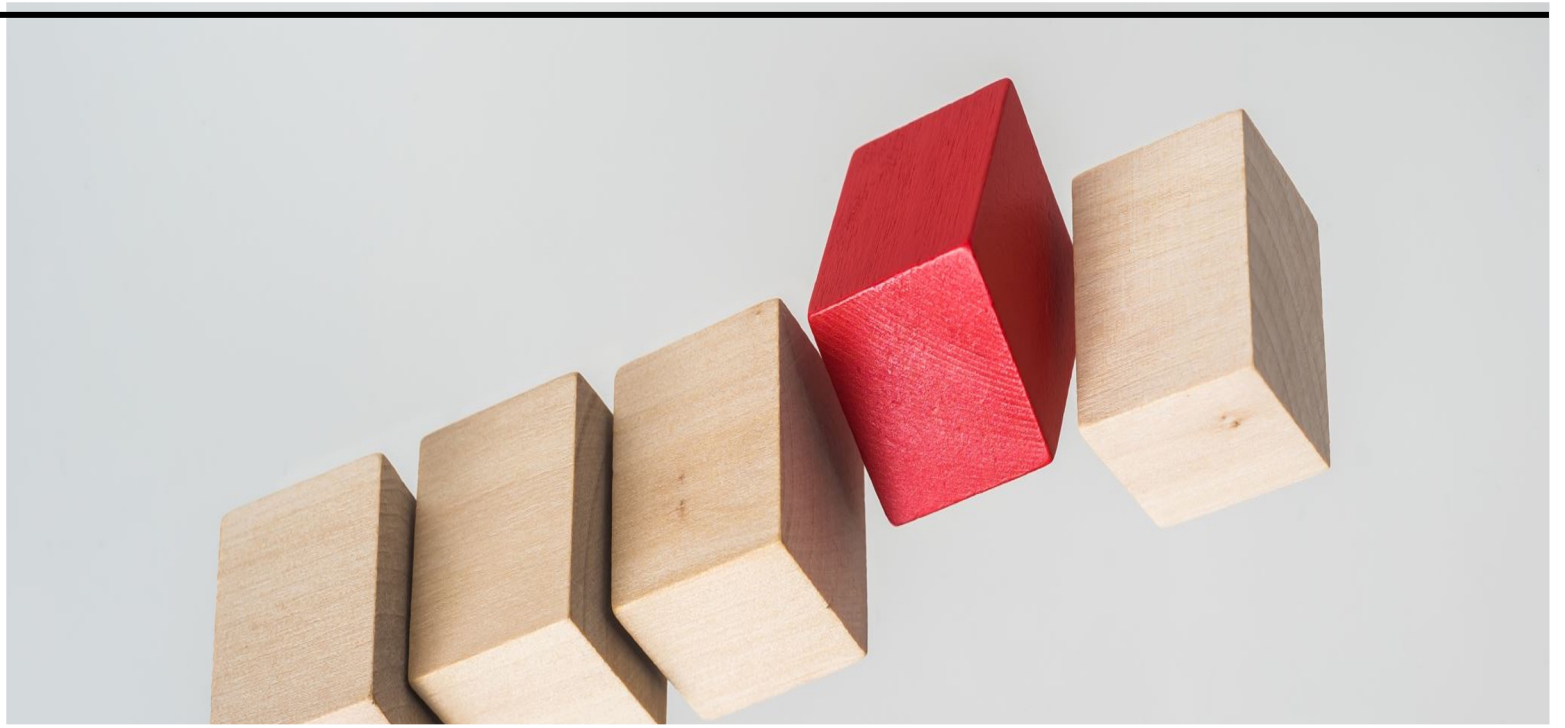
Disenfranchised loss – a loss that cannot be expressed publicly because it is or may be perceived as socially unacceptable, misunderstood, or you are trying to take care of others needs (can include self-disenfranchisement)

Ambiguous loss – occurs when we are unsure what to grieve, this can happen when we see secondary losses in others (family members hurting or reacting/acting out in different ways than normal), when others withdraw, or when we start to identify ourselves as new (differentiated) again and wonder if we are still honoring our loved one

Cultural and role loss – a loss that occurs when your role shifts, changes, or is gone, this can also be expressed as the culture of normal changing in the place where the loss occurred

