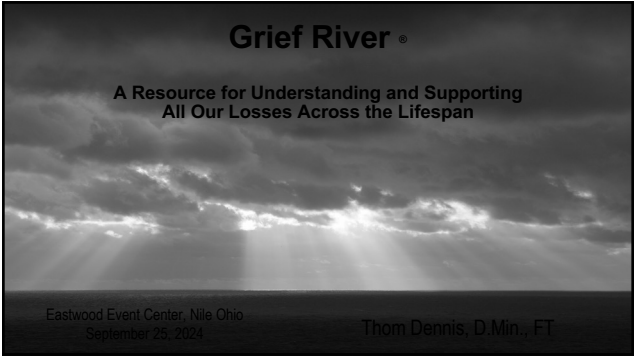
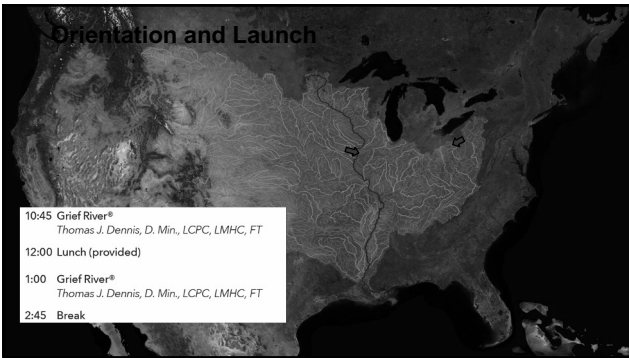




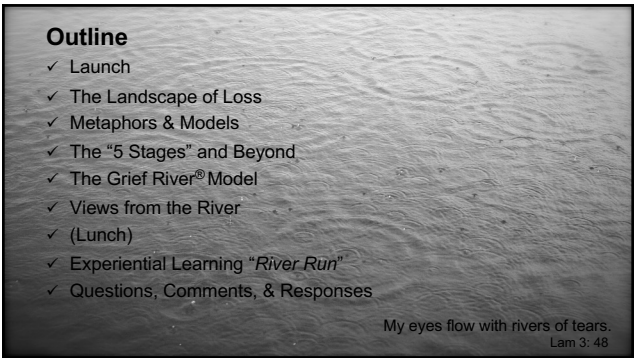
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4

Statement of Ethics

No relevant conflicts of interest to disclose
www.griefriver.com
 Cultural context
 Case illustrations
 Opinions expressed

"Losing a loved one is life's white-water trip on a river of tears."
 Margaret Brownley

5

Learning Objectives

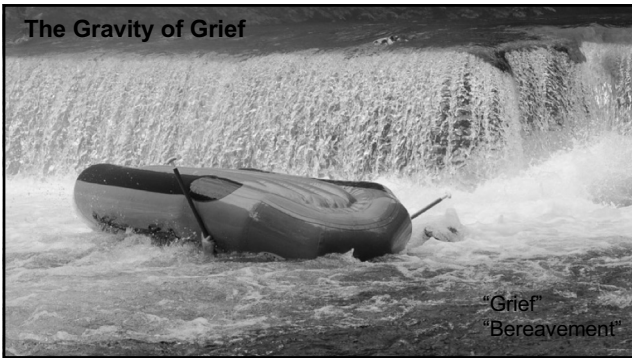
As a result of participating in this workshop you will be able to:

- Explain to others the key elements of the *Grief River*® model
- Access additional resources for further study
- Be more intentional about your use of metaphors when engaging in helping relationships

"Time is a sort of river of passing events, and strong is its current."
 Marcus Aurelius

6

The Gravity of Grief

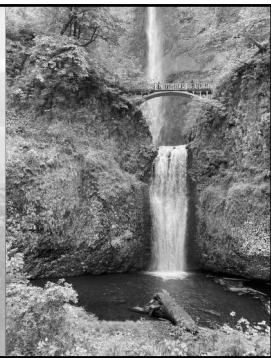


"Grief"
 "Bereavement"

