

Life After Loss



**A Special, No-Cost Two-Day Virtual Summit Exploring Grief Aftermath
for Educators, Mental Health Providers, School Leaders, and Child Advocates**

Day 1 – January 22nd, 2026

Main Summit

9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. PT / 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. CT / 12:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. ET



DANDELION.

WELCOME, COMMUNITY.

**As you enter the room,
we invite you share your
name, location, and
what or who is bringing
you here today.**

A Few Logistics

To ensure the best audio quality for the duration of our gathering, **all participants will be muted** (except in the workshops!); please **go off video if you are moving**.

You can click on "CC" on the bar at the bottom of the screen for **auto captioning**.

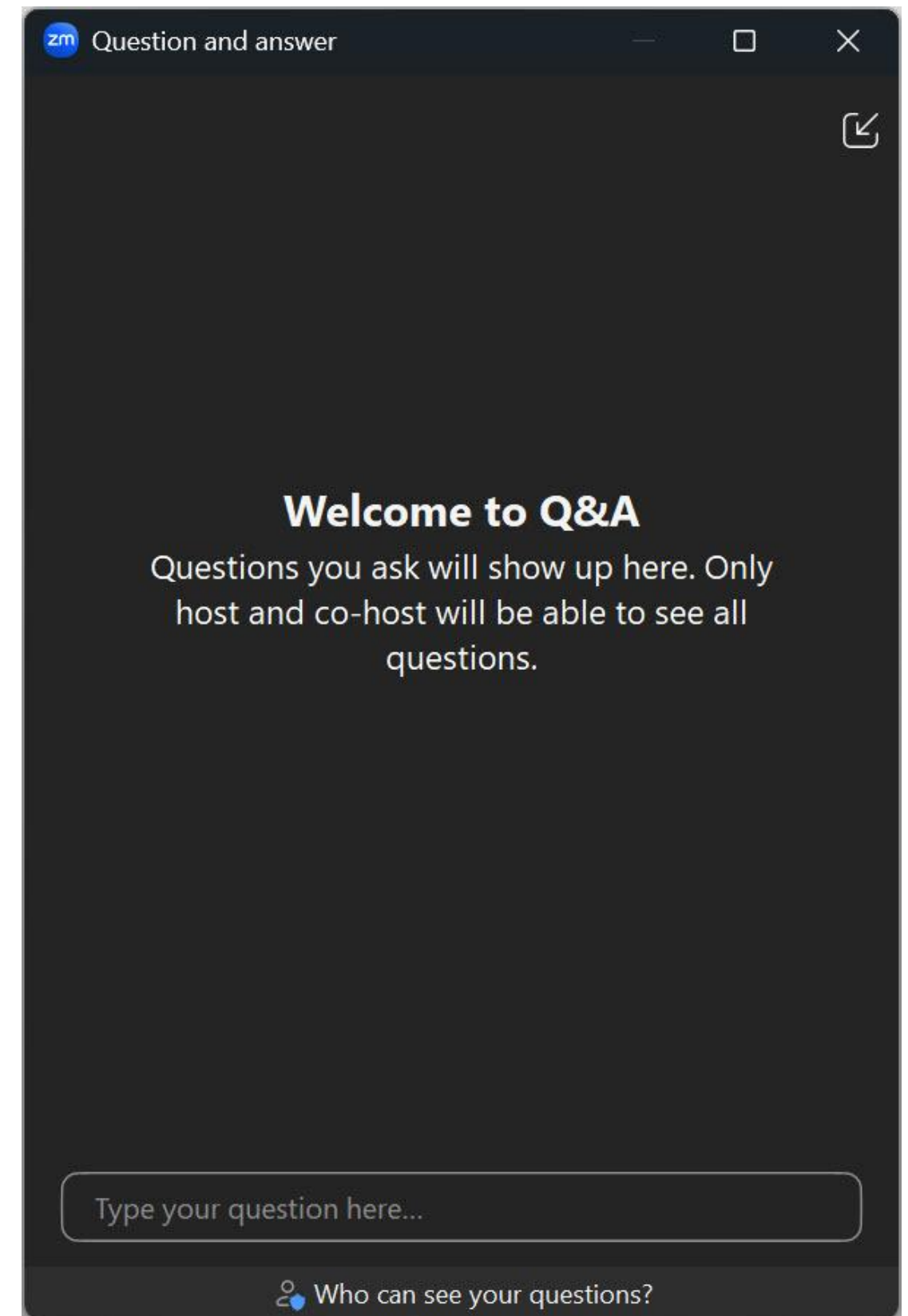
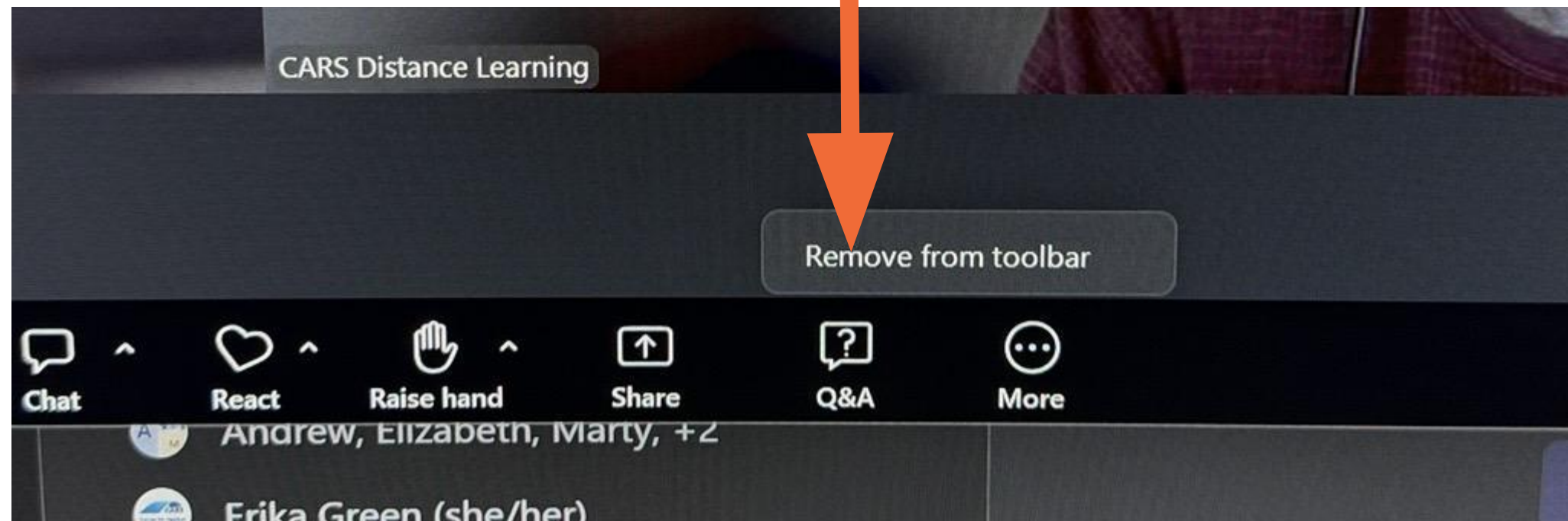
If you have a link to resources you'd like to share or questions for the group...drop them in the chat!