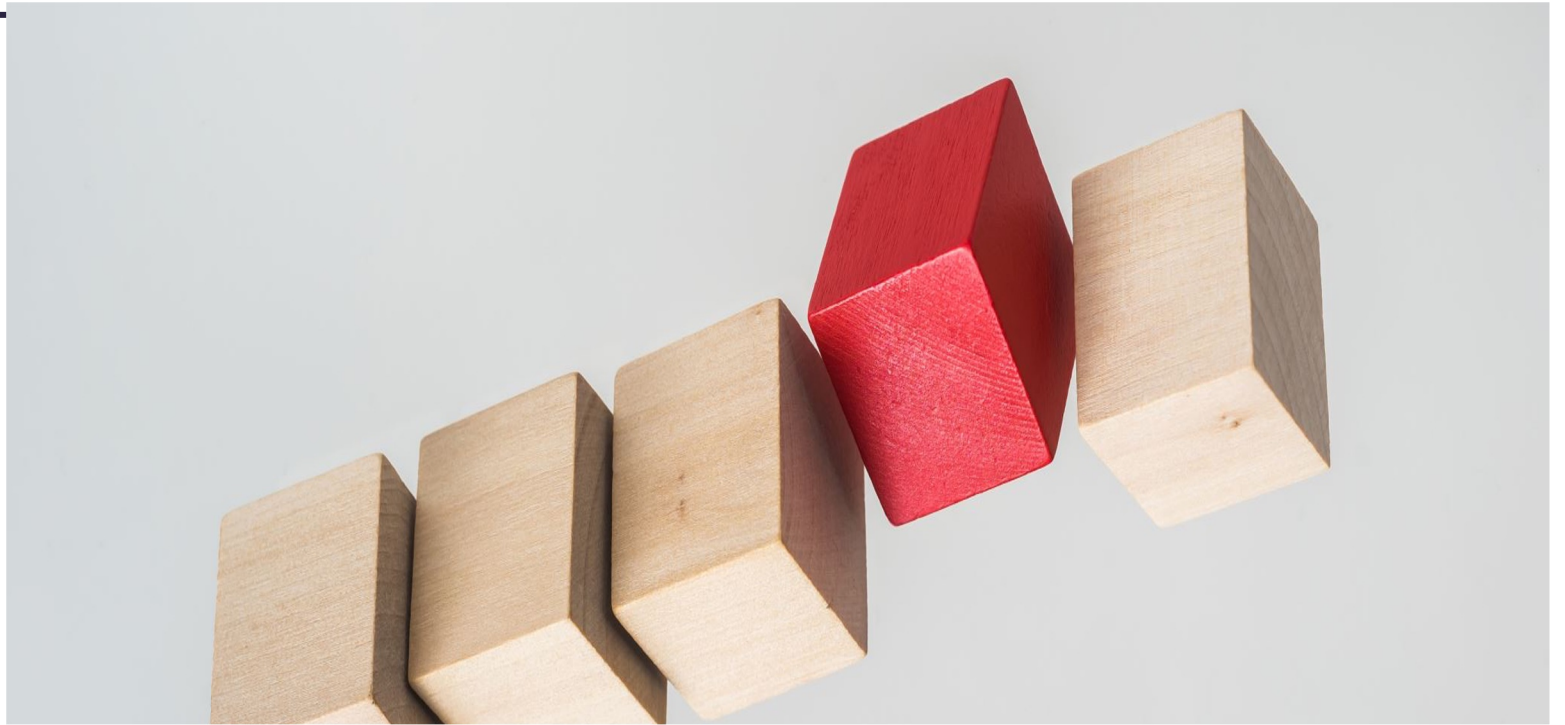
Dehumanize the loss – this can happen when we memorialize the person as flawless, which may not allow us to fully grieve the loss or live forward well

