



UNDERSTANDING AND
TRANSFORMING STRESS
AND GRIEF

KAREN ADLER, MSW, LCSW

GRIEF - THE GREAT REVEALER



- ★ Grief is a normal response to losing what we are attached to due to death or loss of relationships, betrayal, career, financial security etc.
- ★ Our bodies are hardwired for survival. So when survival is threatened we resist letting go.
- ★ Death is a natural part of life.
- ★ We live in a death denying culture with taboos around emotional expression.
- ★ The opposite of Death is Birth- Life is eternal- Eckhart Tolle
- ★ Grief lives in the same place the heart does; It is Love's conjoined twin. (Wolfelt)
- ★ Grief is a spiritual, soul based journey to the heart.
- ★ Grief's job is to break us into pieces and bring us back together transformed.
- ★ When engaged in grief uncovers other layers of grief and trauma.
- ★ Grief is on the inside, mourning is on the outside.- mourning moves grief
- ★ The world is grieving. Unresolved grief can look like tribal division and rage.
- ★ All trauma involves grief but not all grief is traumatic.
- ★ We heal grief by leaning into the process of identifying the phases of grief and expressing the emotions.
- ★ Grief needs a compassionate witness- to move forward.
- ★ Be an active participant in your grief to stay unstuck: Lean in.
- ★ We hold grief in our bodies. Through exploration of sensation we can uncover and discharge layers of grief.
- ★ A simple tool to keep the process flowing is - walking and talking.
- ★ Grief is never gone but we can make more and more space between the pain of the loss and the griever. This creates more space for Light and awakens one's capacity for Love.



POWERFUL BODY CENTERED TECHNIQUE IN MOVING GRIEF

Gestalt technique that identifies blockages in the body while addressing the loved one you are grieving.

- ★ Lay on floor knees up feet flat and reach with arms up.
- ★ Eyes closed, imagine loved one and reach up palms facing in.
- ★ “ I-Thou” As if in the room. “ All the things I miss about you.”
- ★ “ All the things I won’t miss”
- ★ “Thank you for everything you taught me.”
- ★ I’ll love you forever and good- bye.
- ★ Repeat and feel body sensations

Ensure you have a compassionate witness or practitioner to ensure the body is safe and settled as strong emotions may be elicited. Stay with body sensations, keep feet solidly rounded and repeat until you shift and come into a calm flow.



GRIEF NEEDS A WITNESS

- A compassionate witness is able to be fully present for the magnitude of the loss w/out pointing out the silver lining.
- Shows empathy without becoming equally emotional and distracting attention.
- Checks in days, weeks, months after the loss even when there is no response.
- If asked coordinates support coming in and secures needs for the griever.
- Does not talk them out of their feelings.
- Avoids comparing losses.
- Does not take emotional shifts personally.



TOOLS FOR GRIEVING

- ★ Prepare for a marathon not a sprint - things you can control- food, water, rest.
- ★ Say “Yes” to offers of help.
- ★ Find a compassionate witness- friend, therapist, mentor.
- ★ Let emotions happen- mourn! Lean in.
- ★ Self Acceptance Training : Listening to body’s cues - allow the discharge when safe
- ★ Moving the body moves the energy and emotions- walking talking
- ★ Seek additional support if needed. Grief therapist, support group.
- ★ Grounding tools to settle the body
 - Breath low and long - activate Vagus nerve.
 - Stay in the present.
- ★ Be patient with where you are at.
- ★ When ready, find meaning in the life lived and loved ones

6 Phases of Grief - Kubler-Ross and David Kessler

All phases are dynamic, natural and normal response and coping mechanisms.

1. **Denial/ Shock:**

Emotional Bubble Wrap around the Central Nervous System.

Provides a break from the pain

Prepares the body to receive the information in manageable doses

Signs of potential stuck points -

 Numbing out

 Distracting into activity like work/ taking care of everyone else

 Maintaining loved ones belongings intact.

 Thoughts such as ,“I can’t believe it.” or “ Did that really happen?”

 Sightings of loved one walking in the street, in a cafe, etc.

Witness task: Allow the griever to be where they are at without judgment or pressure to change the emotion.