If you have to leave before the end of the day, **please complete the feedback form** that pops up! We'll also be emailing you post event. Thank you in advance for taking the time to share with us.

All session decks are posted on our event page; the session recording will be posted on our event page by **January 30th, 2026**.

If you have questions about our program or anything else that you need, **please private chat "SUPPORT."**

And! The Zoom link is yours for the whole day. Come in, come out. Hydrate. Restroom. Care.



(this is hopefully the least prettiest slide you'll have to look at all day)

OUR TIME TOGETHER TODAY

- 8:45 a.m. PT / 11:45 a.m. ET: “Doors” (aka the Zoom room) open
- 9:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. PT / 12:00 – 12:30 p.m. ET: **Opening, welcome & grounding**
- 9:30 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. PT / 12:30 p.m. – 1:15 p.m. ET: Opening Keynote **“We Begin Whole and Can Be Whole Again”** with Teddy McGlynn-Wright
- 10:25 a.m. – 11:25 a.m. PT / 1:25 p.m. – 2:25 p.m. ET: **Meaning-Making & Coping Workshops** (you’ll choose 1!)
- 11:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. PT / 2:30 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. ET: **“When the Personal is Professional – Leaning In and Leading Out”** – Panel Discussion with Taj Jensen, Shefa Obaid & JuanCarlos Ocun and moderated by Amy Castellanos
- 12:30 p.m. – 1:15 p.m. PT / 3:30 p.m. – 4:15 p.m. ET: **“I am in it and I am from it – Community Grief Aftermath”** – Panel Discussion with Desralynn Cole, Meghan Graham, Scott Lindstrom & Rosaura Orengo-Aguayo and moderated by Leora Wolf-Prusan
- 1:25 p.m. – 1:45 p.m. PT / 4:25 p.m. – 4:45 p.m. ET Closing Keynote – **“Finding Focus in the Griescap**e” with Dr. Zelana Montminy
- 1:45 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. PT / 4:45 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. ET **Integration & Closing**

