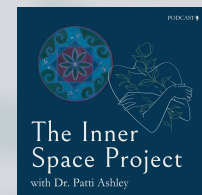


Grief and Toxic Shame in Treatment

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July 9, 11, 16, & 18, 2024

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Disclaimer

Materials that are included in this course may include interventions and modalities that are beyond the authorized practice of mental health professionals. As a licensed professional, you are responsible for reviewing the scope of practice, including activities that are defined in law as beyond the boundaries of practice in accordance with and in compliance with your professional standards.

Limitations of the Research and Potential Risks

Some of the shame research is qualitative in nature. It is important to practice discretion and individualized treatment as each client presents with varying aspects of shame and coping mechanisms.

Objectives

- Define grief and core shame
- Identify how unexpressed grief can induce shame
- Develop an understanding of attachment and early childhood influences on shame
- Recognize the role of the ANS in grief and shame
- Explore therapeutic empathy
- Practice right brain psychotherapy techniques
- Become an enlightened witness
- Learn what to say and not to say when someone dies
- Identify developmentally appropriate ways to help children with grief



Defining Grief and Shame

Grief and the DSM

- DSM I--1952 not addressed at all
- DSM II--1968 neurotic/reactive
- DSM III--1980 Bereavement Exclusion (BE)
- DSM IV--1994 BE added to Adjustment D/O--Controversy begins
- DSM 5--2013 Persistent Complex Bereavement Disorder PCBD introduced
- DSM 5-TR--2021 PCBD renamed Persistent Grief Disorder (PGD)--Controversy continues...

APA (1980; 1987; 1994; 2000; & 2013) & Jordan & Litz (2014) & Pies (2014)

Bereavement Disclaimer In DSM-III (1980)

"Uncomplicated Bereavement is distinguished from major depressive episode and is not considered a mental disorder even when associated with the full depressive syndrome. However, if bereavement is unduly severe or prolonged, the diagnosis may be changed to Major Depressive Depression."

APA (1980, p.213)

Uncomplicated Grief

- a normal human response to the pain of losing someone
- can be brutal, anguishing, disorienting, maddening, enraging, lonely
- may resemble those of a major depressive episode and/or a physical illness
- may feel forever changed, but will find meaning again
- if persists for longer than six months, it might be considered as prolonged grief disorder (PGD), also known as complicated grief

APA (2013)

Prolonged Grief Disorder (PGD)

"Intense yearning or longing for the deceased (often with intense sorrow and emotional pain), and preoccupation with thoughts or memories of the deceased (in children and adolescents, this preoccupation may focus on the circumstances of the death)."

APA (2020)

How Reliable is DSM?

- 2013 field trials were conducted to see how useful the DSM was in producing valid, reliable diagnoses
- Study found an 85 to 96 percent chance that a second clinician, might not give same diagnose as first