Responses to Loss - Physical



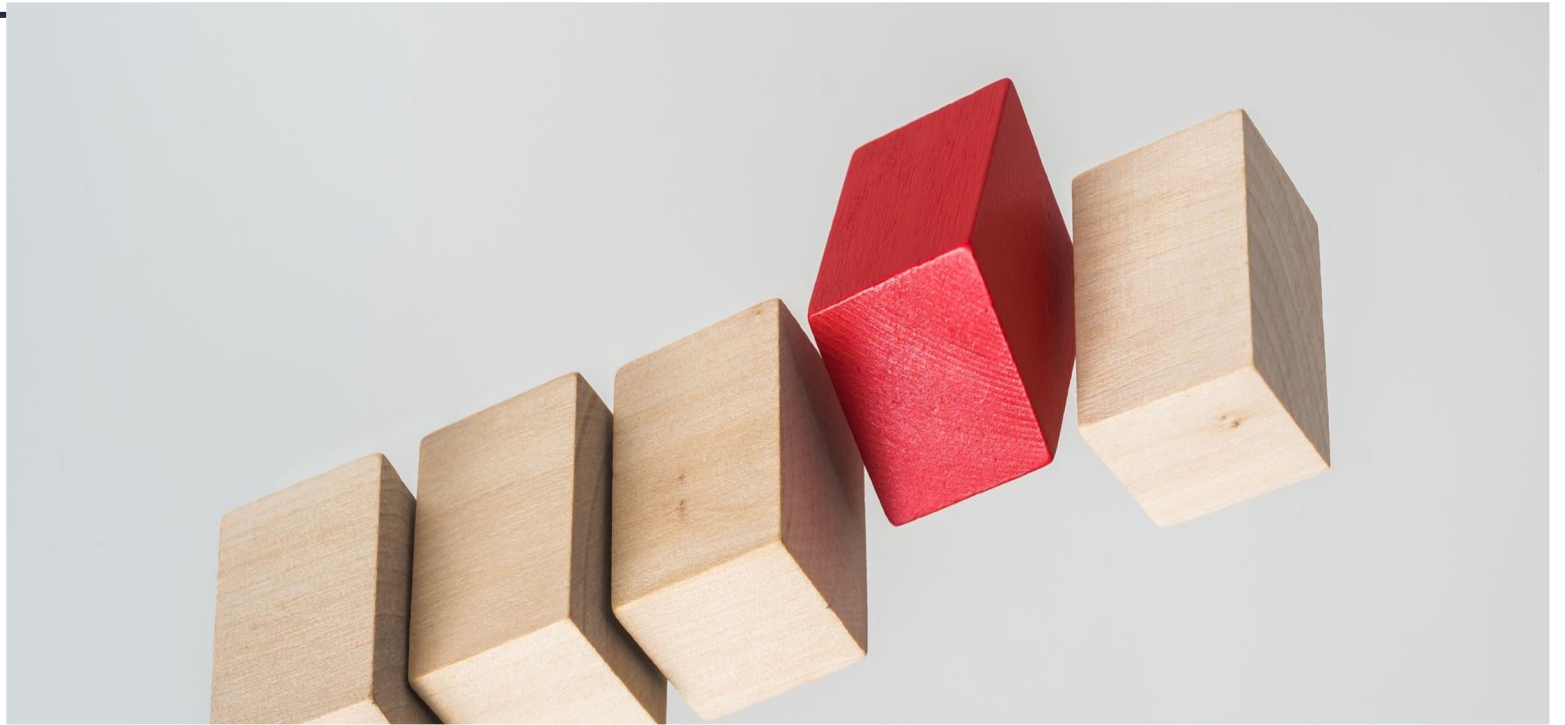
-
- Eating patterns, digestive problems, weight
 - Stress to the immune system, pain, discomfort, inflammation
 - Change in sleeping patterns
 - Disruption of daily activities (fatigue, nervousness, reduced energy)
-