All times are subject to change based on the needs of the facilitators and flow of learning.

For full program descriptions and faculty, see our event page: <https://www.cars-rp.org/life-after-loss>

Creating a humanizing experience: Shared commitments

- **Give and receive welcome.**
- **Safety and self-preservation first.** You know yourself best. Turn the camera on or off. Do you.
- **Presence & respect:** just being here was a big decision that should be respected.
- **Only offer what you need to:** Share only whatever your soul calls for, and know that you do it with our support.
- **Use “I” statements and avoid advice or correcting each other.** Advice given only when asked for it.
- **When the going gets rough, turn to wonder.** Turn from reaction and judgment to wonder and compassionate inquiry. Ask yourself, “I wonder why they feel/think this way?” or “I wonder what my reaction teaches me about myself?”
- **Deep confidentiality:** Safety is built when we can trust that our words and stories will remain with the people with whom we choose to share, and are not repeated to others without our permission.
- **Recognize that no two trauma, harm, grief or healing experiences are the same.** Let’s listen to each other with care, respect and dignity.
- **Expect and accept a lack of closure.** Our time won’t be able to speak to everything, but it will speak to some things.

A photograph of a field of dandelions in bloom, with a bright sun in the background creating a bokeh effect. The dandelions are in various stages of bloom, and the sun is low in the sky, casting a warm, golden light over the scene. The background is filled with out-of-focus light spots, creating a dreamy atmosphere.

Settling In, Together

Smoldering Dawn

-Amanda Gorman, *written during the 2025 LA Wildfires*

All of our angels have gone;
This smoldering dawn, we soldier on;
We've proved ourselves strong;
Not from how badly we've burned;
But how bravely we bond.
Apocalypse does not mean ruin, but revelation;
In devastation, this infernus has injured us,
But it cannot endure us.
Even in the surreal, we do not surrender.
We emerge from the embers.

The hardest part
Is not disaster, but the after

Scorched earth is where the heart hurts;
What we restore first,
Where we start the work.
Today we mourn.
Tomorrow reborn;
We end the burning,
Befriend the hurting,
Mend those who face the flame.
We reclaim our city's name;
A revelation that only this place tells:
To find our angels, all we need to do
Is look within ourselves.

What brings us here today?

Grief / grieving is...

“The natural human response to loss”

A form of learning through experience over time, facilitating integration of loss, and restoring purpose and meaning in life ([O'Connor and Seeley, 2022](#)).



“In grief, the goal is not happiness.

***It is steadiness.
Capacity.***

The ability to live without being constantly overwhelmed.”

– Sylvia Wolfer

What brings us here today? The Great **Rewiring**.

Grief Aftermath // Life After Loss = Re-orientation & integration

- Getting over → growing around (Dr. Lois Tonkin)
- Shift the question from 'how to I get rid of this?' to 'how do I make space for this and still live?' - Release the pressure to make grief meaningful, productive, or transformative in order for it to be legitimate (Neimeyer, 2001)
- "How do I survive this?" to "Who can we face this with?" (Lana Kristine Jelenjev)

Neimeyer, R. A. (Ed.). (2001). *Meaning reconstruction & the experience of loss*. American Psychological Association.

O'Connor MF. Grief: A Brief History of Research on How Body, Mind, and Brain Adapt. *Psychosom Med*. 2019 Oct;81(8):731-738

Statharakos N. Unraveling the Neurobiology of Grief: Insights into Brain and Behavior—Narrative Review. *Brain Science Advances*. 2025;11(3).



Meaning Making Practice

Locating Ourselves in this Conversation

Work with this sentence frame to articulate your own initiation into this conversation.

