



Wellness & Learning Initiatives

Troubled Waters: “And still, sailing ahead”

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Our Time Together

Change is not something that is exclusive to the pandemic; universal law suggests that everything has a beginning, middle, and end – and thus, there will be transition and change. How do we then identify, articulate, and hone-in on what makes us resilient in the face of uncertainty?

During the session we will explore as a collective - skills / strategies to identify and make sense of what makes us resilient in an ever-changing landscape; through focusing on areas of recovery, innovation, and growth to allow us to maintain our balance and better respond to the natural ebb and flow of our day-to-day experiences.

Recovery

- Recovery suggests we take pause and asks us, “where was I and where am I looking to go?” Here we ground and locate ourselves to understand what our current needs are, and the intentional creation of a space and time to slow down and connect to the present moment experience.

Innovation

- Innovation asks us, “what changes will need to be made, individually, collectively, or systemically to support my own and the collective needs?” Where we explore how to support ourselves on an individual, as well as a community level.

Growth

- Growth asks us, “how can we create sustainable change for ourselves and others?” Here participants will focus on process; how to make sense of and integrate these skills and strategies into their own experiences.



Resilience in a changing landscape

Weathering the storm.

“The ability to withstand sudden change or bounce back from crisis”

Resilience can be defined as the ability of a person or a community to function in the face of adversity, to survive, and, perhaps, even to thrive (Hobfoll et al., 2015).

Some describe resilience as a set of interlinked capacities that facilitate an ongoing and dynamic response to changing circumstances (Faulkner et al., 2018; Gubbay & McKendry, 2021).

Resilience can be explained as how we piece ourselves back together.

You can't avoid change AND you can live a life of resilience.
You can embrace transition and see challenges as opportunities to thrive.