Where there are openings increase the reality of the loss. Underline when statements are made acknowledging the loss.

Self Acceptance intervention “ I’m not ready to say goodbye and that's okay” or “ I’m not ready to say goodbye and...goodbye.’

2. **Anger:**

Protest of the loss. Acute Pain.

Anger covers sadness.

Anger is an appropriate response to losing someone we care about

Signs of potential stuck points -

 Blaming self or others- poor care of nurses, family members, spouses.

 Engaging in aggressive actions- verbal and physical fights

 Self destructive behavior- Self harm.

Witness tasks: Baring witness without judgement to anger and underlying sadness

3. **Bargaining:**

Going back to the scene of loss- the “ What if’s “ and “ If Only.” Regrets. Confabulation (Story you tell yourself you believe to be true)

Can be the hardest phase to deal with due to self blame and guilt.

Signs of potential stuck points- “If only I had not asked him to go get us lunch he would not have gotten in the accident.” He was a better person than me, it should have been me.” “ The last time we spoke we were angry! I’ll never forgive myself!”

Witness tasks: Avoid talking the griever out of feelings.

Go through each bargaining statement factually and check in...is that True? Does lunch cause death? Replace “what if” with “even if”.

4. **Depression:**

Soul pressing the PAUSE button

Sitting in the wound- Tears evidence of the love / tears cleanse the soul.

Situational- you are not broken - medication not recommended

Soul designed to take a lot of hits. We are designed for death- come from a long line of death.

Signs of potential stuck points:

Isolating for extended periods of time (Amount of time is variable)

Inability to engage in routine activity for extended periods of time

Suicidal ideation or gestures although some ideation can be normal

Witness tasks:

Allow and validate the depression and underlying sadness

Bare witness to the tears uninterrupted - avoid stopping it, handing tissues, pointing out silver lining

5. **Acceptance:**

Acknowledging the reality of the loss.

Forgiveness happenings in this faze- Freedom from resentment and anger. Not letting others actions define us. Softening self.- not the monster under the bed.

Examples stuck points: Held resentments, rehashing circumstances over and over, not moving forward.

Witness tasks:

Help find the “ Good” Bye vs “Bad” Bye- “ Tell me the first moment after the loss, now tell me other moments, now the whole relationship.”

Write a story of the loss from various perspectives.

“ Empty Chair.” (Talk to the loved one as if in the room. Say all things miss, won't miss, thank you for everything you've taught me, and goodbye.)

Kubler Ross dialogue - I love you, thank you, forgive me, I forgive you, goodbye.

6. **Finding Meaning:**

Active phase in which you see how their living changed you.

Does not equal understanding, From breakdown to breakthrough.

Coming back together changed. Mosaic.

Open to spiritual understanding, bigger picture

There is no stage called “ Closure” - Does not mean in pain forever, we learn to live with the one we lost.

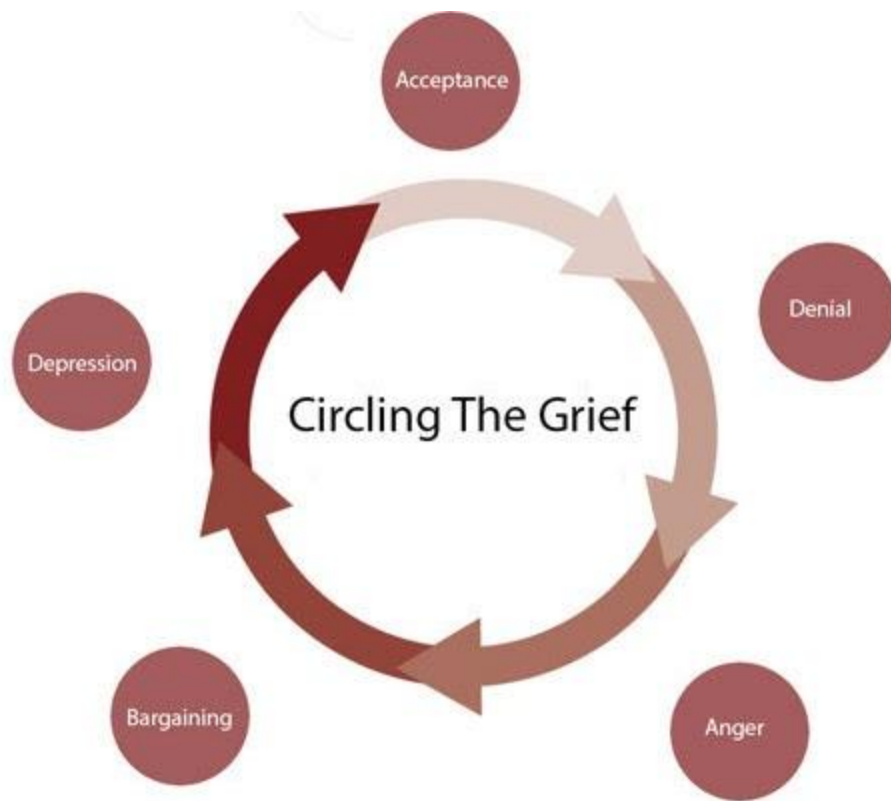
Loved one moves from “in front of us” to beside us.”