I am ____ [my significant identities].... **working as** ____ [my professional and/or community roles]____ **while also navigating** ____ [my personal experiences of loss, grief, suffering, trauma, etc.]____.

Amy's Example:

I am a survivor of suicide loss, **working as** a Department of Education employee leading implementation of suicide prevention, response and postvention systems in schools **while also navigating** the grief, loss of hope and flashbacks I experienced after losing colleagues, students and family members to suicide during the pandemic.

Needs Hunt

**(turn off the
camera. get
snacks. water.
send the last
email.
download
slides... etc)**



“We Begin Whole, and We Can Be Whole Again”

Opening Keynote

Teddy McGlynn-Wright



“Becoming aware of grief gives us more choices about how to respond to grief and opens up possibilities to approach grief not only with compassion for self and others, but also with joy.

Joy is not the opposite of grief. Grief is the opposite of indifference.

Grief is an evolutionary indicator of love – the kind of great love that guides revolutionaries...

Along my own journey, what surprised me most was the discovery that grief is not an enemy to be avoided. In fact, resisting grief led to my suffering, while becoming intimate with grief led me to the lesson that grief and joy are inextricably linked.”

- Malkia Devich Cyril in [Grief Belongs in Social Movements. Can We Embrace It? - In These Times](#)

**Day 1 – January 22, 2026
9:30–10:15 a.m. PT/ 12:30 p.m. – 1:15 p.m. ET**

***Life After Loss: A Special, No-Cost Two-Day Virtual Summit
Exploring Grief Aftermath for Educators, Mental Health Providers,
School Leaders, and Child Advocates***

Meaning Making & Coping Workshops



Day 1 – January 22, 2026

10:25 am – 11:25 am PT / 1:25 p.m. – 2:25 p.m. ET

*Life After Loss: A Special, No-Cost Two-Day Virtual Summit
Exploring Grief Aftermath for Educators, Mental Health Providers,
School Leaders, and Child Advocates*

“We search so hard for meaning after loss – but meaning is born from the love we shared. Meaning is a reflection of the love we have for those who have died.

If you had deep love, then meaning becomes not only possible – it becomes essential.

Meaning reminds us that their life mattered. That their love mattered. That their presence shaped us in ways we still feel today. Their death may have changed us forever, but it didn’t erase who they were or the impact they had.

Meaning is how we keep their story alive. It’s how we honor the love that didn’t end, even though their physical life did. It’s a way of saying: I will never forget you.

Meaning isn’t about explaining the loss – it’s about carrying forward the love.”