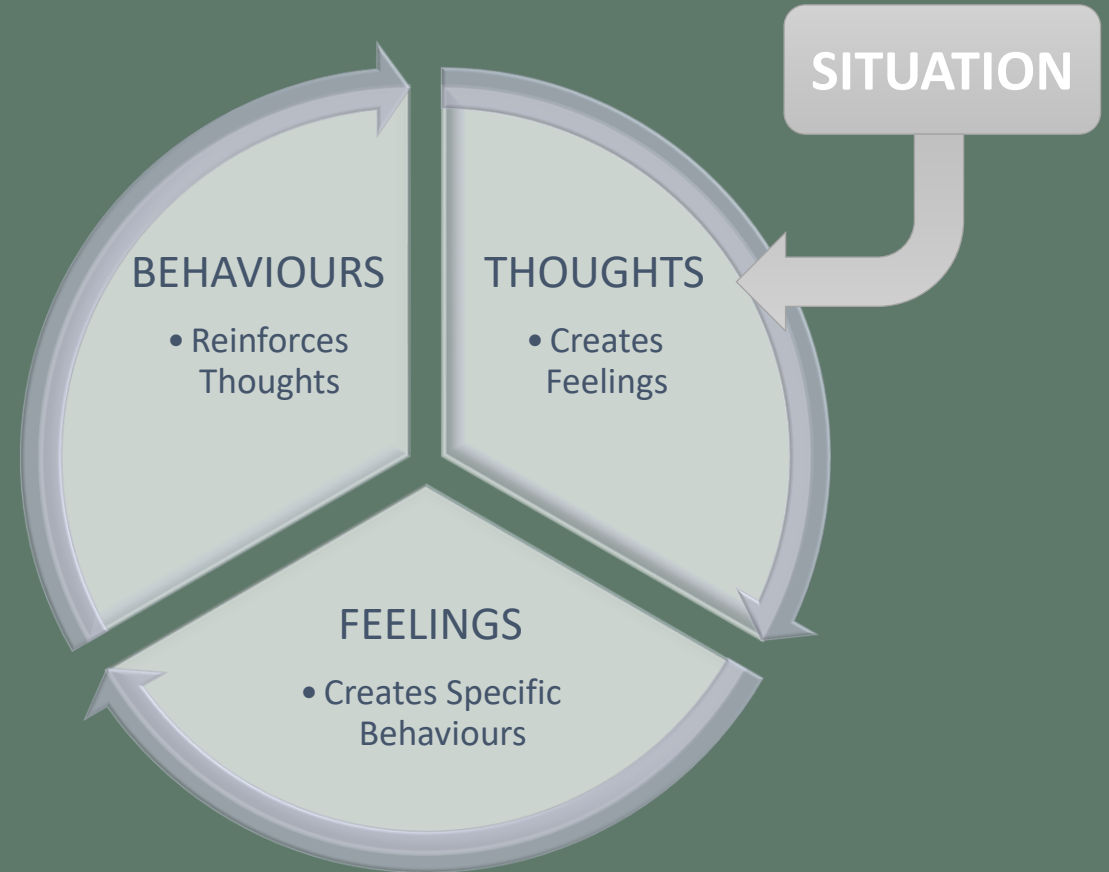


The subtle ABC's

Any demand placed on your brain, your relationships or physical body impacts your overall wellness.

Every aspect of your life influences your state of wellbeing.

Every aspect of your life influences how you think, feel, behave, and react.



Any life is a life of change

- We experience transitions in work and relationships, changes in our physical and mental health, and new events in our local communities and our world.
- If you can learn to cope with change, you'll lower your risk for anxiety and depression. Your relationships will flourish, and your body will feel healthier.
 - If you can't cope with change, only a minor amount of stress can make you feel overwhelmed by life.
 - You might also struggle to set and meet the goals you have for yourself.
- Resilience contributes to maintaining the relative stability of living systems over time, while transformative resilience describes a living system's capacity to transform itself in response to changing conditions and disruptions.



A high-angle, close-up photograph of a group of people holding hands in a circle. The hands are the primary focus, showing various skin tones and textures. The background is a plain, light-colored surface. The overall mood is one of solidarity and support.

Recovery

Testing the water: The way we piece ourselves back together

Recovery acknowledges the individual nature of each person's journey of wellness and each person's right to find their own way to living a life of value and purpose in the community of their choice.

The principles that inform a recovery orientation – such as fostering hope, enabling choice, encouraging responsibility and promoting dignity and respect.

Recovery is about transforming. It is a journey and an intentional commitment.

- **Health/foster wellness:** Make informed, healthy choices that support physical and emotional well-being.
 - Take care of your body
 - Practice mindfulness
 - Avoid negative outlets
- **Home:** Have a stable and safe place to live.
- **Purpose:** Engage in meaningful daily activities, such as a job or school, volunteering, caring for your family, or being creative. Work for independence, income, and resources to participate in society.
 - Help others
 - Be proactive
 - Move toward your goals
 - Look for opportunities for self-discovery
- **Community/connection:** Build relationships and social networks that provide support.
 - Prioritize relationships



Recovery and Assimilation

Assimilation is the legacy of standardization and impacts emotional well-being.

Assimilation deeply undermines resilience.

Assimilation refers to a part of the adaptation process.

Assimilation is the easiest method to adapt to new experiences and information; it does not require a great deal of adjustment.

Through this process, we add new information to our existing knowledge base, sometimes reinterpreting these new experiences so that they will fit in with previously existing information.

Change to memories to fit existing beliefs.

- Belief structure: categories—just world, good things to good people, etc.

When we change our cognitions/thoughts around the trauma by challenging these assimilation and accommodation thoughts, we are better able to redirect our thoughts.



“What got you here, won’t get you there”

The recovery journey for some means returning to their previous life. For others, the recovery journey may represent a new beginning and an experience leading to positive transformation.

At its core, being hopeful means holding an expectation for positive development. Hope helps provide the motivation and sustain the strength required to confront the many challenges. Hope has many expressions.

Fostering hope does not mean ignoring the real distress people experience or the challenges they may face. During times of diminished hope, it is often the support of caring others that holds the key to a brighter future.

A key source of hope comes from looking beyond the challenge and see our unique strengths, character, innate abilities and potential for growth,

Hope stimulates recovery and acquiring the capabilities to nurture hope is the starting point for building a mental health system geared to fostering recovery. At its core, recovery is fundamentally about hope.

