



Inspired with Love Series

Grief and Loss in Supervised Visitation

Session 2: Monday, June 13, 2022

Presented by: Danielle Larsen, LCSW, CADC
In collaboration with Inspire Action for Social Change



Kindly Note: This session
is being recorded.

Learning Objectives

- **Provide strategies for supporting grieving participants and team members**
- **Develop knowledge of how to manage stress and grief**
- **Identify concrete methods to build organizational capacity for grief-processing**

Presenter

Danielle Larsen, LCSW, CADAC

Danielle Larsen is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor committed to advancing anti-oppressive mental health care. Danielle has experience leading programs using trauma-informed approaches, harm reduction, Motivational Interviewing, gender-responsive care, and LGBTQIA affirmative practices.

Danielle co-created and led Illinois' first recovery support team with the non-profit Thresholds, providing community-based mental health services, Medication Treatment, opioid overdose prevention and reversal training, and case management for people who use drugs. Danielle has also provided clinical supervision as a Field Instructor for graduate-level social work students at the University of Chicago. Danielle currently offers outpatient therapy services and treats pre-adolescents, adolescents, and adults.



Where do we go
from here?



Check-In Reflection:

- How has grief been showing up with families, my team, myself?
- How have I attended to grief and loss? With others? With myself?



Is what I am about to say kind?

Is it true?

Is it necessary?

*Does it improve upon the
silence?*

The “Right” Words

- ▷ For young children, they take your words literally, so be sure to use simple but clear language. Use words such as: death, dead, died.
 - Avoid euphemisms (“gone to sleep”, “gone to be with the angels”)
- ▷ What is the family’s belief system about death and afterlife?
- ▷ May need facts repeated
- ▷ Child may not understand the permanence of death
- ▷ Can explain that being dead means “when your heart and breathing stop, and your body does not work anymore”

- ▷ Children need reassurance that the death was not their fault
- ▷ You can pause if you are not sure how to answer a question
 - If you don't know, be honest
- ▷ Ask them questions to explore what they think
 - “I wonder what you think?”
- ▷ Build on their understanding
- ▷ Keys: authenticity, empathy, consistency

Traumatic losses

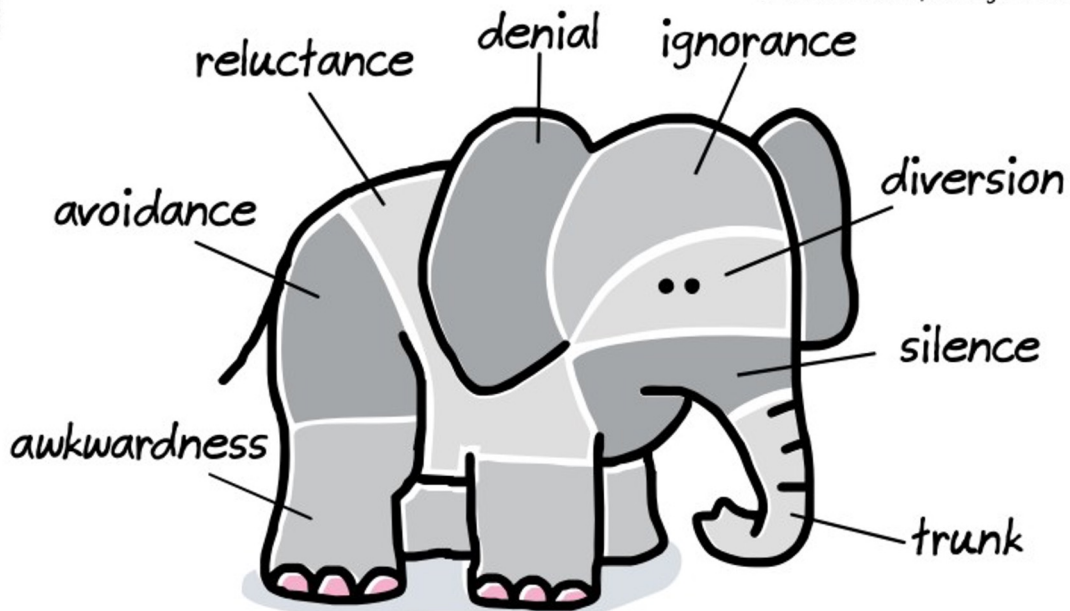
- ▷ Mass traumas
 - Uvalde, Buffalo
- ▷ Method of death
 - Suicide, overdose, violence
- ▷ Explain matter-of-factly
- ▷ Make space of all reactions
- ▷ Remember the life as well as the death
- ▷ Circle back - anniversaries, significant dates

Workers are coping with...



