Filling Your Cup: Self-Care for Professionals & Clients

Founder, Mindfulness & Grief Institute

Author, Mindfulness & Grief and From Grief To Peace

D.O. McComb & Sons & Dignity Memorial Annual Grief Seminar



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1

Workshop Objectives

MORNING

- Describe the symptoms and remedies for work-related stress including burnout, compassion fatigue, and vicarious trauma
- Apply self-care and meaning reconstruction techniques to improve caregiver wellbeing and efficacy.
- Develop an institutional support program to foster professional health, education, and wellbeing.
- Reconnect with your personal mission of service.



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2

Workshop Objectives

AFTERNOON

- Explore established and emerging grief therapies to help bereaved people cope with and skillfully adapt to life after loss.
- $\bullet \;\;$ Identify the symptoms of prolonged grief disorder and know when to refer.
- Administer task-appropriate interventions that foster resilience, continuing bonds, and meaning reconstruction.



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Imagine a World Without Caregivers

- Remember a caregiver who helped you personally during an emergency or emergency crisis. What would have happened to you if they were not there?
- Think of a person you helped during an emergency or personal crisis. How would the outcome be different?



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4

"They may forget your name, but they will never forget how you made them feel."

Maya Angelou



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5

"Life is never made unbearable by circumstances, but only by lack of meaning and purpose."

Viktor Frankl



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Meaning As Medicine

- Remember your purpose
- Find fulfillment in small moments
- Celebrate successes
- Connect with your community
- Be intentional



7

Meaning Reflection

Remember the first time you knew you had a calling. The day you decided to enter a life of service, to care for the sick, the injured, the suffering.

- · What was happening in your personal life?
- What inspired you to choose this path?
- How connected do you feel to this inspiration:
- Is it the reason you wake up in the morning, or does it feel like a distant memory?

Take a moment, and without judging yourself, just notice your relationship to your meaning right now.





8

Types of On-The-Job Caregiver Distress

- Compassion Fatigue
- · Secondary traumatic stress
- Vicarious Trauma
- Shared Trauma
- Moral Injury
- Burnout



The Cost of Caring

- Emotional & physical exhaustion
- Desensitization to patient stories
- Decrease in quality care ("poor bedside manners")
- Increase in clinical errors
- Higher rates of depression and anxiety disorders
- · Rising rates of stress levels
- · Degradation in workplace climate
- Decreased empathy & compassion

(Figley Institute, 2013)



10

Know The Warning Signs

- Having difficulty talking about your feelings
- Free floating anger and/or irritation
- Startle effect/being jumpy
- Over-eating or under-eating
- Insomnia
- · Losing sleep over patients
- Worried that you are not doing enough for your patients and families
- Dreaming about your patients and/or their
- Diminished joy toward things you once
- Feeling trapped by your work
- Diminished feelings of satisfaction and personal accomplishment
- Dealing with intrusive thoughts of clients with especially those with severe trauma
- Feelings of hopelessness associated with your work/clients
- · Blaming others





11

Rewards of Caring

- Pleasure at being able to reduce distress
- Honored to be trusted
- Connected in a meaningful way
- Intellectually and emotionally challenge in real time
- Challenging and spontaneous interventions
- · Variety and stimulating, rarely boring

(Teater & Ludgate, 2019)





The Preventative Factors

- Lower frequency and intensity of trauma exposure
- Older age
- Strong social support
- Impersonal trauma rather than interpersonal trauma
- Calm temperament with low anxiety
- Greater experience dealing with people with trauma
- Close connections with colleagues
- Willingness to look for meaning in suffering

(Teater & Ludgate, 2019)



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13

Most Helpful Activities (Scale 6 to 1)

- 4.60 Vacation
- 4.34 Social activities
- 4.21 Emotional support from colleagues
- 4.10 Reading for pleasure
- 4.06 Sought consultation with difficult cases
- 3.91 Read relevant professional literature
- 3.88 Took breaks during workday
- 3.83 Emotional support from family & friends
- 3.78 Spent time with children
- 3.67 Listened to music
 3.60 Attended workshop or conference
- 3.59 Attended workshop or conference
 3.00 Aerobic exercise
- ▲ MINDFULNESS

- 2.87 Attempted to diversify caseload
- 2.14 Community involvement
- 2.04 Relaxation exercises
- 1.86 Gardening
- 1.51 Artistic expression
- 1.29 Spiritual Practice
- 1.17 Personal psychotherapy
- .95 Massage or bodywork
- .88 Meditation
- .56 Journal writing
- .52 Yoga

(Gamble et al., 1994)