Reframe setbacks in the context of learning opportunities and the prospect for longer-term recovery outcomes.

| Activity: Doors Closed Doors Open



Troubled waters: “And still, sailing ahead”

- Embrace healthy thoughts
 - Keep things in perspective
 - Accept change
 - Maintain a hopeful outlook
 - Learn from your past
- Steps to help in recovery from adversity/trauma/hardship
 - Aim for growth, not resilience.
 - Increase understanding of who you are by looking at the early emotional conditioning patterns your parents taught you.
 - Seek both personality changes and interpersonal growth to discover how to manage relationships and confront suffering in new ways.
 - Get help from a therapist, not to re-establish a resilient you, but to create a new you that grows, copes better and becomes healthier.
- Times of crisis can be regarded as windows of opportunity to make healthy psychological changes, not for resilient springing back to the old you and your difficulties.



Space for identifying resilience in the face of hardships

Hardship can force you to solve problems you probably wouldn't be exposed to if you weren't hard-up.

Hardships are similar in that we learn from pushing through the challenge we face. By facing an initial lack of success with resilience, we can actually grow considerably more through reframing how we approach these difficult experiences.

Letting go is the greatest risk you take, but it is only through letting go that the space for change and healing is created.

RISK-TAKING IS PART OF GROWTH

An essential part of our shared human experience is the ability to learn and grow from the decisions we make.

Recovery is not a linear process. Recovery-oriented practice encourages learning and using mistakes or setbacks as opportunities for insight and personal growth. **Resilience is developed by engaging, rather than avoiding, life's challenges.**

RECOVERY IS STRENGTHENED THROUGH PARTNERSHIP



“Normal” does not exist for anyone.

There are many aspects of your life you can control, modify, and grow with. That's the role of resilience. Becoming more resilient not only helps you get through difficult circumstances, and it also empowers you to grow and even improve your life along the way.

No such thing as normal

It's normal that we fluctuate through life. Now we are learning more how to recognize which stage we're in and identify what we need to prioritize.

People need new self-understanding that helps to better navigate themselves, their relationships, and their traumas.

- Wanting to “go back to normal” is “anti-resilient.”
 - This meant they grew and shed automatic, repeating, resilient patterns that took them back to old ways of being and trying to cope.
- Skewed or pathological roles and coping styles are learned by age 3 in most families.
 - The roles are taught by how parents “emotionally condition” their children.
- Coping styles can anticipate hardship.
- When people experience adversity, the worst thing that can happen is for them to return to their usual way of coping. A better outcome is for people to grow through developing new insights about themselves and new strategies for wrestling with difficulties in life.



A high-angle, top-down photograph of a diverse group of people. Their hands are clasped together in a gesture of prayer, meditation, or collective support. The individuals are positioned around the perimeter of the frame, with their faces partially visible, looking downwards. The background is a plain, bright white surface, which makes the hands and the central text stand out. The lighting is soft and even, highlighting the textures of the skin and the fabric of their clothing.

Innovation

Shifting Perspective

Innovation suggests, shifting perspective towards new ways of thinking about change, grief, and loss – in order to create new experiences around change, grief, and loss.

It begins with you!

- Change (demand made on the system to adapt; constant throughout life). It is time to acknowledge that something in our thoughts, feelings, behaviours, and expectations needs to change for us to become innovators of our “new” normal.
- Grief (spirits that are heavy with sorrow; psychological, social, emotional and somatic reactions to the experience and perception of loss; often powerful, painful, and intense)
- Loss (loss of someone or anything that you have a deep attachment to; tangible or symbolic loss; death, divorce, change in health, trauma)