7

Surveying the Landscape of Loss

- Grief must flow through the environment of your life
- Concurrent stresses
- Historical and cultural antecedents
- Availability of resources
- Grief trajectories
- Point of contact



8

All Our Losses Across the Lifespan

"We only grieve what we love" - The Grief River Guide

- Dreams & aspirations
- Direction
- Innocence
- Objects lost, stolen, or broken
- War, deportation, global instability
- Elections, local or national tragedies
- Sports team a game/championship
- Loss of a limb, personal injury
- Illness, chronic or terminal diagnosis
- Virginity (by choice or by force)
- Safety or security
- Incarceration
- Military deployment
- Losses related to childbirth
- Beginning/end of the school year
- Empty nest
- Someone moves away
- Relational breakup or conflict
- Financial, stock market crash, income
- Job, retirement, career change
- Losses related to aging
- Other people's losses
- Ecological grief

Deeper Dive: Non-Death Loss and Grief: Context and Clinical Implication (Harris, 2020)

9

"I am all alone!"
- Anonymous widow

Existential Losses

Death
Freedom
Identity
Meaning
Happiness
Isolation

Deeper Dive: Existential Positive Psychology (Wong, 2002)
Varieties of Suffering in the Clinical Setting: Re-envisioning
Mental Health Beyond the Medical Model (Wong & Laird, 2023)

10

A Systematic Review of Loneliness in Bereavement Concluded:

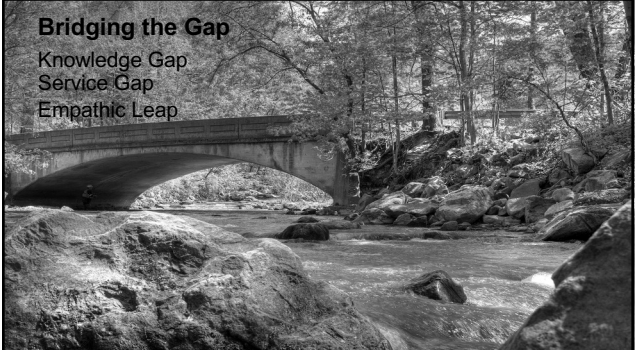
"... loneliness is a core, perhaps even pivotal experience associated with grief, one that is linked to some extreme difficulties in adjusting to the loss of a close person, one that merits development of targeted interventions."

Deeper Dive: A systematic review of loneliness in bereavement (Vedder et al., 2022)
Deeper Dive: "Loneliness Epidemic" (US Surgeon General, 2023 & Gallup, 2023)

11

Bridging the Gap

Knowledge Gap
Service Gap
Empathic Leap




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Metaphors and Models

Metaphor
 "Using one thing to describe another"
 (Source – Target)

- Simile
- Analogy
- Allegory
- Parable
- Myth



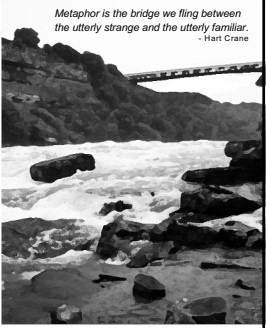
13

Two Types of Metaphors

1. Linguistic expressions
2. Conceptual metaphors

"Conceptual metaphors ... are fundamental metaphors [and] exert a powerful influence over our ways of thinking, speaking and acting ... ultimately rooted in the experience of our own bodies and of negotiating our surroundings."

Metaphor is the bridge we fling between the utterly strange and the utterly familiar.
 - Hart Crane



14


Two Conceptual Metaphors Dominate the Language of Loss

1. Grief is a "process"
2. Grief comes in "waves"

Caution: Clinical Nomenclature

- The "Myth of Process"
- Specialized technical vs. common usage

Deeper Dive: *Metaphor in Practice: The professional's guide to using the science of language in psychotherapy* (Törneke, 2017)
 Tamayo, R. (2021) A Checklist to Define the Psychological Process. *Revista Colombiana De Psicología*, Vol 20; 2. Issn0121-5469, 321-237.