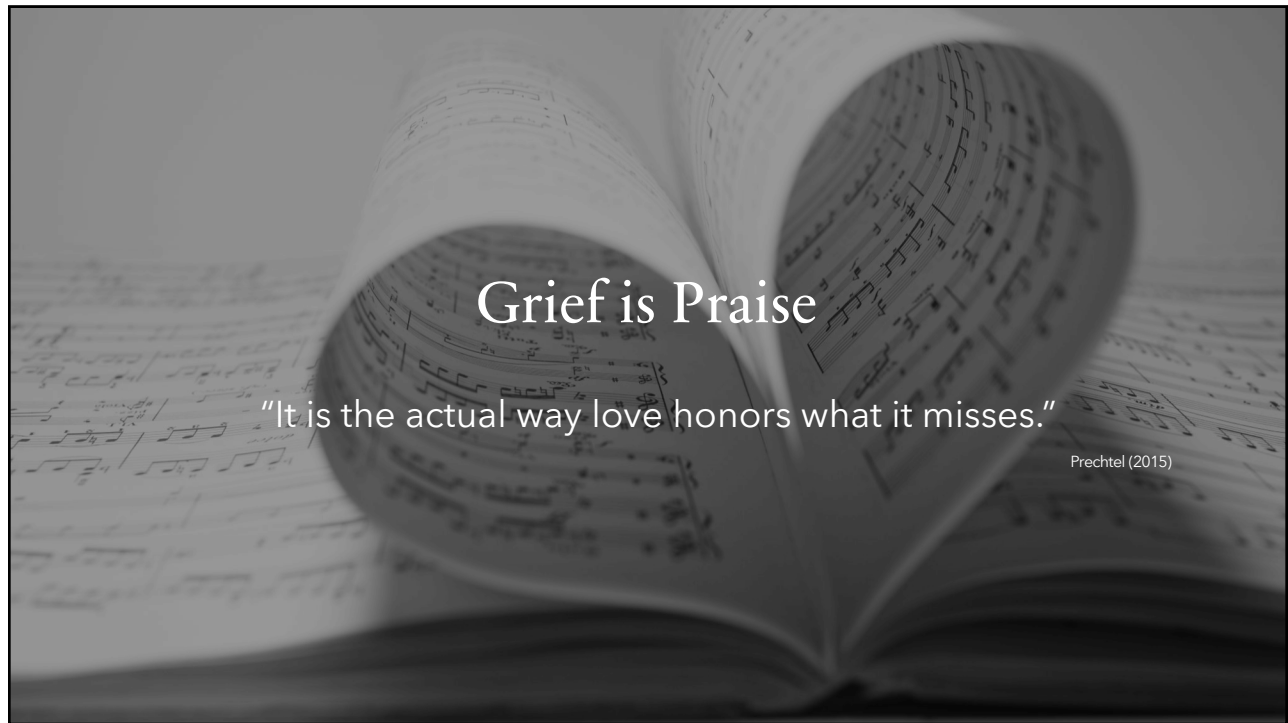
Regier, D. A., et.al. (2013)



What is Grief?

"Grief is what living beings experience when what or whom they love dies or disappears."

Prechtel (2015, p.3)



Grief is Praise

"It is the actual way love honors what it misses."

Prechtel (2015)

Get Over It

A culture that dismisses grief induces shame

What is Shame?

"The intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging."

Brown (2010, p.39)

What do grief and shame have in common?

Loss of connection

Fear of being alone


ANS responses

Trauma

Why Look at Shame?

"If we are to understand and eventually heal what ails the self, then we must begin with shame."

Kaufman (1992)

A photograph showing a dense crowd of dark, open umbrellas. In the center-right, one umbrella is a contrasting light cream color, making it stand out from the sea of dark ones.

"The paradox about shame is that there is shame about shame."

Kaufman (1992)

Shame is “I am bad.”

Guilt is “I did something bad.”

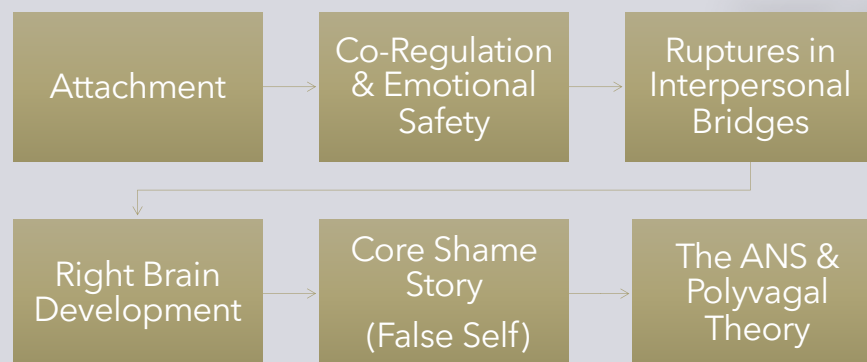


"Shame lies hidden
behind inaccurate words,
symbols that fail to grasp
the inner experience of
the self."

Kaufman (1992 p.7)



The Architecture of Core Shame



Attachment

Reciprocal **non-verbal communications** lie at the psychobiological core of attachment.

Visual-facial: I SEE YOU

Auditory-prosodic: I HEAR YOU

Tactile-gestural: I FEEL YOU

Co-regulating interactions between the infant and caregiver expand the developing right brain regulatory systems.

Schore (2012)



Shame Originates in the Right Brain

Left Brain

Thinking
Logic
Reason
Linear
Analytical

Right Brain

Feeling
Creativity
Imagery
Intuition
Non-linear

Early Relationships Set the Stage for Emotional Safety in Adult Relationships

"The fundamental behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes we observe in our parents become 'hardwired' as synaptic pathways in our subconscious mind."