PARTS OF THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

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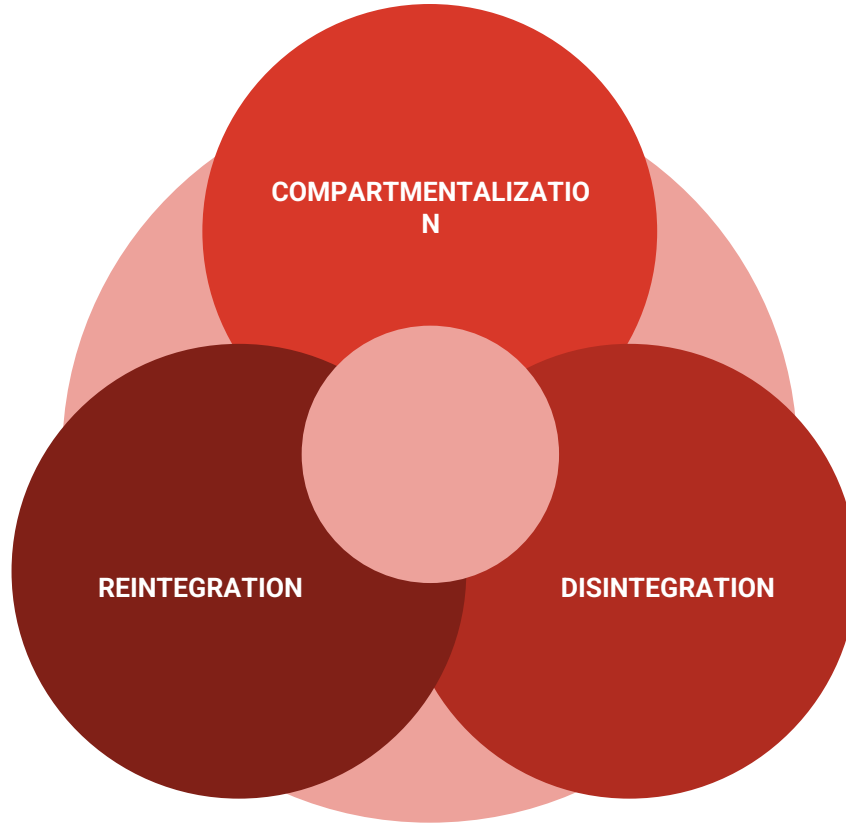
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Barriers to Grieving

- ▷ Productivity culture and demands
- ▷ Lack of financial and organizational resources
- ▷ Understaffed
- ▷ Resentment
- ▷ Judgments
- ▷ Personal discomfort
- ▷ Lack of safety

Small Group Reflection:

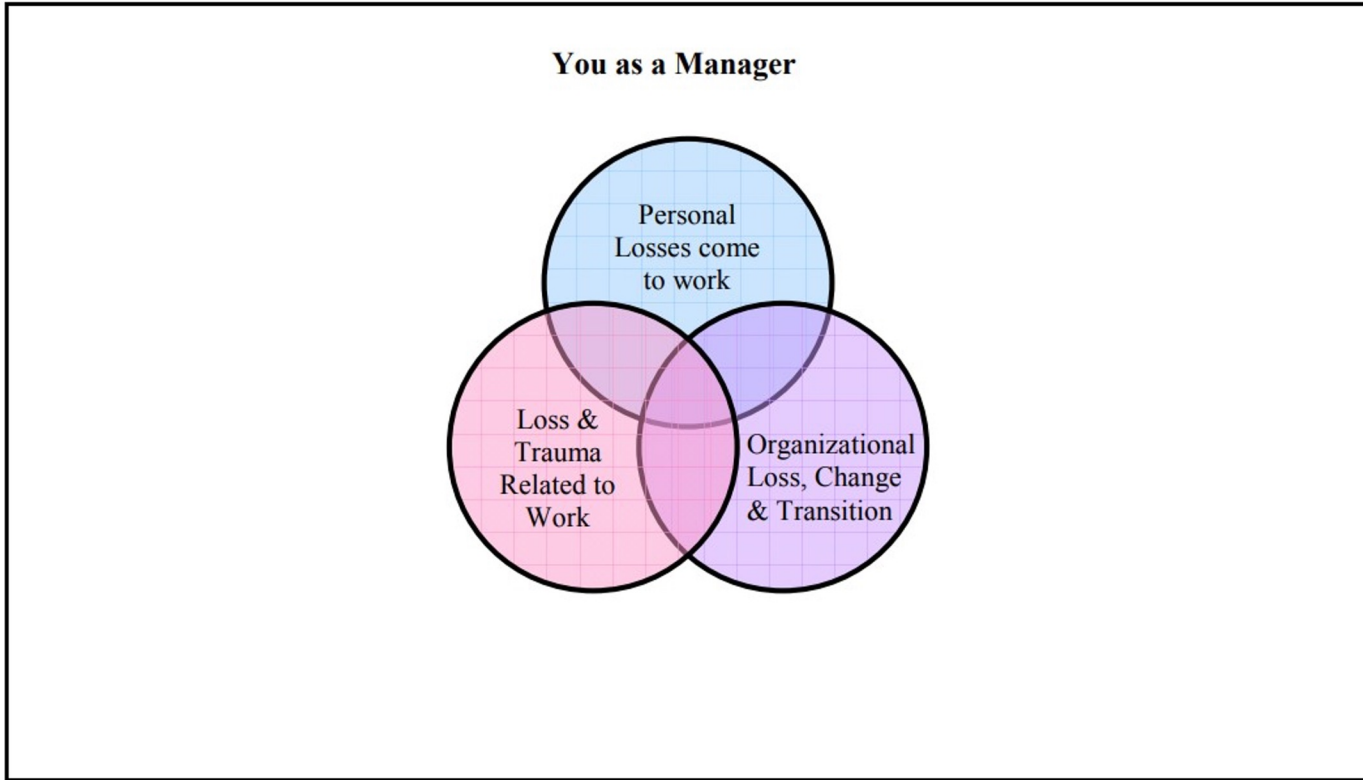
- In what ways have I struggled with grief and loss at work?