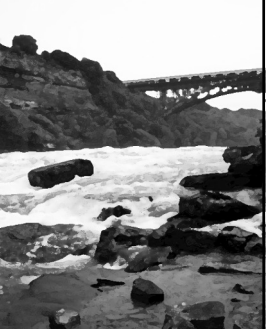


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Model

Models build upon metaphors by providing structure and support; they make use of "entailments," related analogies and concepts, so that we can talk to each other about "it."

"A further step toward analytic language." - More than a Metaphor



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Existing Models of Grief & Key Concepts

How we want
grief to work

How grief
actually works

<http://www.birminghamcounselingforwomen.com/resources/grief.jpg>

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Existing Models of Grief & Key Concepts

STAGES OF GRIEF

My experience

The Whirlpool of Grief, John Wilson

18

Making order of the Chaos

Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, MD

Denial	Anger	Bargaining	Depression	Acceptance
--------	-------	------------	------------	------------

David Kessler, PhD.

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Engel 1961-72	Shock & Denial	Developing Awareness	Revelation	Reaching the limit	Idealization	The Outcome
Pollack 1961	Shock	Grief		Separation	Reparation	
Watzberg 1961 (71)	19 Steps: Shock, Emotional Release, Physical Manifestation, Depression, Guilt, Anger, Idealism, Reorganization, New Patterns, Living w/ Loss					
Averill 1968	Shock	Despair			Recovery	
Kübler-Ross 1969	Denial	Anger	Bargaining	Depression	Acceptance	
Bowlby/Parks 1971-80	Numbness	Yearning & Searching	Disorganization & Despair		Reorganization	
Rando 1984	Avoidance		Confrontation		Reconciliation	
Sanders 1989	Shock	Annumer	Confrontation-Whirlwind	Meaning	Renewal of aliveness	

20

The Four Tasks of Mourning



1. Accept the reality of the loss
2. Feel the pain
3. Adjust to an environment without the deceased
4. Find an enduring connection with the deceased while embarking on a new direction in life

Worden, J. W. (2008). *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner*. 4th ed. New York: Springer Publishing Company.

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Meaning Making Reconstruction

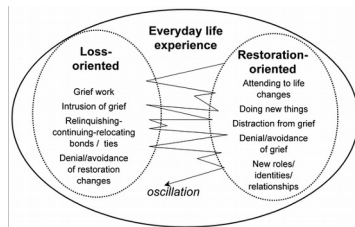
This model proposes that the central process involved in resolving grief is about reconstructing meaning that is lost as a result of the loss.

Over time, and often with the help of a therapist, the bereaved is involved in "constructing" a new coherent narrative of the events surrounding the loss and role they played in their life/death, assess the thoughts and feelings about the deceased post death, personal identity now, and the lessons one takes from the experience.

Neimeyer, R. Editor. *Meaning Reconstruction and the Experience of Loss*. Washington: American Psychological Association, 2001.

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Dual Process Model



Stroebe, M. and Shut, H. (1999). "The dual process model of coping with bereavement: Rationale and description." *Death Studies*, 23, pp. 197-224.

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Ambiguous Loss



- Physical absence with psychological presence
- Psychological absence with physical presence

Disenfranchised Grief


- The relationship is not recognized as significant
- There is a lack of social understanding regarding the relationship
- The relationship is not public knowledge
- The person expresses their grief in a way that is inconsistent with expected grieving behaviors
- Self-disenfranchisement

Boss, P. (2000). *Ambiguous Loss: Learning to Live with Unresolved Grief*. Harvard.

Doka, K. (2002). *Disenfranchised Grief: New Directions, Challenges, and Strategies for Practice*. Research Rr. Pub.