Lipton (2005)

The Shame Story



By age 7, the stories are all set up and remain in the subconscious until they are excavated and reprogrammed.

Clues Indicating Shame

Verbal	words such as foolish, silly, ridiculous, shy, idiotic, stupid, humiliated, embarrassed, etc.
Paralinguistic	hesitation, soft speech, silences, rapid speech, mumbling, stammering, etc.
Non-verbal	covering face, looking down, fidgeting, hunching shoulders, biting lip, gaze aversion, etc.

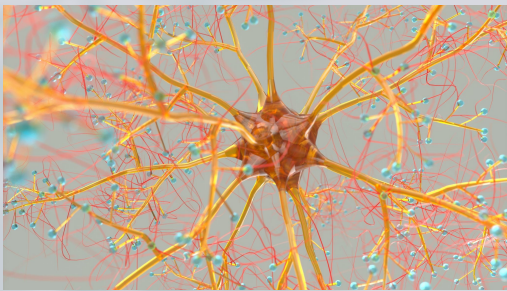
Retzinger (1995)



The ANS, Polyvagal Theory, Grief, and Shame

Photo by [Anthony Tran](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Every action is a
reaction seeking safety
and survival.



The ANS & Polyvagal Theory

The autonomic nervous system (ANS) is the neural platform beneath every experience.

Stephen Porges' polyvagal theory expanded on prior understanding of the ANS.

Porges (2011)

The Vagus Nerve

largest of the twelve cranial nerves extending from the brainstem into the chest and abdomen

sometimes called "the wanderer"

provides sensory input to the brain about how the body is feeling

conveys information to the ANS about safety, or lack thereof



Porges (2011)

ANS Hierarchy

Dorsal Vagal: immobilization

Sympathetic: mobilization

Ventral Vagus: social engagement

Porges (2011)

Social Engagement System

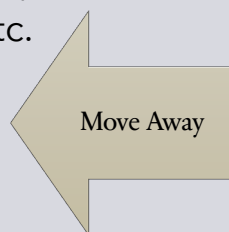
- ventral vagal state that promotes connection
- ANS functioning well--openness, positive expectations, and trust
- ANS unsafe--hard to access rational thought, energy moves into defensive, instinctual responses

Porges, 2011

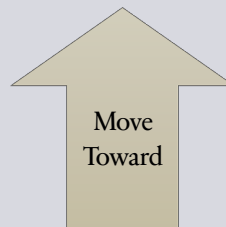


Three Strategies of Disconnection

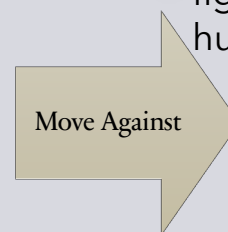
isolation,
avoidance,
hiding, etc.



people pleasing,
co-dependency,
over-giving, etc.



lashing out,
fighting back,
hurting, etc.