Witness tasks: Allow the miracle to unfold as an active listener

If unable to find meaning be patient, “ Wait for it.”- “Hamilton”

Honor loved one through ritual, ceremony, music, poetry.

What meaning can they bring to the rest of their life, to the people in their life now?



Meaning



SETTLING THE BODY

When your body is settled you are more likely to be calm, alert, and fully present, no matter what external forces are at play. It enables you to harmonize and connect with other bodies around you, influencing those bodies to follow your example and settle as well.

This creates a foundation for health, healing, helping others and changing the world. The felt sense of “Settling” is to connect to an infinite internal resource that has never left us, it is just covered with layers or shells of trauma or pain. Held emotions left unexpressed held within the folds of the body.

VAGUS NERVE (SOUL NERVE)

Unifying organ entire nervous system. Reaches into your throat, lungs, heart, stomach, liver, spleen, pancreas, kidney and gut.

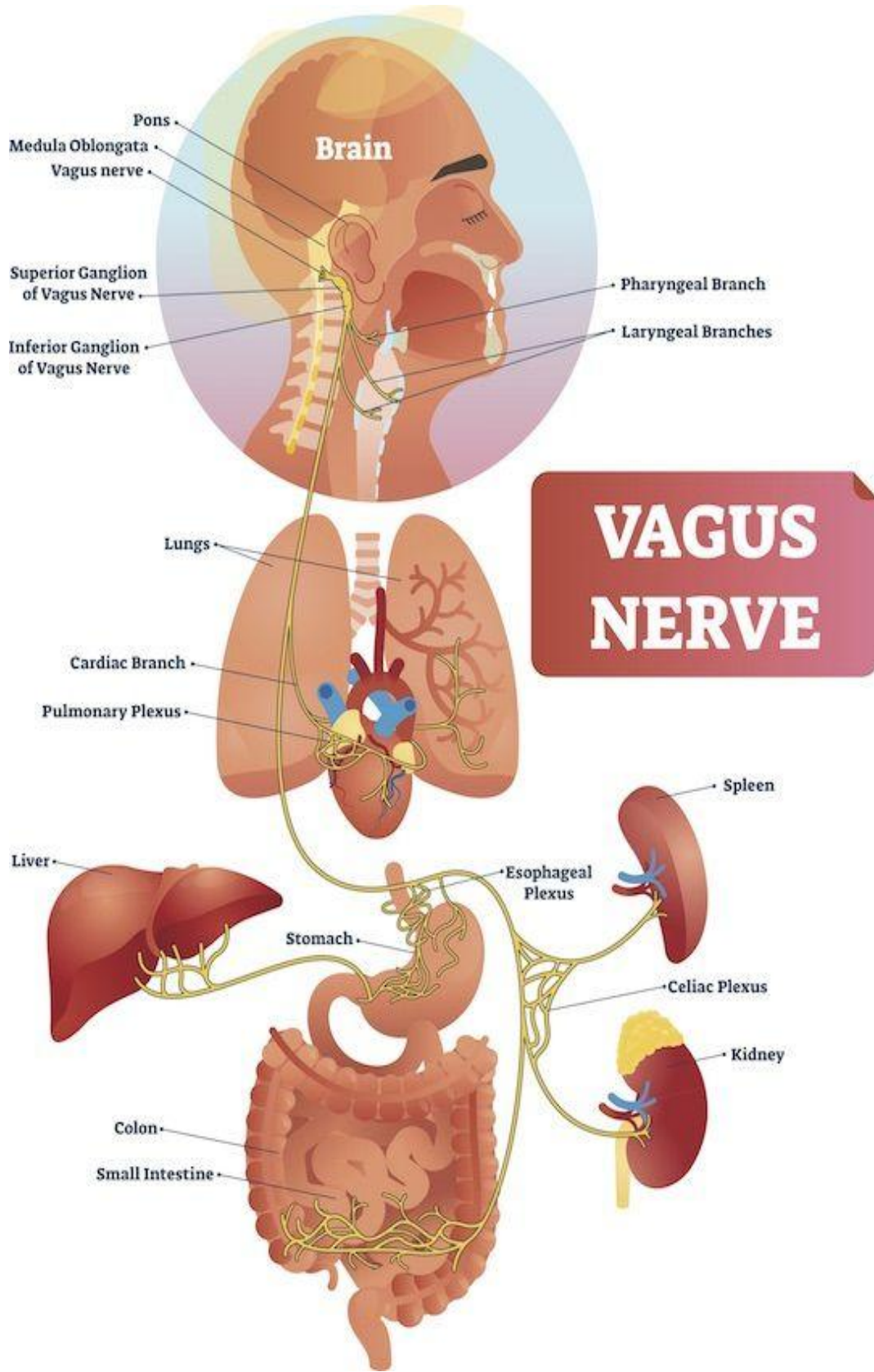
Senses in the body, love, fear, compassion, grief, dread, sadness, loneliness, hope, empathy, anxiety, caring, disgust, despair etc. (GUT feeling)