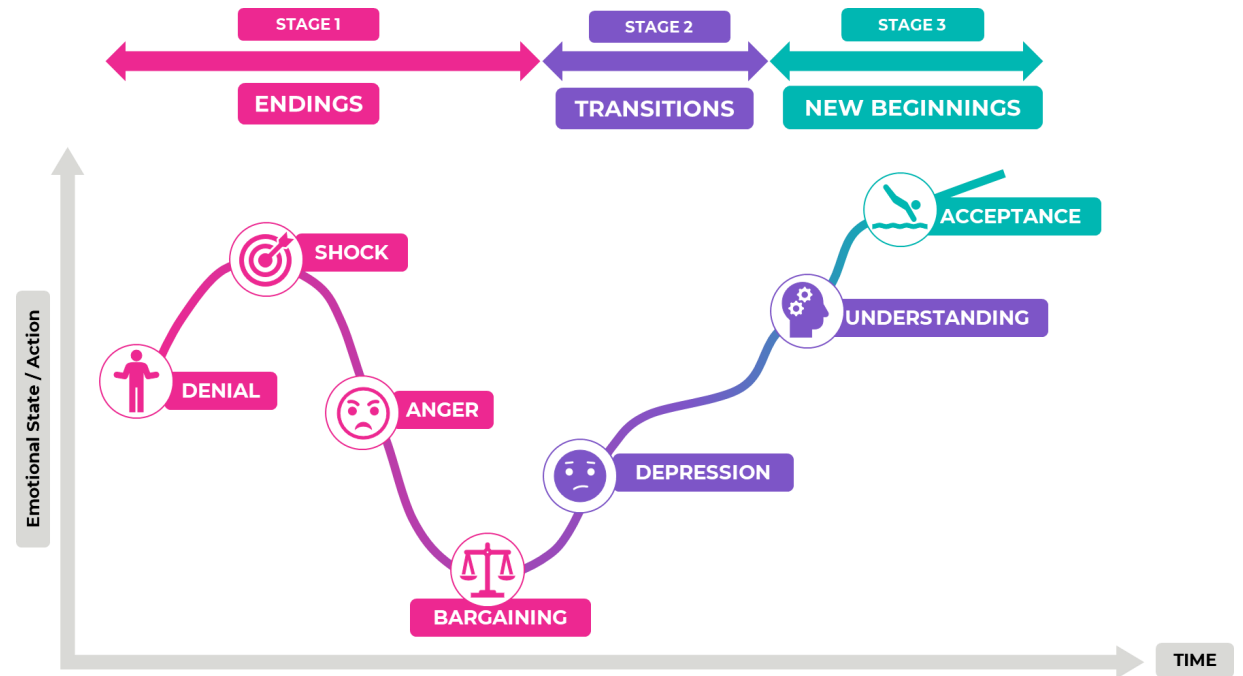


Grief is...

- A process of experiences, phases and adjustments ...
- Individualized and unique ...
- A common human experience ...
- Determined in a social and cultural context ...
- Dynamic and requires energy ...
- Pervasive and holistic in nature ...
- A lifelong challenge ...
- Can be BIG or small...

It comes and it goes ...

Give yourself permission to experience the rough waters that is the GRIEF cycle.



Types of Losses...

Loss of **external objects** (theft, fire, war, climate)

Loss of **known environment** (migration, jobs, climate, war, neighbourhood, home, nature - ecological)

Loss of a **significant other** (family, friends, pets)

Loss of an **aspect of self** (body changes, talents, self-identity, self-esteem, independence)

Loss of **life** (accidents, illness, suicide, old age, war)