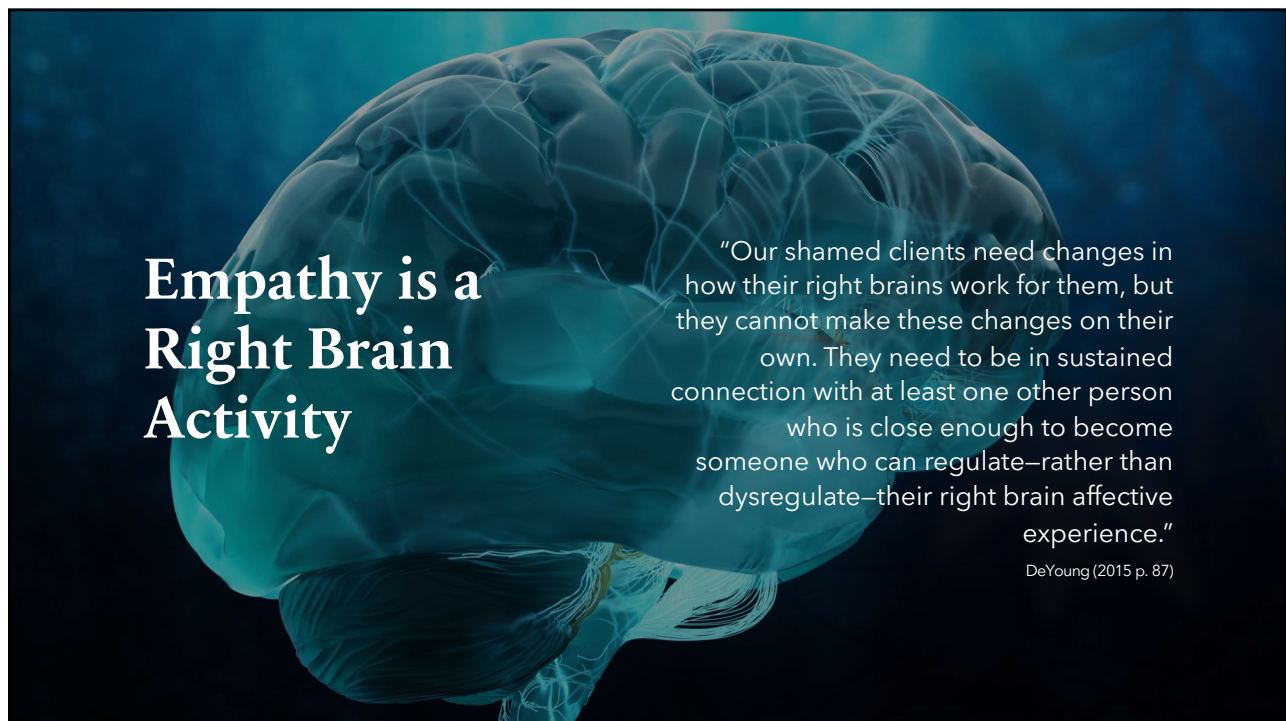


Hartling, et.al. (2004)



