Course outline

I. Impact of sudden loss
   A. Individual reactions in the grieving process
   B. Physical, spiritual and psychological responses
   C. Trauma response
      1. Body memories
      2. Emotional triggers
   D. Isolation and connection

II. Strategies for addressing traumatic grief
   A. Compassionate listening and awareness
   B. Psycho-education about grief and trauma
   C. Living with uncertainty
   D. Working with somatic responses
   E. Beyond words: experiential integration

III. Rituals that help with integration
   A. Grief calendar: anniversaries and milestones
   B. Subsequent pregnancies
   C. Increasing social support
   D. Integrating loss into the family

Rituals can help create order
How do we stay present with unbearable pain?

Compassionate listening

1. Awareness of our own process allows us to be responsive rather than reactive
2. This allows for deeper capacity for listening
3. Increases our ability to be compassionate

To listen is to lean in softly with a willingness to be changed by what we hear.
Mark Nepo

Pausing to listen

Inner World

Sensation

Thoughts

Feelings

Awareness
I am not afraid of your sorrow

Mentioning my child’s name may make me cry
Not mentioning my child’s name will break my heart.

Impact of traumatic loss

Grief & Trauma

Grief and trauma

- Grief recalls other losses
- Trauma recalls other traumatic events

- To bear witness to trauma and grief opens our hearts to the breadth of human experience
- Healing and healer lack separation
  we change and impact one another
Grief

- There is nothing to fix
- Grief is not a linear process
- Grief can arise throughout life and this does not mean something is wrong
- Grief is a multifaceted response to loss: emotional, physical, behavioral, social, and philosophical dimensions

“There is a deep longing among people in the West to connect with something bigger — with community and spirit.”

Sobonfu Some’

Experiences that allow for expression of grief and trauma can be integrative
PTSD and birth trauma

Anxiety  Anger  Instability  Confusion  Sleep disturbance
Guilt   Lack of appetite  Lack of focus  Somatic complaints  Intrusive thoughts

Set of normal reactions to a traumatic, scary, or negative experience.
Traumatic experience can be any event involving the threat of death or serious harm to self or other.

Trauma produces defensive responses in the body

Fight, Flight, Freeze

Trauma resides in the nervous system

Bracing vs Embracing

Trauma healing work includes work with the physiological responses

Somatic experiencing
EMDR
Hakomi
Mindfulness
Yoga

Rituals of remembrance
Social isolation increases suffering

- The world has stopped
- People don’t know what to say
- Need to protect others from this unbearable pain
- Cultural norm: “move on”

Emotional responses

- Hyper-vigilance
- Am I going Crazy?
- I should’ve known something was wrong
- Future uncertain
- GUILT
- Where am I supposed to be?
- Beyond WORDS
- ANGER
- Am I a parent?
- HOLIDAYS
- Loss of innocence
- Out of control
- The world stopped
- I should be over this by now
- Fiction
- Powerless
- DESPAIR
- I feel bad for feeling a moment of joy
- My body failed
- I will always feel like this
- Blame
- Future
- Art
- Music
- Acts of service

Resilience and resourcing

- Living with the unknown
- Spirituality
  - Faith
  - Hope
  - Music
  - Acts of service
- Community and family

The world breaks everyone and afterwards some are stronger in the broken places

Hemingway
Rituals are cairns marking the path behind us and ahead of us. Without them we lose our way.”
Robert Fulghum

"It is only with the heart that one can see rightly. What is essential is invisible to the eye”
Antoine de Saint-Exupery