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The Continuing Bond

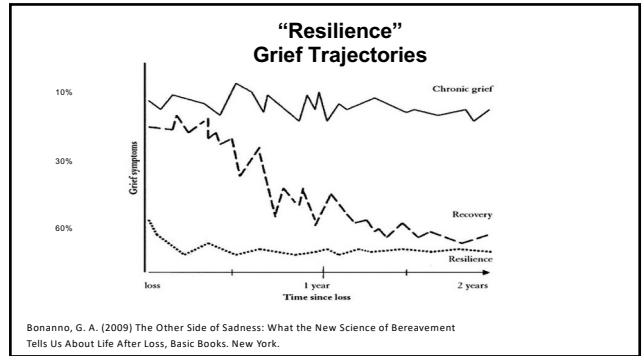


In contrast with:
(Freud & the "work" of grief)

Spiritual-religious-worldview
Genetics
Memorials
Linking objects
The "Internalized Other"

Klass, D. Silverman, P. and Nickman, S. ed. *Continuing Bonds: New Understandings of Grief*. Philadelphia: Taylor & Francis Publishers, 1996.

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26

Prolonged Grief Disorder

The DSM-5-TR criteria for PGD require that distressing symptoms of grief continue for at least 12 months following the loss of a close attachment (6 mos. in children) characterized by intense longing/yearning for the deceased person and/or preoccupation with the lost person to a clinically significant degree, nearly every day for at least a month.

As a result of the death, at least 3 of the following 8 symptoms:

1. feeling as though a part of oneself has died,
2. a marked sense of disbelief about the death,
3. avoidance of reminders that the person has died
4. intense emotional pain (anger, bitterness, sorrow) related to the death,
5. difficulty with reintegration into life after the death,
6. emotional numbness (particularly with respect to an emotional connection to others),
7. feeling that life is meaningless as a result of the death, and
8. intense loneliness as a result of the death.

Clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.
The duration and severity of the bereavement reaction clearly exceeds social, cultural, or religious norms.
Not better explained by major depressive disorder, PTSD, or attributable to another substance or a medical condition.

"I'm stuck on a rock, in the middle of the river, and I can't get off."
A former client.

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The DSM 5-TR and "Other conditions that may be a focus of clinical attention"

- Z63.4 Uncomplicated bereavement
- Z60.0 Phase of life problem
- Z65.8 Religious or spiritual problem
- Z60.2 Problems related to living alone
- Z60.5 Social exclusion or rejection
- Z56.0 Unemployment
- Z63.5 Disruption of family by separation or divorce
- Z56.82 Military deployment
- F06.8 Other specific mental disorder due to another medical condition

PTSD
Removal of the Bereavement Exclusion for Depression Disorder

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We need to be fluent in multiple models

5 Stages	Ambiguous Loss
4 Tasks	Disenfranchised Grief
Meaning Making	Continuing Bonds
Dual Process	Resilience
	Prolonged Grief Disorder

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Grief from 30,000 ft.

“Communication is always in the mode of the receiver.”
Aristotle

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The Grief River® Model

Zooming in on a different way of understanding and supporting all our losses across the lifespan

- Headwaters
- Rapids
- Run
- Delta
- Rejoining the Sea

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The Waves: Dealing with the Current Loss
Grief is “Episodic” and “Intermittent”

Description: “Grief is our embodied response to loss”

Waves Waves Space Waves Space Waves Space Ripples

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Rapids


Question:
If life is a journey, what do we need for the trip?

The 3 Rs: Re-education, Reassurance, Resources

- Begin where the person is ...
- Assessment of risk factors AND resilience
- Internal coping skills
- External resources of support

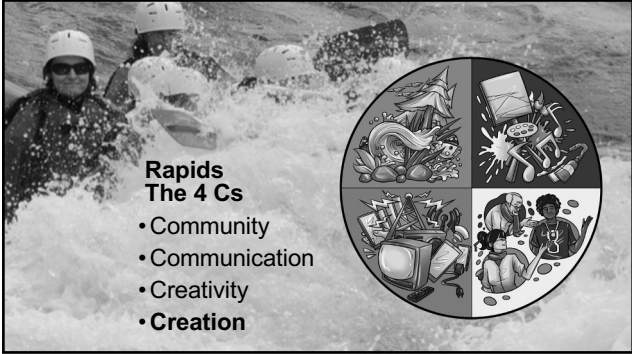
- ISRD 1-6 (SUDs, Pain scale)
- Emotional Flood Plan (EFP)
- Energy Release - Channel it
- CBT-DBT Distress tolerance & self-soothing
- Trauma response interventions
- Polyvagal Theory