THE ANTIDOTE TO SHAME

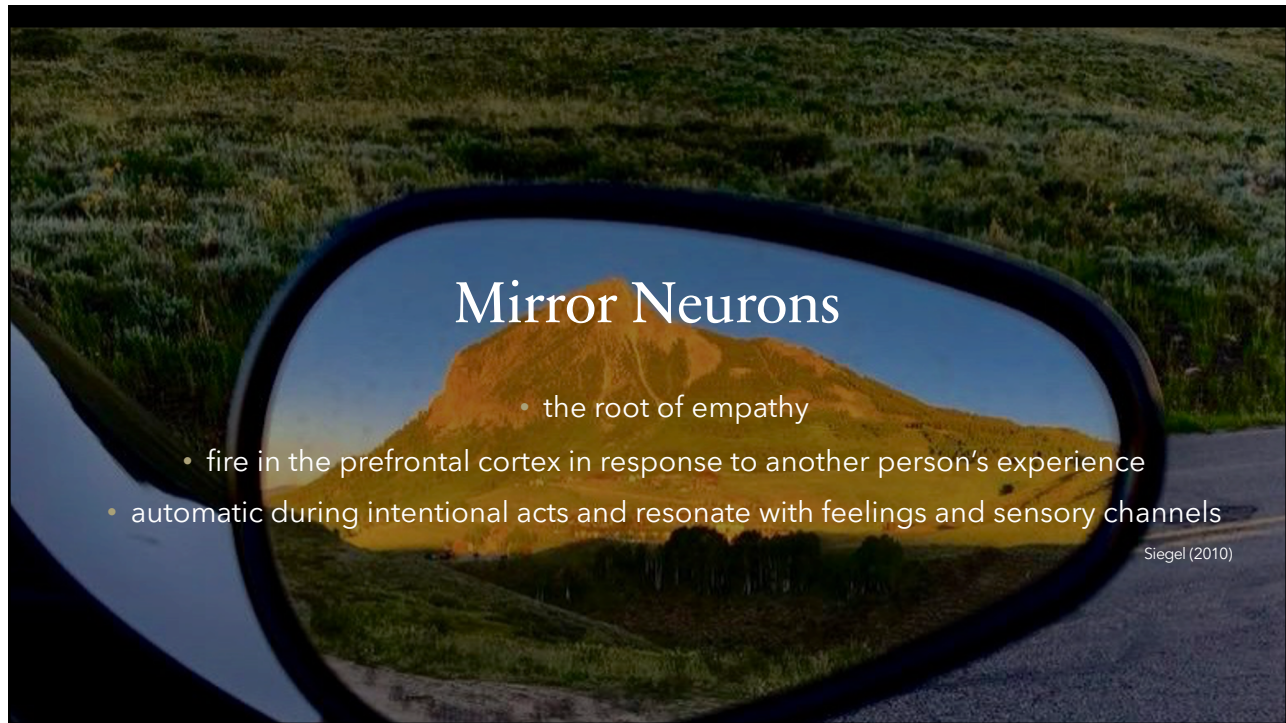
empathy



Empathy is a Right Brain Activity

"Our shamed clients need changes in how their right brains work for them, but they cannot make these changes on their own. They need to be in sustained connection with at least one other person who is close enough to become someone who can regulate—rather than dysregulate—their right brain affective experience."

DeYoung (2015 p. 87)



The 4 R's in Therapeutic Relationships +1

- Recognize the autonomic state
- Respect the adaptive survival response
- Regulate & co-regulate into a ventral vagal state
 - Re-story
- Repetition, repetition, repetition

Dana (2018) & Ashley (2020)

Therapeutic Empathy

To share the shame and humiliation of the client

To take on your own perspective while regulating affect when feeling with client.

To bear and contain the experience of being seen, even if as abuser

To co-create a new relational experience where both therapist and patient collaborate and co-construct self-compassion

Knox (2013)

Empathy in the Therapy Room

1. Empathy to me feels like...
2. When my client is getting dysregulated, I feel my body...
3. Some clues that my client has triggered my own shame is...
4. It is difficult for me to notice my own shame because...
5. What helps me self-regulate is...



Tolerating Grief & Shame

Courage

Vulnerability

Authenticity

Self-
Awareness

Humility



SELF-COMPASSION

Taking Care of Yourself



The Guest House

This being human is a guest house. Every morning a new arrival.
A joy, a depression, a meanness, some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!

Even if they're a crowd of sorrows, who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture, still, treat each guest honorably.

They may be clearing you out for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice, meet them at the door
laughing, and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes, because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

Rumi

Jalal, D. R., & Barks, C. (1997)



Stages of Grief

Denial

Bargaining

Anger

Depression

Acceptance

Grace

Kubler-Ross (1969) & Ashley (2019)

Six ways to express anger

Turn it
inward

Lash-out

Non-
productive
outlet

Productive
outlet

Talk about it

Problem-
solve

Kersey (1983)

Funerals Are For the Living

- Rituals are an important part of death culture across the world
- Funerals and memorials help mourners transition into new inner states and social statuses, such as "wife" to "widow"
- They help individuals keep a symbolic bond with the deceased

Romanoff & Terenzio (1998)

Purpose of Ritual

- To honor the deceased loved one and to keep a symbolic bond
- To let go of the traumatic experience
- To self-transform

Sas & Whittaker (2016)

Common Characteristics of Mourning Rituals

1. embodied action (not merely mental activity)
2. follows a certain protocol or structure
3. differs from the ordinary or everyday use of language, action and objects
4. need to be performed or enacted in a specific way

Grimes (2014)

How to Help Someone Who is Grieving

- Please keep calling after the first week has passed. Months, and even years is good.
- Don't ask them to get over it and move on.
- Let them be sad.
- Let them be weak.
- Let them be vulnerable.
- Call at night when they are alone and say hello.
- Send flowers.
- Cook meals.
- Offer to help with bills that don't get paid due to bereavement time off.
- Let them cry. A lot!
- Give lots of hugs.
- Massages are great if they like them.
- Let them tell you stories repeatedly.
- Be patient.
- Don't give up on them.
- Please don't ask them to be strong.
- Let grief take as long as it takes.

<https://pattiashley.com/living-with-loss-depression-is-unresolved-grief/>

Ashley (2019)

Helping Children with Grief

- Avoid Euphemisms
- Encourage Expression of Emotion
- Explain What is Going to Happen
- Make a Memory Album
- Use Caution When Discussing Religious Beliefs

Ashley (2019)

BRIDGING PARADOX

Holding the tension of the opposites
Tolerating pain & discomfort
What we resist persists

"Some of you say - joy is greater than sorrow, and others say - nay, sorrow is the greater.' But I say unto you, they are inseparable."