–David Kessler

Room 1: COVID-19 Meaning Making with Oriana Ides

Room 2: Culturally Responsive Suicide Postvention with Tina Rocha

Room 3: Creating the Container – Holding Space with Leora Wolf-Prusan

Room 4: Writing Our Way Through the Aftermath with Niki Magtoto

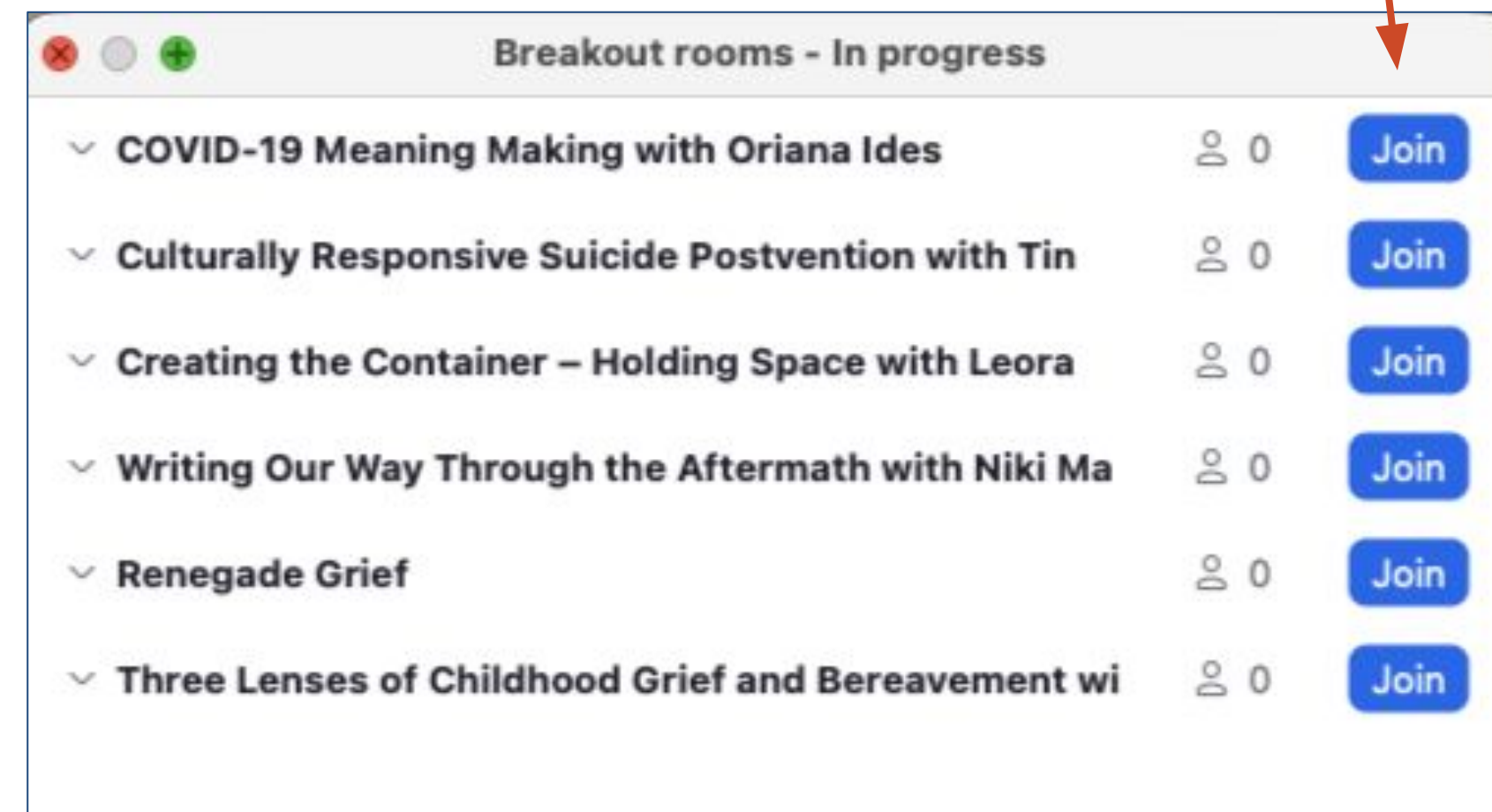
Room 5: Renegade Grief – Embracing grief as a fundamental human experience and a potential pathway to a more soulful life with Carla Fernandez

Room 6: Three Lenses of Childhood Grief and Bereavement with Angela Castellanos

Click on “Breakout rooms” in your bar; it will pop up, too

Hover your mouse over the room you want to join, and click join!

Or, put in chat which #room you want to go to



Break



“When the Personal is Professional: Leaning In & Leading Out”

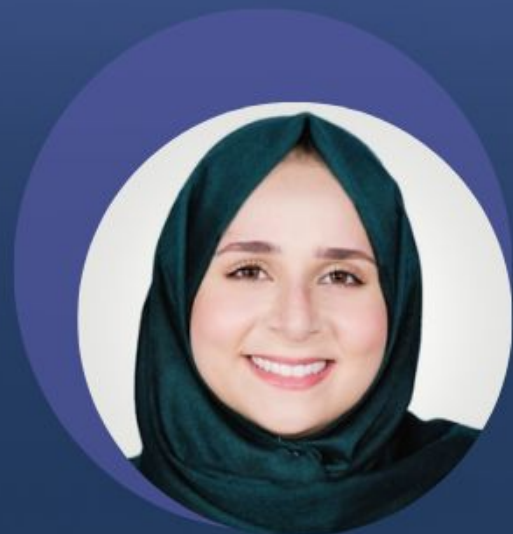
Panel Discussion



**Amy
Castellanos**



**Taj
Jensen**



**Shefa
Obaid**



**Juan
Carlos
Ocon**

and moderated by Niki Magtoto

Day 1 – January 22, 2026

11:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. PT / 2:30 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. ET