Some losses are more complicated and complex than other losses

Other Losses

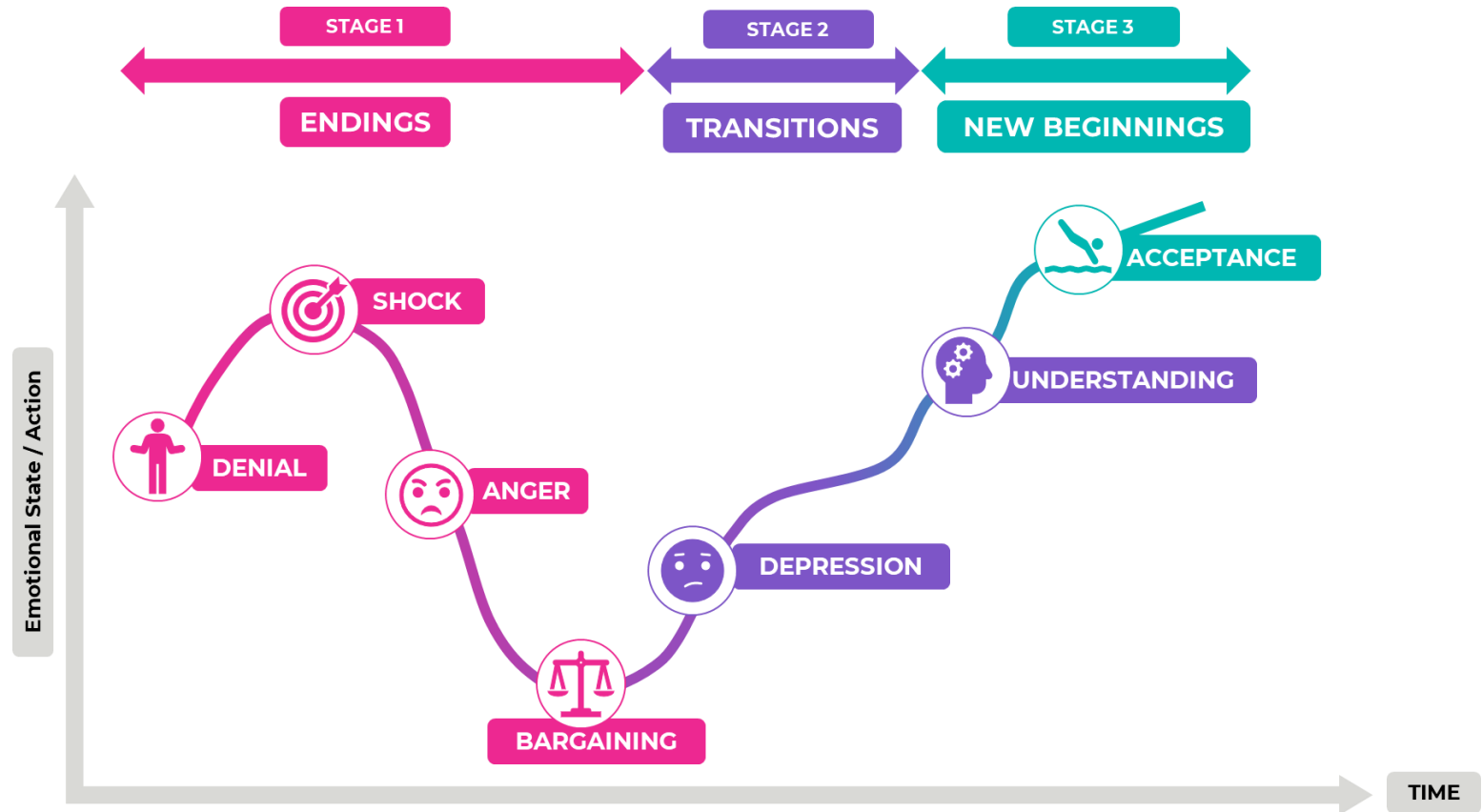
- Maturation losses
- Traumatic losses
 - Sudden no time to adjust, often stigmatized or existentially problematic
- Disenfranchised and not acknowledged losses
 - Drugs, drinking & driving, suicide, infectious diseases, crime, Covid, marital/family complications
- Collective group losses
 - shootings, war, human displacements, disasters
- Multiple losses ...



Finding a soft place to land...

How do we make sense of these experiences around change, grief, and loss so that we can sustainably bring ourselves to the “here and now?”
Adapting Elizabeth Kubler-Ross’ 5-stage theory on the grieving process....

1. Denial/Shock
2. Anger
3. Depression
4. Bargaining
5. Acceptance



Finding a soft place to land...

Shock/Denial:

"I feel so numb" "I can't believe this happened to me" "This is all just a control tactic", "The tests must be wrong," "I'm healthy I can't be..." "I'm fine" "It's fine"

Can look like: avoidance, procrastination, forgetting, distracted easily, mindless behaviours, keeping busy all the time

Can feel like: shock, numbness, confusion, shutting down

Anger:

(at helpers, the leaver, friends, family, bosses, your God, the human race, government, life)

"Why me?" "Who is to blame" "You know who did this..."

Can look like: pessimism, cynicism, sarcasm, irritability, aggression or passive-aggression, reactivity, unhealthy coping.

Can feel like: frustration, impatience, resentment, embarrassment, rage, feeling out of control



Finding a soft place to land...