Deeper Dive: *The Polyvagal Theory in Therapy* (Dana, 2018)



"If you aren't willing to get wet, don't even bother getting into the boat."
The Grief River Guide

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Rapids
The 4 Cs

- Community
- Communication
- Creativity
- **Creation**


The circular graphic is divided into four quadrants, each containing various icons representing the '4 Cs': Community (people), Communication (speech bubble), Creativity (lightbulb), and Creation (tools and objects).

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Rapids
More about "Creation" ("You are not alone")

Engage!


- "Getting to know my neighbors"
- "There is an app for that"
- Equine therapy, "goat yoga," ziplining, golfing, skiing, fishing, hiking, kayaking, foraging
- You do not have to become a vegan, be mindful
- Like-minded people: "Wild Ones" Local Conservation groups, nature preserves
- Environmental education and activism
- "Be mindful"
- Read!



Animal Guides:
Greater than human community

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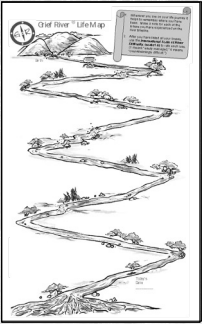
Headwaters
Lake Itasca "True-head"
July 25, 1832



August 2, 1832

36

Headwaters
Grief River® Life Map
 (grief, joy, resilience)



All our Losses


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Headwaters

- Life before the present loss
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE)
- Attachment theory
- Relational dynamics
- Personality and temperament
- Addiction and mental health
- Cultural factors
- "Determinants" of loss
- Neurology and Epigenetics

Deeper Dive: Hospice Foundation of America's webinar, *The Grieving Brain* (O'Connor, 2023)


- HOSPICE (and an often long history of engagement with the managed care system)



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Run

- Over the course of the river there may be many sets of rapids
- Engagement with life
- Rest/reflect/explore
- Existentialism and meaning-making
- Posttraumatic growth (PTG), Resilience
- Prolonged grief disorder (PGD), "Relational disaster," "Chronic sorrow"
- Find an enduring connection with the deceased while embarking on a new direction in life




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Run

- Navigating the *Life Transition* that follows
 - New Career
 - New Relationships
 - New Worldview "revised" "reaffirmed"
 - New Priorities

Ritual



40

"The meander is the technical name for the loop in the course of a river... (it) is life's natural path, I think. Straightened out, canalized, Department-of-Engineers pathways are as artificial in life as they are in riverbeds."

William Bridges, The Way of Transition

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Delta

- The pace of life slows down
- We can get stuck in the backwaters or flow on toward the sea
- Psychosocial theory –
 - Life Review
 - Developing a point of view about death
- Dignity Therapy - Chochinov
- Rituals for entering the Council of Elders
- "Ars Moriendi" - Spiritual preparation
- Advance Care Planning/Directives
- *Four Things that Matter Most* – Byock
- *Advice for Future Corpses* -- Tisdale

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Rejoining the Sea

"I cannot see very far ahead, but when I come to where the horizon closes down, a new prospect will open before me, and I shall meet it with peace."
 - Edith Stein (St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross)


- Heaven/Hell, Reincarnation/conversion to cosmic energy/food for worms/ nothingness, death is either the end of the journey or the beginning of a whole new adventure.
- Unlike most models, Grief River® provides an opportunity for an exploration of the client's concept of a Continuing Existence
- Continuing Bonds

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Advice for River Guides

"You can't just wave from the shore."
- The Grief River Guide

- River Guides demonstrate compassion, competence, and confidence
- Caregiver fatigue
- Empathic concern vs. Empathic distress
- You companion them for only a brief moment on their life journey
- Anticipate risks, enforce safety rules (ethics), keep travel log, learn 1st aid
- Know your (and their) skill level/limitations
- Observe and trust the current
- Offer a compass, not a map
- Appreciate the beauty along the way