Responses to Loss - Emotional



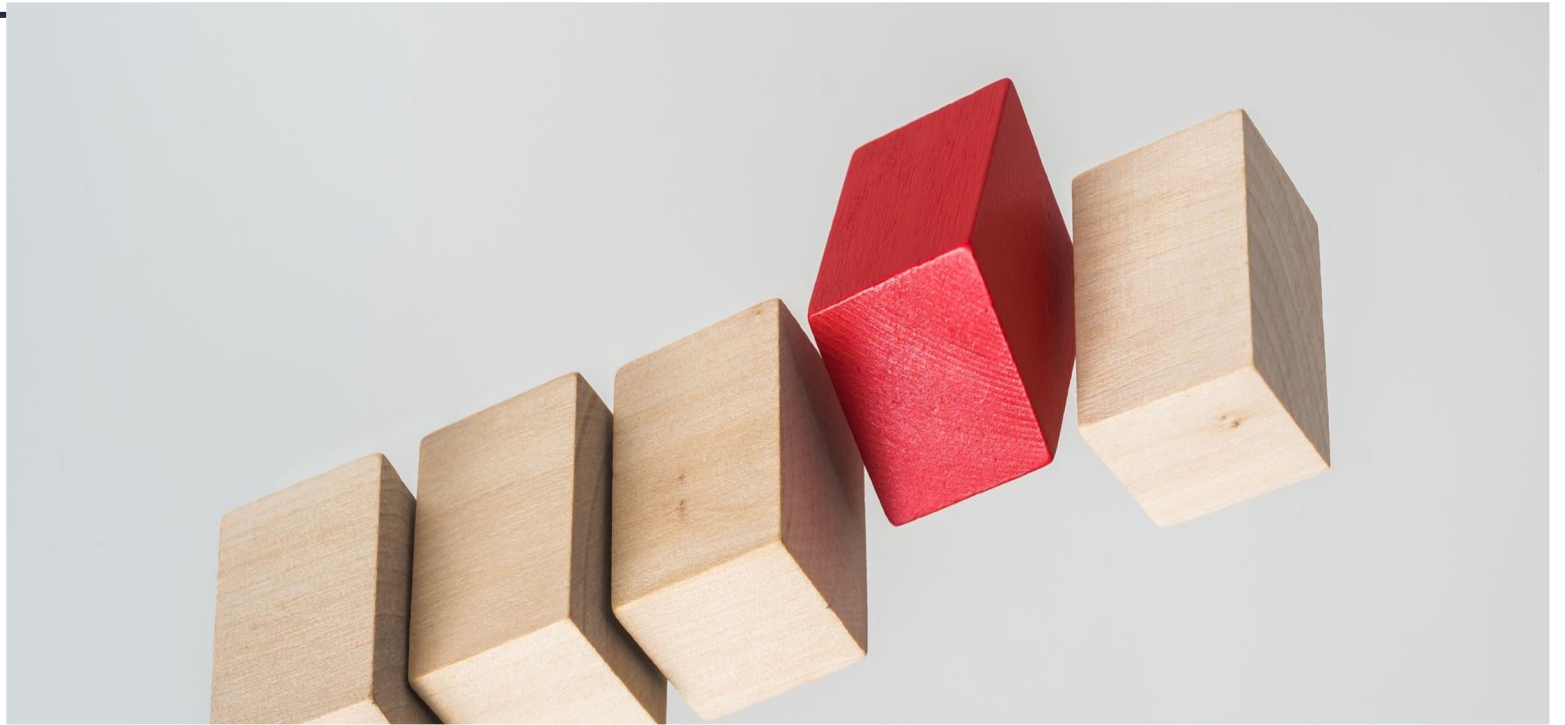
- Anger
 - Guilt
 - Fear/Anxiety
 - Shame
 - Loneliness
 - Relieved
-

Responses to Loss - Social



- Withdrawal (solitude)
 - Disorientation and/or forgetfulness
 - Spontaneity
 - Finishing "unfinished" projects
 - Self-focus
 - Detachment from purpose
-

Responses to Loss - Spiritual



- Why questions (If God loves me, why did God let this happen?)
 - Where was God? (confusion and feeling unprotected)
 - Disruption of religious practices
 - Seeking purpose, meaning, and hope
-

Unhelpful Ways Others Attempt to help us address Grief

- Platitudes (God wanted them more, I'm sorry, It was meant to be)
 - Quick Fixes (problem-solving statements)
 - Too much optimism (you will be fine, you will bounce back, you will adjust)
 - Story "Stealing" (I know how you feel)
-



Addressing Grief

Bowley – Attachment Theory
Worden – 4 Tasks
Wolfelt – 6 Needs of Mourning
Rando – 6 R's

Bowley – Attachment Theory

- Shock and Numbness – the loss seems unreal or unacceptable (emotional shut-downs can occur)
 - Yearning and Search – becoming aware of the loss (search for comfort and void filling practices)
 - Despair and Disorganization – everything has changed (hopelessness and despair)
 - Re-organization and Recovery – new goals and patterns (the loss shifts to the background)
-

Worden – 4 Tasks

- Accept the loss (ritual, significance of the loss, means of loss)
 - Working through the pain of grief (each person will be different)
 - Adjusting to the environment in which the deceased is missing (new skills are developed)
 - Find an enduring connection with the deceased will embarking on a new life (this one has been reworded several times)
-

Wolfelt – 6 Needs of Mourning

- Acknowledge the reality of the death
 - Embrace the pain of the loss
 - Remember the persons who died
 - Develop a new sense of identity
 - Search for meaning
 - Receive ongoing support from others
-

Rando's 6 Rs

- Recognize the loss (acknowledge and understand the death – avoidance phase)
 - React to the separation (confrontation phase)
 - Recollect and re-experience (realistically reviewing the person – confrontation phase)
 - Relinquish old attachments (old assumptions – confrontation phase)
 - Readjust (accommodation phase)
 - Reinvest (accommodation phase)
-

Addressing Grief through Stories

Process of Self- Discovery and Moving Forward with Grief:

- Stories
- Worldviews
- Practices
- Habits

Addressing Grief in a Group Setting



-
- Set limits and honor the loss
 - Offer online grief support options with every group
 - Utilize public spaces for group meetings (libraries, parks, etc...)
 - Writing to address the pain
 - Build in checkpoints so burnout or checkout does not occur
 - Develop rituals (group and personal)
 - Use social media to develop online platforms for grief
-