Bargaining:

"Take this away and I will ..." *"I should have"*
"If only"

Can look like: ruminating on the future or past, overthinking or worrying, comparing self to others, assuming the worst around future orientation, perfectionism, judgement towards self and others

Can feel like: guilt, shame, blame, fear, anxiety, insecurity

Sadness/Depression:

"I can't go on" *"It hurts so much"* *"When will this stop?"*

Can look like: sleep/appetite changes, reduced energy/vitality, reduced social interest, lack of motivation, crying, unhealthy coping.

Can feel like: sadness, despair, helplessness, hopelessness, disappointment, overwhelmed



Finding a soft place to land...

Acceptance:

*"It will never be the same" "I accept this has happened"
"That was difficult to move through and now I must
cope" "good enough" "this is how it is right now..."*

Can look like: mindful behaviours, living in the here and now (presence), vulnerability and emotional flexibility, assertiveness, non-defensive and open communication, adaptation and healthy coping, responsibility

Can feel like: courageous, validation, self-compassion, pride, and wisdom.

Acknowledgment
is NOT Acceptance

Acceptance
is NOT Approval



5 CRITICAL variables related to grief/discomfort/pain/regret...

1. Prior attachment
 - The strength of the bond you had with what was lost. The stronger the bond the more significant and long term the impact.
2. Nature of the loss
 - Expected vs. unexpected
3. Coping strategies
 - What was available at time of distress.
4. Developmental stage
 - Where we find ourselves at in our life cycle, we inherently expect various experiences of loss. Expectations impact our perceptions, and our perceptions influence our reality.
5. Supports available
 - This can include social support, community support, family support etc.



We experience multiple losses & changes across our lifespan

- Over a lifetime (work, family, friendships, body, places, \$)
- Over a short time
- Traumatic and significant losses
- Lots of little losses/ big losses
- At a vulnerable or strong time
- When we are younger or older
- With or without internal and external supports

And we still live on and prove that we have the capacity to heal, to change and to begin again!



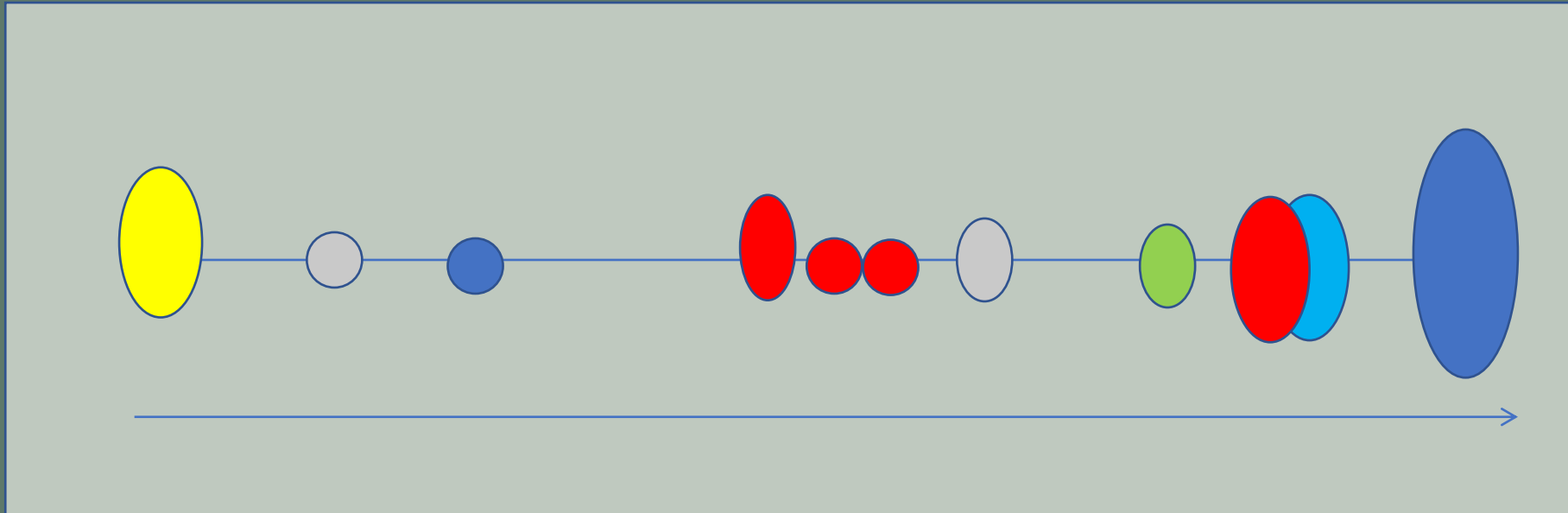
A Step Away...





