



Navigating Grief During the Holidays

Tara Fischer | November 12, 2024



Indigenous Land Acknowledgement

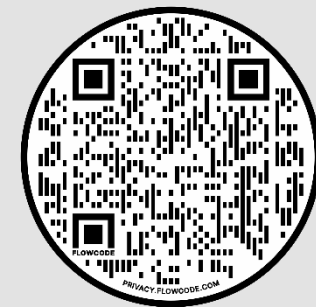
- We respectfully acknowledge that we live and work in territories where indigenous nations and tribal groups are traditional stewards of the land. Our California office resides in Tongva territory.
- Please join us in supporting efforts to affirm tribal sovereignty across what is now known as California and in displaying respect, honor, and gratitude for all indigenous people.

Whose land are you on?

Option 1: Text your ZIP code to 1-907-312-5085

Option 2: Enter your location at <https://native-land.ca>

Option 3: Access Native Land website via QR Code



Community Agreement

- Be present and be an active listener.
- Remember: One mic, one voice.
- Practice inclusivity.
- Honor pronouns and gender identity.
- Show respect (this may look different for each person).
- Allow conflicting perspectives to exist.
- Assume best intentions.
- Take space, make space.
- Share what you are comfortable sharing.
- Protect individual privacy.
- Practice self-care.
- Encourage growth of self and for others.
- Support resource sharing.



Presenters



Tara Fischer, M.S.W., LICSW
Senior Program Manager II

Tara Fischer, M.S.W., LICSW, is a senior program manager working at the intersection of behavioral health care and change management. She helps organizations, state governments, and federal agencies to improve service delivery by strengthening approaches to prevention, recovery, and treatment for adults, children, and their families dealing with mental health concerns.

As a therapist, she has had the privilege of supporting individuals in their journey through loss and grief. She also knows the grief experience from her own personal life.

In her free time, you can find Tara outdoors—hiking, biking, and paddling through nature!



Agenda

1. What grief looks like
2. Strategies for self-care and healing
3. Sharing with purpose and intent
4. Closing

Objectives

1. Identify and recognize the various ways grief may manifest during the holiday season, both for ourselves and the individuals we serve.
2. Explore strategies for practicing self-care and promoting healing through mindful approaches to grief management.
3. Foster a supportive environment for sharing personal experiences and effective methods for helping clients cope with grief related to past and present losses.

What Is Grief?

Grief is “the anguish experienced after significant loss, usually the death of a beloved person. . . .