Gibran (1923)

Excavating Emotions

Deep S.E.A. Dive

Situation

Emotions

Aspired Action

<https://pattiashtley.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Excavation-Exercise-A-Deep-SEA-Dive.pdf>

Some DEEP-SEA Feeling Words

ABANDONED	ABUSED	ACCOMPLISHED	ADVENTURESOME
ALERT	ALONE	ANGRY	ANNOYED
ANXIOUS	APPRECIATED	ARTISTIC	ASHAMED
ATHLETIC	AWKWARD	BABIED	BEAUTIFUL
BETRAYED	BORED	BRAVE	BROKE
CALM	CAPTIVE	CENTERED	CHALLENGED
CLUMSY	CLUTTERED	COMMANDED	CONFUSED
CONNECTED	CONTENT	COURAGEOUS	CURIOUS
DEPLETED	DEPRESSED	DIRECTED	DISCONNECTED
DISLIKE	DISMISSED	DISORGANIZED	DISSATISFIED
DRAINED	EDGY	ELATED	EMBARRASSED
EMPTY	ENERGETIC	ENGAGED	ENTHUSIASTIC
EXCITED	EXCLUDED	FABULOUS	FLATTERED
FORGETFUL	FRUSTRATED	FULFILLED	FULL
FUNNY	GASLIGHTED	HAPPY	HELPPFUL
HELPLESS	HORRIFIED	HUMILIATED	HURT
INCLUDED	INCONVENIENCED	INTERESTED	INVOLVED
IRRITATED	INSIGNIFICANT	INVISIBLE	ISOLATED
KNOWLEDGEABLE	LAZY	LETHARGIC	LIGHTHEADED
LONELY	LOVED	MISERABLE	MISUNDERSTOOD
MORTIFIED	NEEDED	NEEDY	NEGATIVE
NERVOUS	OFFENDED	ORGANIZED	OUT-OF-CONTROL
OVERWHELMED	OWNED	PATIENT	PEACEFUL
PENSIVE	PITIFUL	PLAYFUL	PLEASED
POOR	POSITIVE	PRASED	PREPARED
PRESENT	PRESSURED	PRETTY	PROUD
PUSHED	PUT-UPON	RAILROADED	RELAXED
RESTLESS	RICH	ROMANTIC	RUSHED
SABOTAGED	SAD	SATISFIED	SCARED
SCOLDED	SHAKY	SHOCKED	SICK
SILLY	SKINNY	SMOTHERED	SPECTACULAR
STRESSED	STRONG		

Connect The Dots



The new story is one
that has never been
written before.

SHAME-INFORMED THERAPY
PATTI ASHLEY, PHD, LPC



Treatment Tools & Techniques

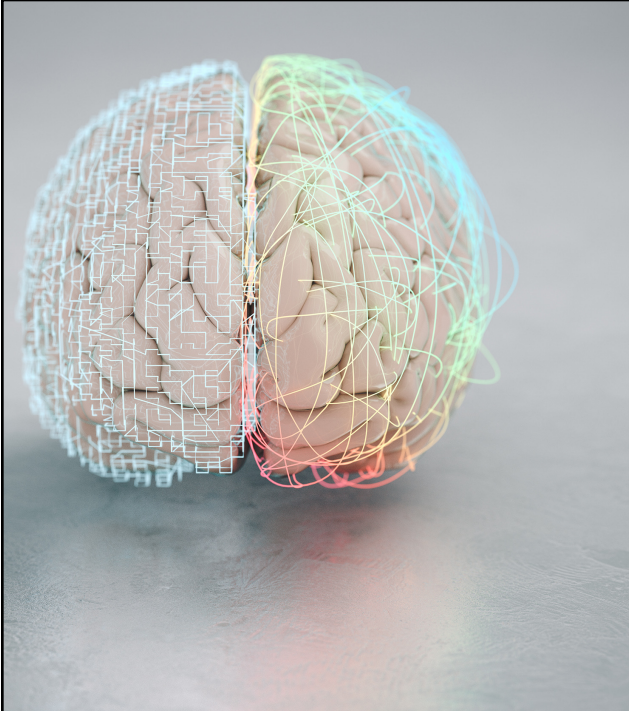
Epigenetics & Neuroplasticity

Epigenetics- The new biology that reveals the environment and our perception of the environment control our genetic activity.