Supporting Staff

- ▷ Losses may trigger staff's personal losses and re-activate grief
- ▷ Bearing witness is painful
- ▷ Watch out for suppressing one's feelings in order to "be strong" for families, children
- ▷ Unrecognized biases and beliefs
 - Separation of personal and professional
- ▷ "I don't know what to say, but I am here for you"

Workplace Losses Generate a Multiple Loss Environment



“When Grief Comes to Work” Yvette Perreault (2011)

- ▷ **In a leadership position**, be aware and knowledgeable of your organization's policies about grief
 - Explain resources and options clearly
 - Short-term counseling, bereavement time (who is “covered”?), flex time, EAP
- ▷ Help in specific ways (“I’ll complete that report”)
- ▷ Encourage boundaries/discourage over-work
- ▷ Organize group gestures

- ▷ May feel pulled in different directions
 - Supporting team and addressing performance
- ▷ Can feel helpless, unsure how to approach staff, lack support/direction, have minimal authority to effect policy
- ▷ Accept that grief is present

Organizational Grieving

- ▶ Investing in policies and practices that allow for grief-processing (proactively, not just in response to crisis) can create sustainable, healthy organizations
- ▶ Strategies:
 - Create spaces for mutual support (direct workers, managers)
 - Reflective supervision
 - Rituals that acknowledge loss
 - Training for employees and leaders
 - Connect staff to larger purpose and values
 - Encourage leaders to see grief as a process
 - Respect workers' boundaries and incorporate their feedback

Memorialize

- ▶ Honor those who were lost
 - Sharing memories
 - Drawing, artistic expression
 - Playing music
 - Plant a tree
 - Act of service
 - Create a physical object of remembrance – photos, bracelet, stone, plant



Practicing Presence





“When you love someone, the best thing you can offer is your presence. How can you love if you are not there?”

- Thich Nhat Hanh

Regulation Reset

R.A.I.N

R - Recognize what's going on. Name the emotions/triggers that you are experiencing.

A - Allow yourself to feel the emotions, sensations and feelings.

I - Investigate why you got triggered and are experiencing the emotions.

N - Non-Identification. Remember you are not your thoughts or emotions.



Mindful Moment: Loving-Kindness Meditation

Settle into a quiet place. Breathe slowly and soften your gaze.

Repeat the following cycle two times each:

May I be happy

May I be well

May I be healthy

May I be safe

May I be loved

May (insert name) be happy

May (insert name) be well

May (insert name) be healthy

May (insert name) be safe

May (insert name) be loved

Thank you!

Q & A *

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Upcoming Inspired Sessions



Summer Learning Series

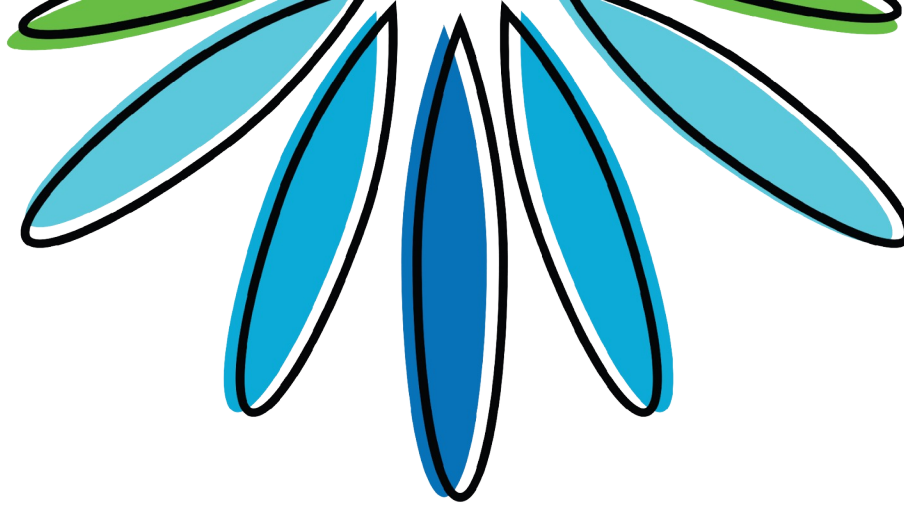
Equity and Trauma-Informed Compassionate De-escalation

Self-guided e-Learning & Live Facilitated Conversations

June, July, and August

Registration Information:

<http://www.inspireactionforsocialchange.org/summer-learning-series>



We are here to provide you support - please contact us anytime!

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