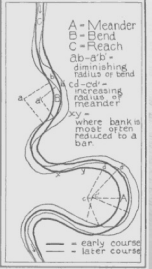


Riparian

45

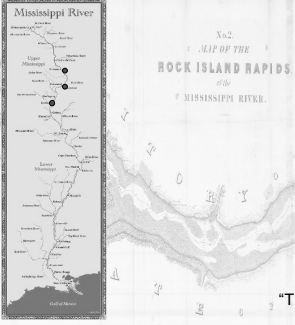
Related Entailments and Water Analogies

- When to paddle & when to **"go with the flow"**
- Companions and Paddle Partners
- Emotional Flood Plan (EFP)
- Whirlpools - PGD
- Muddy waters, currents, undertow
- Confluence
- Effluence
- Mile Markers
- Panning for Gold - PTG
- Meander-Life's natural path




American Association for the Advancement of Science, Michels, J. (Ed.) (1904), p. 273

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River "Management"

4 Ps: Progress, Pragmatic, Private, Positive
Barge traffic and powerboats



#15 Rock Island, Illinois

"The best way out is always through."
Robert Frost

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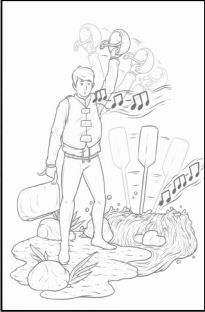


Dams, locks, & debris

Men may dam it and say they made a lake, but it will still be a river. It will keep its nature and once in time, like a caged animal alert for the slightest opening, in time, it will have its way. The way, like the ancient cliffs, will be carved away piecemeal in the currents.

Wood Berry

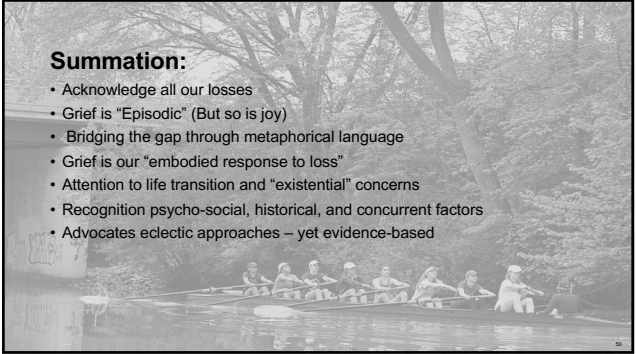
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Problems, critiques, and counter indicators

- Counter indicators
 - Loss related to water
 - "Instrumentally" minded
- Definitions vs. descriptions
 - My "description" of grief may be too broad
- Lacks empirical evidence


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Summation:


- Acknowledge all our losses
- Grief is "Episodic" (But so is joy)
- Bridging the gap through metaphorical language
- Grief is our "embodied response to loss"
- Attention to life transition and "existential" concerns
- Recognition psycho-social, historical, and concurrent factors
- Advocates eclectic approaches – yet evidence-based

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Questions, Comments & Responses 

"Our lives truly are a river we have never been down before, full of mystery, awe, and wonder. On the river of life, from sunrise to sunset, from midnight to dawn, we are perpetually learning about living and dying, being and becoming, when to paddle and when to glide... Ultimately to not resist nor push the current, but rather to trust the flow. Ultimately, learning about accepting what comes our way with grace."

Michael De Maria



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River Run
Lessons Learned on the Journey of Life

Big Questions


Compass

Tent

Canoe

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River Run



Imagine for the next hour or so this group will be taking a kayak trip together on the river of time.


Typically, when we look back over the course of our lives, we realize we learned life's most profound lessons when we summoned the courage to face the challenges that were in front of us.

The losses and obstacles we've experienced, as well as local and global events, often challenged our assumptions about the world and invited us to explore new answers to some of life's "big questions." Looking back, at times we may have felt scared or overwhelmed, but wisdom was acquired because of our willingness to shoot the rapids, eventually gaining self-confidence, and learning to go with the flow.