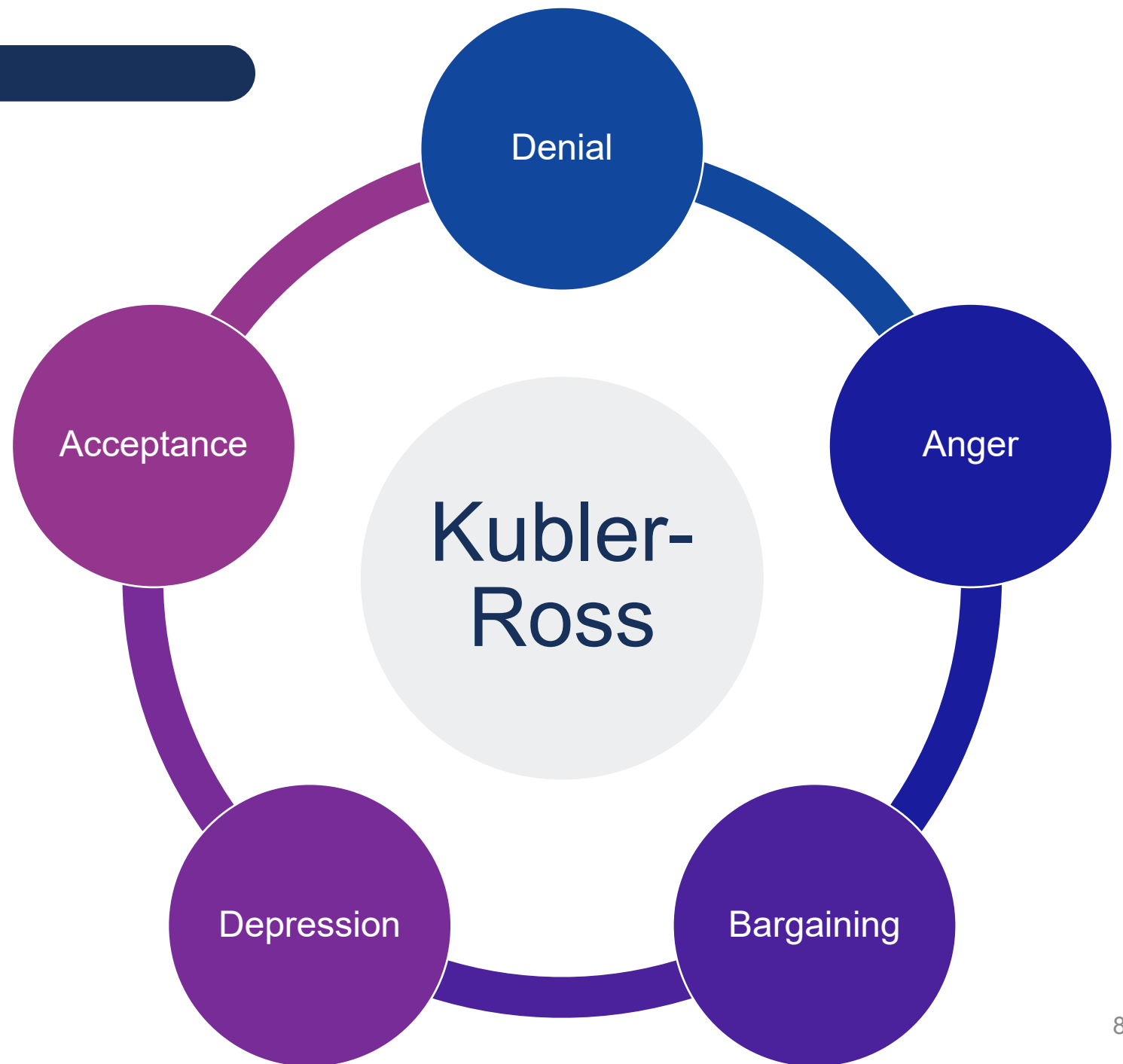
“Grief often includes physiological distress, separation anxiety, confusion, yearning, obsessive dwelling on the past, and apprehension about the future.

“Intense grief can become life-threatening through disruption of the immune system, self-neglect, and suicidal thoughts.

“Grief may also take the form of regret for something lost, remorse for something done, or sorrow for a mishap to oneself.”

Source: the [APA Dictionary of Psychology](#)

What does grief look like?



(Kubler-Ross, 2014)



What might spark a sense of grief during the holidays?