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5 Domains of Posttraumatic Growth

- Increased Appreciation of Personal Strength
- Sense of New Opportunities & Possibilities
- Deepened Sense of Connection & Compassion
- · Appreciation of Life in General
- Spiritual or Religious Growth or Change

(Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2014)



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R	elir	nqu	ıish	ıing	Shame	In	Asses	smen	ıt

- Normalize your experience
- · Adopt an unbiased observer perspective
- Focus on the Facts
- Use non-judgmental language
- Remind yourself of your strengths
- Seek external support
- Emphasize growth & learning
- Focus on solutions
- Be patient
- Practice [Fierce] Self-compassion



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16

Barriers to Implementing Self-Care

- Too busy to notice the level of distress
- Symptoms are perceived to be medical in nature
- Erroneous view of the solution
- Perceived lack of feasibility
- Other priorities outweigh self-care

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(Teater & Ludgate, 2019)

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17

"When we relate to ourselves with tender self-compassion, we care for and nurture ourselves. When we relate to ourselves with fierce self-compassion, we assert our autonomy and stand up for our rights." Kristen Neff



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Healthy Motivation & The Three Components of Self-Compassion

- 1. Kindness manifests as encouragement
- 2. Common humanity provides wisdom
- 3. Mindfulness gives vision and clarity

Write down a sentence or two that you can say to yourself to change the tone when you are feeling self-critical.







19

"It is said that we can't attain enlightenment, let alone feel contentment and joy, without seeing who we are and what we do, without seeing our patterns and our habits. This is called maitri developing loving-kindness and an unconditional friendship with ourselves." Pema Chödrön





20

How To Cultivate Maitri

- Meditation
 - Self-compassion
 - Mindfulness
 - Common Humanity • Self-kindness
 - R.A.I.N. meditation
 - Metta meditation
 - · Compassionate friend
- Gratitude Letter
- Taking In The Good
- Nature
- Prayer
- Compassionate Community
- Movement



R.A.I.N. Meditation

- RECOGNIZE Acknowledge what you are feeling. What is happening inside me right now?
- ALLOW (Acceptance) Be willing to be present to your experience, no matter how unpleasant. Whatever you
 notice let it be
- INVESTIGATE Unhook yourself from the object or story, so you can witness the emotion with kindness, and from an unbiased perspective. Mindfulness of body is a great technique here, as is asking yourself "what am I believint to be true?"
- NURTURE Offer yourself mercy and care as you would an ideal best friend. Words of kindness, a gentle caress, or an acknowledgement of how hard this is are a few ways to practice.

(RAIN was coined by Michele McDonald, and refined by Tara Brach)



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22

Compassionate Friend Visualization

- Imagine someone you care about suffering with the same hardship as you
- Knowing that you can provide comfort to them, even if you cannot fix the situation, imagine what you would say, do, and feel as you sit and listen to them with compassion
- What would it be like to offer the same comfort back to yourself? If that feels like a bridge too far, imagine a benevolent being or good friend offering you the same.



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23

Gratitude Letter

- Gratitude Letter to Yourself:
 - What you did, how it made you feel, and the benefits you received.
 - Why this action is important to you.
- Gratitude Letter to Another Person
 - $\bullet\,$ What they did, how it made you feel, and the benefits you received.
 - What this says about their character and how it benefits the relationship.

Improves emotional exhaustion, happiness, work/life balance

Gratitude at Work: Prospective Cohort Study of a Web-Based, Single-Exposure Well-Being Intervention for Health Care Workers (Adair, 2020)



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Taking In The Good

- 1. At least 6 times a day, look for small, positive experiences and allow yourself to enjoy them
- 2. Really enjoy the experience for 20 to 30 seconds with all of your senses
- 3. Allow the good experience to sink into you with the intention that it is benefiting you

"Turns transient positive experiences into long-lasting neural structures"

Hardwiring happiness: The new brain science of contentment, calm, and confidence (Hanson, 2016)



25

"Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes, this includes you."

Anne Lamont



26

Self-Care Quickies

- Deep breathing
- Music break
- · Listen to music
- Sing
- Aromatherapy
- Read poetry
- · Stand outside

- Gratitude break · Drink water
- Savor future plans



Results confirmed that leisure satisfaction was significantly correlated with decreased burnout.

27

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"Any act done with intention that transforms meaning can be a ritual....They punctuate and mark significant events in our lives such as weddings, births, confirmations, graduations and deaths. Rituals provide order to the chaos of grief."