Informed by Lizard Brain- Limbic Cortex and spreads throughout your body.

And opposite - it's okay; you're safe right now; you can relax

Picks up vibes and sensations not only between different parts of the body but from one person to another. Sense of belonging and connection.

Working with this organ settles the body brings into presence and healing
Soul Nerve coined by Resmaa Menakem, " My Grandmother's Hands".



DO's and DON'TS for those in grief

Do:

- ★ Offer and follow through with support
- ★ Offer specific things. (they cannot make decisions) ie, “ I can come walk with you Monday at 3pm”.
- ★ Text, call send inspirations
- ★ Listen without judgment or effort to change or fix.
- ★ Share stories and memories
- ★ Share your life too, they need a break from their own pain and self focus.
- ★ Seek creative ways to keep their energy moving. Walks, bike rides, yoga classes.
- ★ Say the loved ones name. Honors and acknowledges the reality.
- ★ Stay calm and present for bursts of emotion. Tears Cleanse the soul.
- ★ Underline and support the griever's statements of meaning without forcing it.
- ★ Meditation prayers - they feel it!
- ★ Best things to say:
 - “ I wish I had the right words,just know I care.”
 - “ I don't know how you feel, but I'm here if I can help in any way.”
 - “ You and your loved ones will be in my thoughts and prayers.”
 - “ My favorite memory of your loved one was...”
 - Keep The focus on them.

Don'ts:

- ★ Avoid the discomfort of seeing or talking to the griever for fear of awkwardness or saying the wrong thing.
- ★ Look for a way out of offers of support.
- ★ Disappear after the initial loss.
- ★ Compare grief
- ★ Shy away from intense emotions
- ★ Interrupt tears
- ★ Worst things to say:
 - “ How are you?” in truth terrible!
 - “Everyone has to die some day.”
 - “You think your loss is bad...my loved one...”
 - “At least you're still living.” “ i understand.”
 - “ I know how you feel”
 - “Give it time.”
 - “ In a better place.” “ God needed another Angel.” “ Out of pain now”
 - “ God take the good ones.”
 - “ You're still young”
 - When miscarriage. “You can have another” or “at least you have other children”.

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