Gustafson (2017)

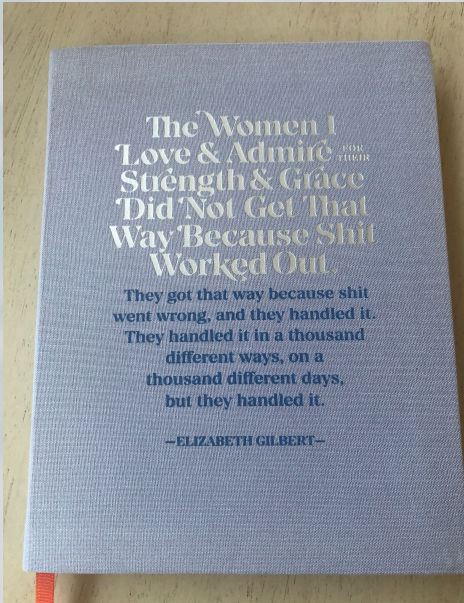
Neuroplasticity- The nervous system's ability to change its response to intrinsic or extrinsic stimuli by reorganizing structure, functions, or connections.

Mateos-Aparicio, et al (2019)



Activate the Right Brain

- Expressing, Journaling & Letter-writing
- Prosody, Poetry, Music, & Sound
- Meditation, Mindfulness, Nature, & Animals
- Creative Arts, Mandalas, Coloring, Humor & Play
- Yoga, Movement, Dance, & Ritual
- Dream-work, Imagination, & Visualization



Journaling

Getting your power back through writing

Letter Writing

Letters to loved ones who have died

Letters to and from "little me"

Letters NOT to send

Prosody, Poetry, Music & Sound



Healing Haikus

I am here with you
My empathy feels your pain
I will hold you close

Find Your Comfort Song



Back of My Heart

There are no words for some kinds of love.

Only revealed in a look or a touch.

I love you, love you, back from the start.

I love you, love you, back, from the back of my heart.

Some treasures lost, we found in time, only buried.

Returned to the light we're reunited in tender ecstasy.

I love you, love you, back from the start.

I love you, love you, back, from the back of my heart.



Back of My Heart courtesy of Rebecca Folsom

Meditation & Mindfulness

- Calms nervous system
- Mindfulness Apps
- Meditation Apps
- Inspirational cards
- Daily practice

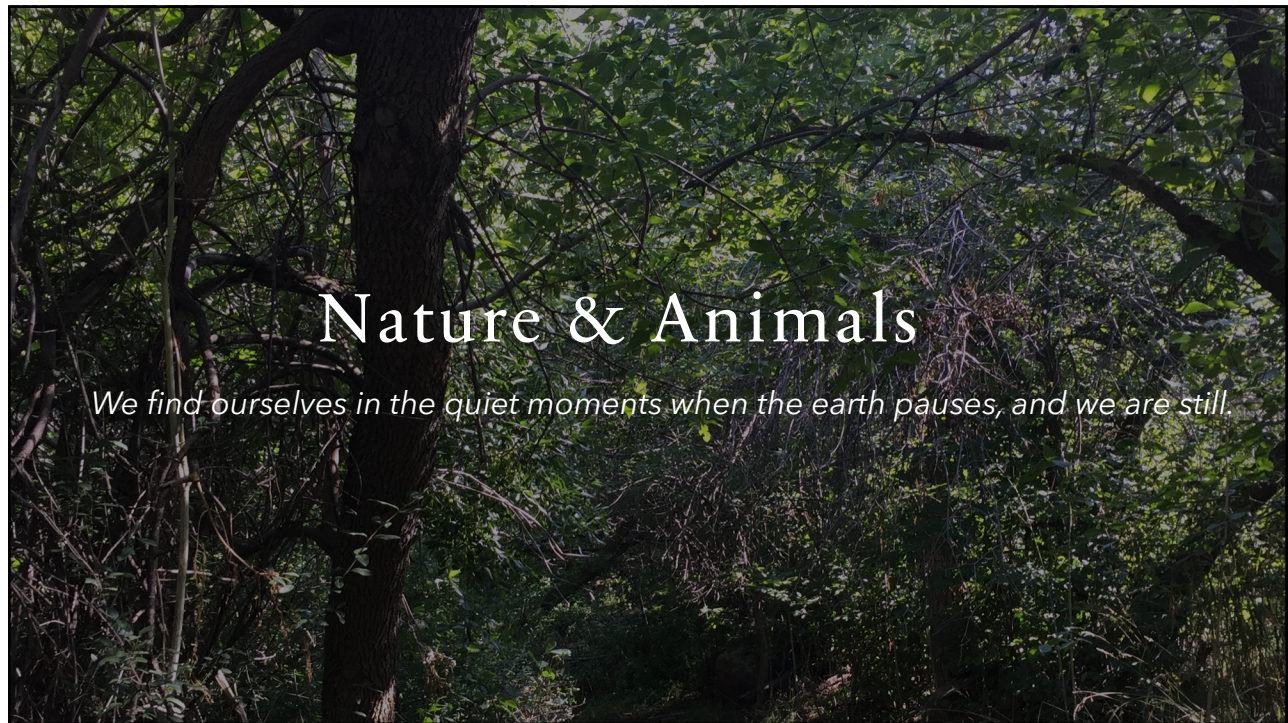
"Moment to moment
non-judgmental
awareness."