Diane Snyder Cowan



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28

Personally Meaningful Rituals Reduce Burnout and Increase Compassion Satisfaction

- Attending the funeral of patients
- Calling the bereaved to offer condolences
- Writing a poem or journaling
- Lighting a candle or saying a prayer
- Walking in a forest or near a beach
- Picturing the deceased and wishing them well on their "next journey

Montross-Thomas (2016)



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29

"It is worth considering that we should actively challenge the implication that providers who are in therapy are the ones who are impaired. In fact, they are acting in their clients' and in their own best interests. We should be more concerned about health care providers who need help, but don't seek it."

Overcoming Compassion Fatigue: A Practical Resilience Workbook (Teater & Ludgate, 2019)



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Compassionate Reflection and Self-Care for Grief Therapists

- Your emotions, personal narratives, and cultural influences influence the therapeutic relationship and moment-to-moment decision making.
- Compassionate Reflection weaves together three principles to help caregivers understand root causes of suffering and find effective selfcare practices.
 - Self-Compassion (Neff)
 - Meaning-Making (Neimeyer)
 - IFS: Internal Family Systems (Schwartz & Sweezy)

(Krawchuck 2023)



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31

Feeling True Compassion

- 3 Stages of Compassion
 - Stress response
 - Compassionate action
 - The biological reward
- $\bullet\,$ Clear Boundaries are the Key to a Truly Compassionate Exchange
- Our Intention for Service Impacts Our Physiological Resilience to Burnout & Stress

(McGonigal, 2012)



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Resources for Recovery

- Seek out a therapist or counselor who specializes in compassion fatigue or trauma (EMDR or Internal Family Systems)
- Communicate with your supervisor and/or team
- Put a regular wellbeing plan into place (self-care)
- Plan how to respond to stressors (coping skills)
- Bibliotherapy: Compassion Fatigue Workbooks
- Ask for help
- Do not give up hope



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"From the moment one embarks on a journey to become a professional healer, one enters into a deliberate dance between meeting the needs of wounded clients and tending to one's own vulnerabilities."

Lara Krawchuk



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34

Organizational Support Barriers

- Unsupportive work environment
 - Stigma
 - Bullying
 - Busyness
- \bullet Lack of planning for or prioritizing self-care
- Inadequate work/home boundaries
- Self-criticism and low self worth
- Ignoring support requests
- Poorly staffed/overworked



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35

Organizational Support Principles

- Create a positive work culture
- Monitor & Assess Employee Wellbeing
- Formalize Peer Support
- Develop strong leadership and mentoring relationships
- Encourage work-life balance
- Offer training and education
- Promote self-care
- Provide emotional support
- Offer professional mental health support



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Plan To Be Supportive

- Understand what self-care means and the real needs of your team
- Honestly assess organizational buy in and address resistance
- Create and encourage a range of self-care strategies
- Inside Workplace
- Regulate workload, Healthy teams, Laughter/Humor, Reflective practice
- At Home
- Rest and relaxation, Prayer/Spiritual practice, Leave work at work
- Regularly assess team and manage self-care barriers

https://palliativecare.org.au/resource/resources-self-care-matters-practising-self-care/



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37

"There are only four kinds of people in this world: those who have been a caregiver, those who are currently caregivers, those who will be caregivers, and those who will need a caregiver."
Rosalynn Carter

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38



Meaning Reflection

- Recall how you felt about your relationship to meaning at the beginning of this workshop.
- Recall what I said, what you thought, what you learned, what you already know, and your interactions with friends and peers.
- Recall what you learned from your Mind Map.
- What is one thing you can take with you to move you one step closer to you your meaning?



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40

Grief Counseling Principles & Procedures

- Principle 1: Help the survivor actualize the loss
- Principle 2: Help the survivor identify and experience feelings
- Principle 3: Assist living without the deceased
- Principle 4: Help find meaning in the loss
- \bullet Principle 5: Help find ways to remember the deceased

Worden (2008)



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41

Grief Counseling Principles & Procedures

- Principle 6: Provide time to grieve
- Principle 7: Interpret *normal* behavior
- Principle 8: Allow for individual differences
- Principle 9: Examine defenses and coping styles
- Principle 10: Identify pathology and refer

Worden (2008



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Measuring the Process & Outcome of Grief Therapy

- Measures cannot replace live enquiries into the client's experiential world.
- Measures offer a tangible representation of theoretical concepts
- Intake measures can signal ways in which the therapeutic process can be tailored and provide an emotional buffer when gathering information on topics that can cause distre4ss.
- Assessment measures can serve as supplements to the ongoing process of therapy, enabling grievers to articulate seeming ineffable, unacceptable, or avoided topics.