Growth

ACTIVITY: YOUR life of resilience



All Aboard: Personal Reflections

- Think of a significant loss in your life...
- What was your first reaction?
- What happened over the next months? Years?
- How did you grieve?
- What helped you in your grieving process?
- **Have you worked through your grief?**
- Do you feel you have resolved your grief?
- What do you think the next stages are after shock, denial, anger, depression and acceptance from your experience?
- What have others taught you about the grieving process and how you can help?
- **Reflect on your personal ethnic and cultural background. How do you and your family view grief and loss?**



All Aboard: What do we need while navigating change

COMFORT NEEDS

(shelter, food, water, pain control, touch, people, nature, senses)

COMMUNICATION NEEDS

(presence, listening, conversation, honesty, humour, sharing)

DECISION-MAKING NEEDS

(information, discussion, deliberation, choice making, consulting, planning, action)



All Aboard: What can support look like?

COMFORT NEEDS

(shelter, food, water, pain control, touch, people, nature, senses)

- Sharing a meal, cooking, self-massage, a warm cup of tea, sitting in a park, people-watching, going for a walk-in nature, aromatherapy, meditation, movement, dancing, artwork, relaxing music

COMMUNICATION NEEDS

(presence, listening, conversation, honesty, humour, sharing)

- Creative writing, singing, good conversation with a friend / colleague or family member, laughter, truth-telling & bearing

DECISION-MAKING NEEDS

(information, discussion, deliberation, choice making, consulting, planning, action)

- Understanding internal/external resources available, feedback from a professional or trusted-other, goal-setting, critical-reflection practice, information-gathering

How is this sustainable? We Process...

1. Acknowledge the reality of the loss
 - Stop, breathe, take notice (inventory) and reorient to present experience (what happened, as it is).
2. Identify & express the emotions of grief (grief cycle)
 - Allow yourself to feel - Denial/Shock, Anger, Bargaining, Sadness/Depression, and Acceptance.
3. Commemorate the loss (ritualize)
 - Identify what you need to stay connected (not tethered) to your loss
4. Acknowledge the ambivalence
 - Understanding that change can bring forward conflicting emotions, thoughts, behaviours (notice without the judgment)
5. Resolution of the ambivalence
 - Moving towards acceptance of the conflicting emotions, thoughts and behaviours change can bring forward.
6. Letting go & moving on
 - Acceptance! A change is needed, I can process this and prepare for what's ahead...



Real Applications: How we can mobilize, impact, and influence change

- Avoid rescuing or attempting to fix
- Don't force the issue at hand (slow-down!)
- Make yourself available (for yourself and others, when that is available to you)
- Mindfulness (presence to experiencing)
- Breathe!
- Adopt a curious and non-judgmental stance (Yes...and?)
- What's your self-talk like? (punitive vs. supportive)
- Noticing and creating space for honest and critical-reflection
- Regular check-ins



Real Applications: How we can mobilize, impact, and influence change

- Cultivate a sense of belonging; create and hold space for people inside and outside our lives to process.
- Seek out moments to connect to-and-with others from a similar culture, value-system, or community (opportunities for comfort and soothing)
- Seek out moments to connect to-and-with others from a different culture, value-system, or community (opportunities for growth and development)
- Address the past (memories & why)
- Address the future (where do we go and what do we do?)
- Watch not to respond before we understand and not to be prone to understand before we actually know what has happened
- Listen and tune into what time-sense friend, family, colleague, partner or self are in (past, present, or future orientation?)



How to ride the wave of change smoothly

- We slow down to negotiate with our present experiencing and attend to the appropriate experiences from our past that are needing closure or reconciliation, in order to move forward and into the life you would like to live.
- Consciousness-raising leads to action
- Dance between avoidance (reflection) and confrontation (action)
- Promote collective reflection and social action
- Change must come from within.
- Change is not something to be feared. It should be embraced and accepted.