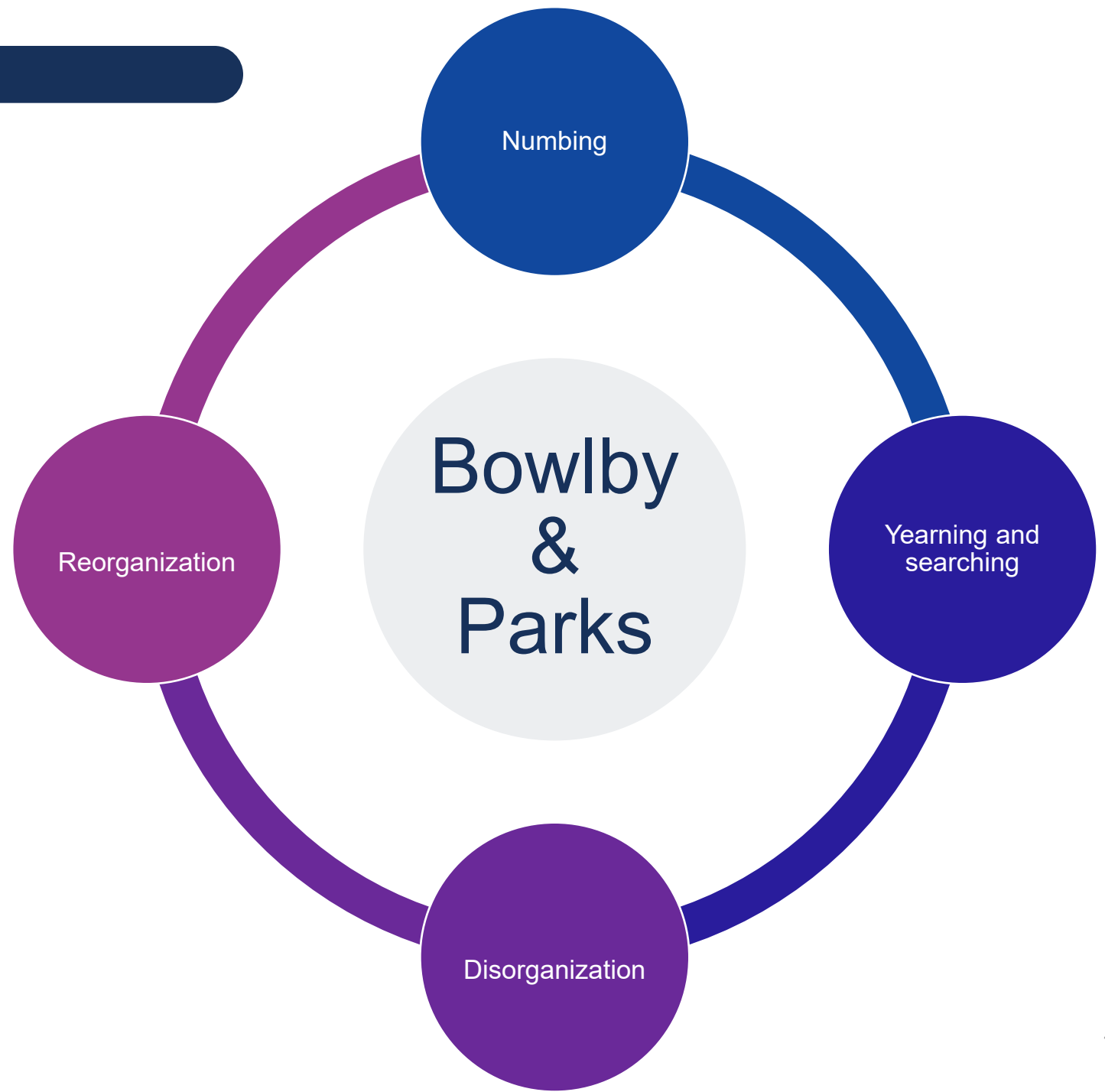
Grief During the Holidays

It's natural for grief to be felt more intensely on special days.

Grief might be felt for weeks and days leading up to the special day.

This kind of grief is usually a gradual change that we don't often recognize until later.

What else does grief look like?



What can help?

Be active

- Ask, “What can I do to honor my loved one’s memory and my own grief?”
- For example, create a memory box or transitional object.

Journal

- Write a letter, make a timeline of significant events, describe what the grief feels like in the body.
- Rewrite your grief story annually.

Schedule grief time

- Build in time daily to sit with the grief and see what comes.

Use self-compassion phrases

- Say to yourself, “May I care for this grief; may I care for this sorrow.”

Engage in healthy distractions

- Spend time in nature; perform acts of kindness; exercise.

Socialize

- Plan for who you want to/can spend time with.

Journaling Prompts: Rewrite Your Grief Story

Who was I?

Who was I while my loved one was ill?

Who am I now?

Who do I want to be?

What's my "code" of coping?



Holiday Self-Compassionate Letter

Dear [yourself],

I am writing to you because I understand that the holidays may be difficult at times. Some of the things that make it difficult include [list them].

I am sorry you must go through this. I want you to know it's okay to feel all these feelings: [name them].

I will do my best to care for this pain and suffering. Some of the ways I can do this are [list them].

Please remember that I want the best for you and am here for you during the holidays and always.

May you be at ease during this holiday season,

[sign your name]



Self-Care

Simply put, self-care is defined as providing adequate attention to one's own physical and psychological wellness.

(Beauchamp & Childress, 2001).

Image source: Tara Fischer

Your Self-Care Practices



- What do you currently do for self-care?
- How do these practices affect your well-being?

Wellness Toolbox—Brainstorm

Develop a self-care plan



List all the things you can do to stay well or restore wellness during the holidays.



Include tools that have worked for you in the past or new things you would like to try.



Include items from your list into your daily routine.