(Quoted from Milman, 2023, p. 293)



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43

Assessing Bereavement

- HGRC: Hogan Grief Reaction Checklist (Hogan & Schmidt, 2015)
- IDWL: Inventory of Daily Widowed Life (Caserta et al., 2016)
- ISLES: Integration of Stressful Life Experiences (Holland et al., 2010)
- MLC: Meaning of Loss Codebook (Milman et. al, 2015)
- Grief and Meaning Reconstruction Inventory (Neimeyer et al., 2016)
- PLSS: Perceived Life Significance Scale (Hibberd, 2016)
- \bullet ISS: Inventory of Social Support (Hogan & Schmidt, 2016)



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44

Assessing Bereavement

- ICSG: Inventory of Complicated Spiritual Grief (Burke & Neimeyer, 2016)
- \bullet PGS: Pandemic Grief Scale (Lee & Neimeyer, 2022)
- PG-13-R: Prolonged Grief Disorder Scale (Prigerson, 2021)
- Children and Grief Project Assessment Instrument (Worden, 1996



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Prolonged Grief Disorder

- Grief symptoms intensify chronically over time rather than abating.
- · Increasingly debilitating.
- Griever is incapacitated by grief and daily function is impaired on a long-term basis.
- Disbelief regarding the reality of the death lingers.
- Imagining the deceased person is alive.

46

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Prolonged Grief Disorder

- Painful yearning for deceased.
- Intrusive images of the deceased.
- Desperate loneliness, anger, bitterness, death wish.
- Griever spends the majority of their time contemplating the death, longing for reunion, and is unable to adjust to life without the
- The loss is not integrated.

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47

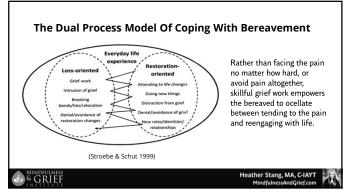
Rando's Six R's Of Coping With Grief

- Recognize the loss: Acknowledge the reality of the loss and allow yourself to feel the pain associated with it.
- React: Experience and express your emotions related to the loss, including sadness, anger, guilt, or confusion.
- Recollect: Remember the person who has died, and honor their memory through rituals, stories, or other activities that celebrate their life.

 Relinquish: Gradually let go of the old attachments to the deceased and the life you shared together. This does not mean forgetting the person, but rather accepting the new reality without them.
- Readjust: Adapt to the new circumstances in your life by developing new roles, routines, and relationships.
- Reinvest: Begin to move forward and reinvest in new relationships, goals, and life pursuits, while continuing to remember and honor the person who has died.







49

Meaning-Focused Grief Therapy

"People's lives are inscribed by their experience. That lived experience gets compressed into stories, themes and identities, all of which scaffold and constrain the meaning of their lives....Grieving entails the reaffirmation reconstruction of a world of meaning that has been challenged by loss."

(Neimeyer, 2023, p. 65)

- Inquiry Examples
 - "What will my life look like now?"

 - "What did the deceased's life mean"
 "How can I feel safe in a world such as this?"
 - "Who am I now that this death has occurred"?"



50

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Attachment Informed Grief Therapy

"When an adult experiences a significant loss of a security enhancing relationship, their attachment system is active in the same way that a child's attachment system is active when they are separated from their

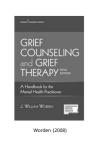
- Psychoeducation about grief as an attachment loss
- · Review of client's attachment history
- Strategies to strengthen emotion regulation
- · Identifying and addressing anxiety and fear about the future

(Kominsky, 2023, p. 99)



Four Tasks of Mourning

- 1. To Accept The Reality of the Loss
- 2. To Process The Pain of Grief
- 3. To Adjust to a World Without The Deceased
- To Find An Enduring Connection With the Deceased In The Midst of Embarking On A New Life







52

Established Grief Counseling Techniques & Practices

- Evocative language
- Use of symbols (a.k.a. artifacts)
- Writing
- D .
- DrawingRole Playing
- Cognitive Restructuring
- Memory Books
- Directed Imagery
- Metaphors

Worden (2008)



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53

Art-Assisted Grief Therapy

- Embodied acts of doing that gives shape to what may be hard to communicate otherwise
- Sensory-motor aspect aids in self-regulation and staying within the window of tolerance
- Can be both soothing and emotionally evocative
- May create reflective distance
- Can foster an empathetic attunement and dialogue
- Can help clients get unstuck

(Strouse, 2023, pp. 162-163)



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Superhero Grief

- Explores the transformative power of loss through the lens of the archetype of the superhero.
- Uses Marvel and DC universe to explore themes of loss, hope, and resilience.
- The shared experience of watching a movie can help family members, friends, or support groups, process their grief together.
- Accessible to a wide range of readers, including children and teenagers who might struggle with traditional self-help books or resources.