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Orientation




All participants are winners, there are no losers.

The objective of this game is not to be the first person to finish, the goal is to have fun while sharing our perspectives and learning from each other. Expressing our opinion helps to clarify our point of view, listening respectfully to other people's ideas about similar questions offers new insights and an opportunity for personal growth.

We will need to agree on some rules so everyone will feel safe and have an enjoyable time on this kayaking trip.

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Group Safety Rules



- Confidentiality:** What happens on the river, stays on the river. Respect the privacy of your paddle partners, don't share their stories with other people outside the group.
- A river run is risky:** Remember, sharing your thoughts, opinions, and emotions in a group takes courage and requires trust. Never feel pressured to say anything you do not feel comfortable sharing.
- No judgments:** Your beliefs and values have evolved over the course of your lifetime; the same would be true for everybody else. Listen respectfully to others and you just might learn something new.
- Advice giving:** If it is not solicited, it is not appreciated. Just because your answer worked for you, doesn't mean it will for anyone else.

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Group Safety Rules



- Keep it brief:** Long answers to big questions may result in other people not getting a chance to talk. Keeping your comments short ensures everybody else will have time to share their thoughts and insights too.
- Don't dam the river:** Creating emotional dams will block everyone's progress on the journey. Respect for your and everyone's emotional expressions will allow for a much more enjoyable experience.
- Personal space and touching:** Don't assume someone needs a helping hand or a hug; ask before you act.

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River Run
Lessons Learned on the Journey of Life

Launch (How to Play)

Each participant selects their own **kayak** and places it at the boat launch. Each also receives a **lifesaver token*** to be used later during the game if they need to be "rescued."




The first participant spins the **Grief River Compass**. (Taking note of the number and color,) the participant then moves their kayak the appropriate number of spaces on the river.

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River Run
Lessons Learned on the Journey of Life

Launch (How to Play)



Taking a white **Big Question** card from the top of the pile, the question is read aloud. The participant shares their thoughts or opinions in response. There are no right or wrong answers just different points of view.

After answering the question, refer back to the Grief River Compass. The participant takes the **Tip** card from the top of the pile that corresponds to the color the arrow is pointing toward, and the tip is read aloud so all may benefit.


The next player takes their turn, spins, responds to a big question, and receives their tip, and so on.

Continue as time allows or until all have reached the point of exit.

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River Run
Lessons Learned on the Journey of Life


Launch (How to Play)



***Lifesaver Tokens**
For any number of reasons, a player may not prefer to respond to a particular question. If that's the case, they can always ask someone else for "HELP!" and another group participant can volunteer to be their "lifesaver." The player gives that person their lifesaver token, then that person responds to the question in their place. **Lifesavers may be used only once per player. A player who receives a second lifesaver for responding to someone else's call for help can subsequently use both lifesavers later if desired or they can pass it on to someone else who needs it.**

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River Run
Lessons Learned on the Journey of Life



Boat Launch

Grab a Grab Tip

Point of Exit

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Reflecting on Our Journey Together

Some questions for discussion after the game is over

Would anyone care to share:

- a question you have been wondering about, that was not included in the game?
- a new insight or perspective you have gained as a result of participating in this game?
- a resource that you have found helpful in your search for answers to these big questions?
- a next step you plan to take as you search for answers to one or more of these questions?
- a personal tip that has served you well on your life journey?
- what you will take with you from this experience?

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River Run

Lessons Learned on the Journey

Parting Thoughts

Reminders to participants

- Topics discussed may have stirred up uncomfortable thoughts and feelings.
- You can be proud of yourself for having the courage to explore these "big questions" and for sharing your thoughts and ideas with others.
- Do not lose sleep over the questions; answers typically do not come overnight.
- If you find yourself overwhelmed by any of these questions, know that there are resources available to turn to for help.

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Take-a-ways & Departure
Thank You

Hope for weary travelers
www.griefriver.com

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