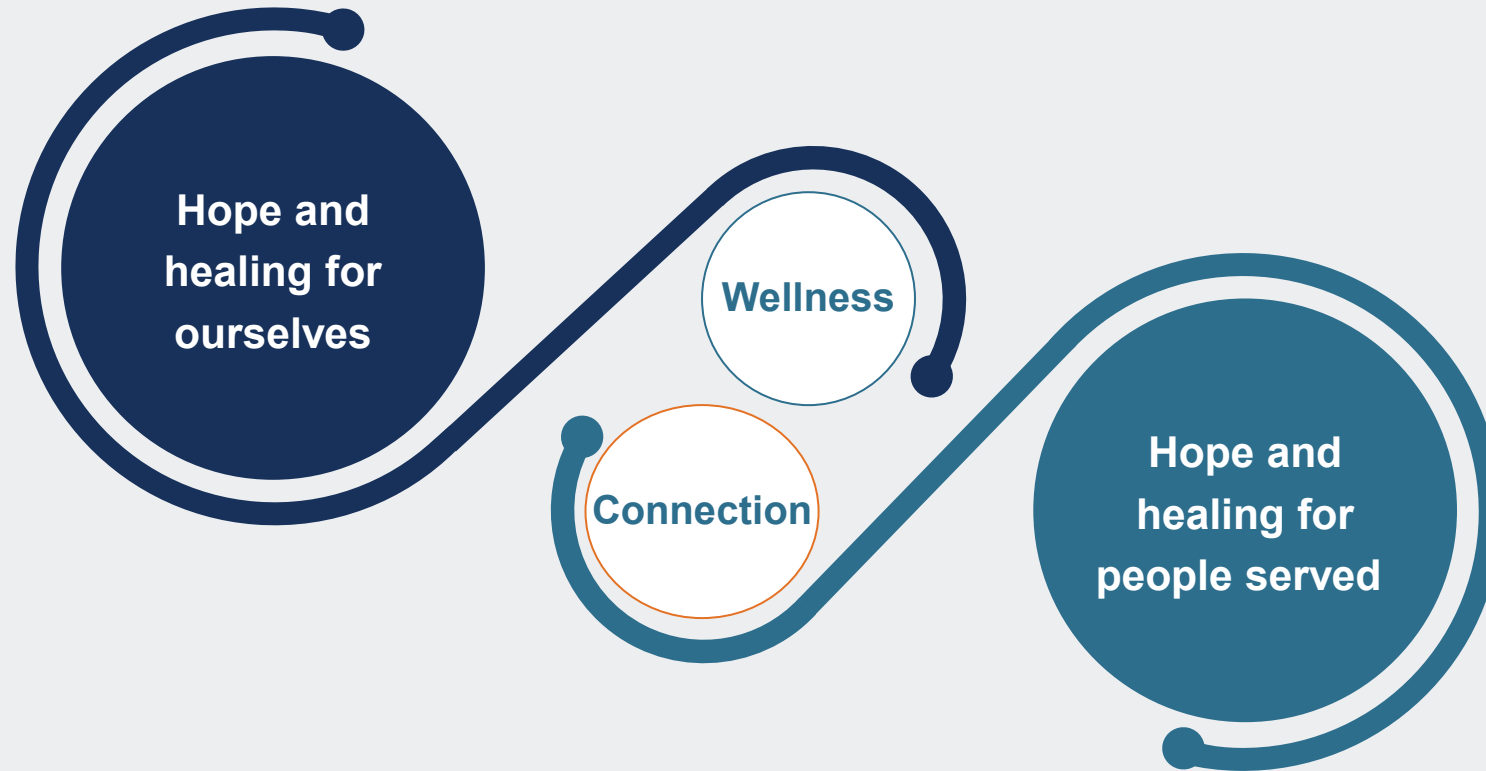
Developing a Wellness Toolbox

by Mary Ellen Copeland | Apr 29, 2015 | Addictions, Blog, Creating & Using Your WRAP, Daily Plan, Elements of WRAP, Sample WRAP Plans, Trauma, Wellness Toolbox, Wellness, Recovery & Lifestyle Topics



Image source: WRAP

Strategies for Peer Support Specialists



Strategies for Supporting Others

BOUNDARIES

WAIT: Why am I talking?
It's okay to say "no."
Honor your own stage of grief.
Use your own healing story.

TRADITIONS

Create new rituals.
Honor the loss.
Participate in cultural practices.



PAIN

Acknowledge pain.
Validate pain.
Allow space for people's unique expressions of grief.

TOOLS

Create a wellness plan.

Sharing Your Grief Story with Purpose and Intent

Hope



Dual Process Model—Stroebe & Schut

LOSS ORIENTATION	RESTORATION ORIENTATION
Ruminating on emotions focused on the death or loss	New roles and responsibilities
Focused on life before the death	Creating a new life without the deceased
Focused on circumstance before the death	Relating to friends and family in different ways

(Stroebe & Schut, 2010)

Quick Plan for Self-Care as the Holidays Approach



**What am I going to
START doing?**



**What am I going to
KEEP doing?**



**What am I going to
STOP doing?**

References

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Thank You