(Harrington, 2020)



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55

"I Am My Own Superhero" Meditation

Step 1: Choose your posture

Step 2: Set an intention for self-compassion

Step 3: Sharpen your focus

Step 4: Open your awareness

Step 5: Rest and reflect

Heather Stang in "Mindfulness As Your Grief Superpower" Superhero Grief (p. 236-7, 2020)



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56

Mindfulness-based Grief Therapy

- Mindfulness is an intentional, non-judgmental awareness of the present. It is also a style of meditation and an umbrella term for the dharma, the teachings of the historical Buddha (Kabat-Zinn, 2011).
- Mindfulness for grief can be traced back to the 5th century B.C.E. when Prince Siddhartha's mother died seven days after his birth.
- One does not need to be Buddhist to practice the techniques, and some people find lay terms more accessible, such as open monitoring instead of mindfulness, or compassion instead of metta.
- The Mindfulness & Grief System is a program that is grounded in thanatology, including Worden's (2018) Four Tasks of Mourning, and the Four Foundations of Mindfulness body, feelings, mind, and dhamma, or mental processes found in Buddhist psychology (Gunaratana, 2012).

 (Stang, 2023)

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The Mindfulness & Grief System

- \bullet Module 1: Conscious Relaxation: Self-care for your grieving body
- Module 2: Mindfulness For Grief: Peace in the present moment
- Module 3: Compassion For All: Care for Yourself & Others
- Module 4: Skillful Courage: Harness Your Strength & Vulnerability



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58

The Mindfulness & Grief System

- Module 5: Getting Unstuck: The Space You Need to Move Forward
- Module 6: Meaning Reconstruction: Cherish The Love That Remains
- Module 7: Allowing Transformation: Rewrite Your Life's Story
- Module~8: Perpetual Mindfulness: A Healthy Lifestyle For Grief & Beyond



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59

Creative Approaches

- Journaling
- Poetry
- Mind Map
- Music
- Visual Arts/Collage
- Crafts
- Worksheets



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From Grief To Peace Journaling Tips

- There are no right or wrong answers
- Mindfully engage with your whole being
- · Approach familiar subjects as if it were the first time
- Walk up to the edge, but don't fall over
- Seek out physical and emotional support as needed
- If you are using a guided journal, go through in order or don't
- Bonus Tip: Make it a habit by linking it to a regular activity

From Grief To Peace (Stang, 2021)



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61

Build Resilience Into Your Life

- The givens: sleep, nutrition, hydration, movement
- Schedule time to enjoy the people around you
- Spend alone time doing something pleasurable and/or creative
- \bullet Plan daily, weekly, & monthly self-care activities that get you excited
- Be trauma-sensitive & practice self-compassion
- Create a resilience toolkit (literally)



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62

Developing a Compassion Fatigue Prevention Toolkit

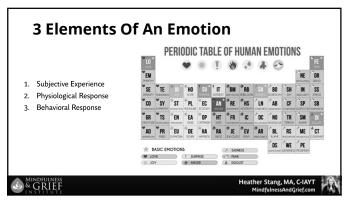
- What would go in that toolkit?
- \bullet What are my warning signs on a scale of 1 to 10, what is a 4 for me, what is a 9?
- Schedule a regular check in, every week how am I doing?
- What things do I have control over?
- What things do I not have control over?
- What stress relief strategies do I enjoy? (taking a bath, sleeping well or going for a massage)



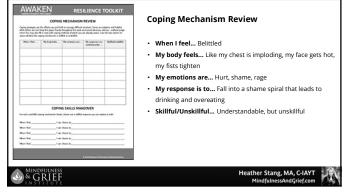
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(Mathieu, 2007)

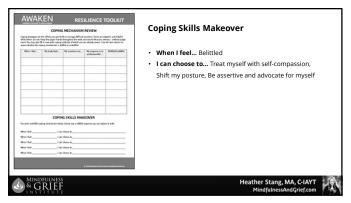




64



65





67

Workshop Objectives

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- Apply self-care and meaning reconstruction techniques to improve caregiver wellbeing and efficacy.
- Develop an institutional support program to foster professional health, education, and wellbeing.
- Explore established and emerging grief therapies to help bereaved people cope with and skillfully adapt to
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- Administer task-appropriate interventions that foster resilience, continuing bonds, and meaning reconstruction.
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