Kabat-Zinn (1997)



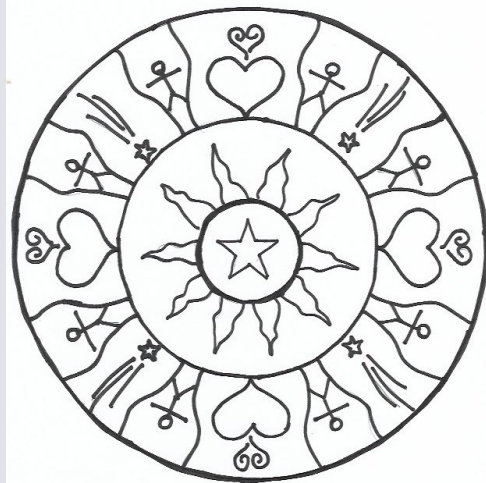
The Fantastic Five

Look around you now and identify 5 things that feel safe. Such as *the sun, the birds, your pets, your comforter, a stuffed animal, etc.* Pay attention to them throughout the day when you are in fear.



Creative arts, mandalas & coloring books

- Meditation Tools
- Healing
- Re-wires right brain
- Calms nervous system





Drawing by Laura Martinez

I am a NUFF

Yoga, Movement, Dance, & Ritual



Dreams, Imagination & Visualization

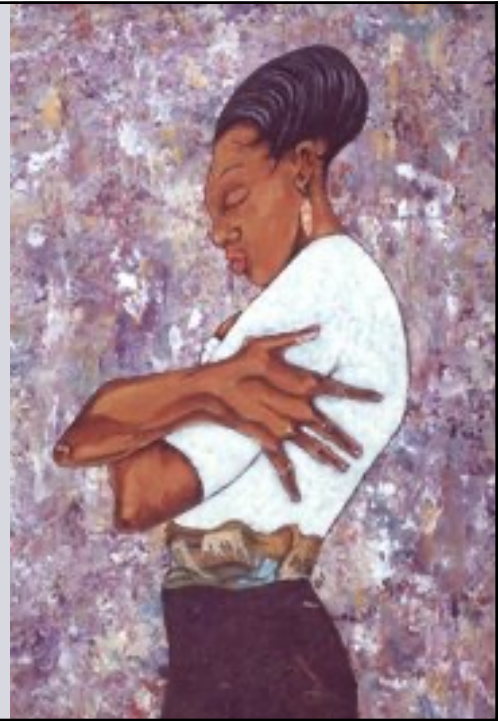
Being an Enlightened Witness



Love

"Love is not something we give or get; it is something that we nurture and grow, a connection that can only be cultivated between two people when it exists within each one of them. We can only love others as much as we love ourselves."

Brown (2010, p. 26)



Belonging

"True belonging only happens when we present our authentic, imperfect selves to the world. Our sense of belonging can never be greater than our level of self-acceptance."

Brown (2010, p. 26)