Take
Action

Foster a culture of self-care

- **Walk the talk!**
 - Be a role model of self-care to others in your sphere of influence.
- **Share self-care tips via your internal communications** and invite individuals to share what has worked for them.
- **Encourage others to take regular lunch breaks away from their desk** and ideally away from the “work” environment.
- **Encourage a mindset of acceptance - accept that we will never get all that needs to be done, done.**
 - To-do lists are by nature endless.
- **Create a healthy email policy** - be mindful of the burden of e-mails on staff/colleagues/students/families and implement ways to reduce it in order to increase productivity and efficiency.

Examples of top tips:

- Create technology free times/days in the week or month.
- Be available for activities you enjoy.
- Drink lots of water and eat well.
- Cycle or walk to work - physical exercise brings balance to mind and body. It can help prepare for the day ahead or wind down from the day that’s been.
- Have a buddy (friend/colleague) you trust at work with whom you can talk and share your feelings with.
- Spend 10-20 minutes every day writing down a stream of consciousness. Just write down what’s there on your mind.
- Create a conscious morning ritual.
- Set intentions for the day – this can help establish a feeling of control.
 - Ask yourself, *What do I want out of this day?*



Coping Toolbox of Champions

Achieving a mental state of balance and well-being.

The following are various coping skill practices that can help individuals feel connected and resilient:



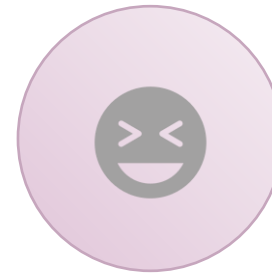
Self-Soothing



Distraction



Opposite Action



Emotional Awareness



Mindfulness



Change the F.A.C.E. of Emotional Storms

F = Focus on what's in your control

A = Acknowledge your thoughts & feelings without judgment

C = Come back into your body

E = Engage fully in what you're doing - focus on immediate tasks

Your Survival Compass: Guide your way back to Calm

- Evaluate your level of control - To evaluate your level of control over a situation, you can ask yourself, “What can I take responsibility for in this situation?”
- Practice self-care after a loss – Acknowledge and Accept the loss and pay attention to what you’ve learned from the experience.
- Check your thought patterns
- Be in the present
- Find your priorities - The most resilient people see change as an opportunity rather than a monster to fear

Recovery

Aim for growth, not resilience.

Innovation

Resourcing – Look back to find the lessons of the experience.

Growth

Process - if you can learn from hardships, and turn it into an opportunity for growth, you gain something back that stays with you forever.



Resources to Explore

Training Opportunities:

- ✓ Mental Health First Aid by the Mental Health Commission of Canada
 - Learn ways to support others in distress.
- ✓ safeTALK or ASIST Training by LivingWorks Education Inc.
 - Learn ways to support others at risk of suicide.
- ✓ Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging Training
- ✓ 2SLGBT*Q1A+Training

Mental Health and Well-being APPs

- ✓ What's Up: General Mental Health
- ✓ WellMind
- ✓ Fabulous
- ✓ Mind Shift: Anxiety
- ✓ SAM: Self-Help for Anxiety Management
- ✓ 7 Cups of Tea
- ✓ **Wellness and Learning Initiatives Webinars:**
<https://www.gotostage.com/channel/guardmentalwellnesswebinars>
- ✓ *Meditations:*
www.helpguide.org/home-pages/audio-meditations.htm



Wellness & Learning

Initiatives

CONTACT US

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DISCOVER MORE

www.wellnessandlearning.me

The Wellness and Learning Initiatives program offers a wide variety of training workshops, mental health and wellness consulting, customizable webinars, customizable seminars, and support groups for individuals and organizations aimed to help individuals on how to model and impact prosocial behaviours within the context of our larger communities.

As a team we utilize a proactive, anti-oppressive and trauma-informed psychoeducational approach to provide individuals with the knowledge and skills required to foster becoming advocates and agents of change around their own mental well-being while empowering the same in others.



Wellness & Learning Initiatives

Building Awareness and Promoting Change Starts With You.



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