***Life After Loss: A Special, No-Cost Two-Day Virtual Summit
Exploring Grief Aftermath for Educators, Mental Health Providers,
School Leaders, and Child Advocates***

***“One way we ease loneliness
is by learning into fear and
vulnerability.***

***The fear of initiating the call;
of asking for something we
want, of letting someone
know we’re having a hard
time.***

***Loneliness thrives off of
shame and silence.***

***It cannot thrive in the face of
emotional courageousness
and care.”***

–Yolo Akili

Being called into leadership so early is a common experience for us crisis leaders: we become the support we need and support others to ensure our safety. In this process, I was taught, like so many of us are, that if you wanted any control or agency in life, you had to remain composed. I pursued certifications, degrees and volunteering opportunities seeking to alleviate my pain and access my own safety.

Yet, despite my best efforts to seem collected, inside I often felt overwhelmed, inadequate, and ashamed of my experiences of loss and the depth of emotion I carried. Although these challenges left me feeling like an imposter most days, no matter the title I held, I was consistently pulled into a position of leadership during a crisis.

My past and my present were consistently colliding and colluding in unexpected ways.

The very thing I was ashamed of—my vulnerability and my experience with navigating loss —became the gift others leaned on for support.

-Amy Castellanos

"I am in it and I am from it: Community Grief Aftermath"

Panel Discussion



**Desralynn
Cole**



**Meghan
Graham**



**Scott
Lindstrom**



**Rosaura
Orengo-
Aguayo**

and moderated by Leora Wolf-Prusan

Day 1 – January 22, 2026

12:30 p.m. – 1:15 p.m. PT / 3:30 p.m. – 4:15 p.m. ET

*Life After Loss: A Special, No-Cost Two-Day Virtual Summit
Exploring Grief Aftermath for Educators, Mental Health Providers,
School Leaders, and Child Advocates*

***"Grief unearths the truth,
revealing the fault lines and
truth about power and
injustice..."***

***To grieve openly at a time
when narratives are being
distorted is an act of clarity.***

***To refuse silence is a form of
witnessing."***

– Nina Rodriguez

Break





"Finding Focus in Griescap"

Closing Keynote



**Zelana
Montminy**

Day 1 – January 22, 2026

1:25 p.m. – 1:45 p.m. PT / 4:25 p.m. – 4:45 p.m. ET

*Life After Loss: A Special, No-Cost Two-Day Virtual Summit
Exploring Grief Aftermath for Educators, Mental Health Providers,
School Leaders, and Child Advocates*

***"...the most
meaningful shifts
in our lives don't
happen in motion,
they happen in the
pause."***

–Dr. Z

<https://drzelana.com/therefocus/category/Grief>

Griefscape (n.)

It's the space between the life you had and the life you didn't ask for. Where muscle memory still reaches for what's gone, where echoes of normalcy taunt you with what you used to be.

A griefscape isn't an end. It's a reckoning.

It's waking up and remembering, over and over, that what was familiar is no longer yours to hold. It's standing in the wreckage of what you built, what you loved, what you thought would always be there, and realizing that the only way out is through.

Grief isn't sadness— it's love with nowhere to go.

It's the weight of absence pressing against your ribs, the sudden collapse of a moment that should have been ordinary.

In the griefscape, you don't just miss people or things — you miss versions of yourself that existed only in their presence.

To those standing in this Griefscape — Let yourself feel it all. The sorrow. The longing. The love. The disorientation of existing in a world that has shifted beneath your feet.

Because grief doesn't mean you stop living. It means you learn how to carry love differently.

And from this place, something new will take shape. Not as a replacement. Not as a resolution.

But as a quiet steady reminder that what's gone will always be a part of what remains.

Let this be our shared story — not just of loss, but of love that refuses to disappear.

- Dr. Zelana Montminy

A collage of images including a chandelier, a window, a crown, and a bird on flowers.

Speak their name.

and if it comes out

as a whisper

it is not because

their name is

a *secret* thing.

it is because

their name is

a *sacred* thing.

sara rian

INTEGRATION AND CLOSING

Reflecting Together

- What conversations, if begun today, could ripple out in a way that created new possibilities?
- If there was one thing that hasn't yet been said but is needed in order to reach a deeper level of understanding / clarity, what would that be?
- What parts of you (past, present, future) need tender care and compassionate witness?
- What needs immediate attention going forward?



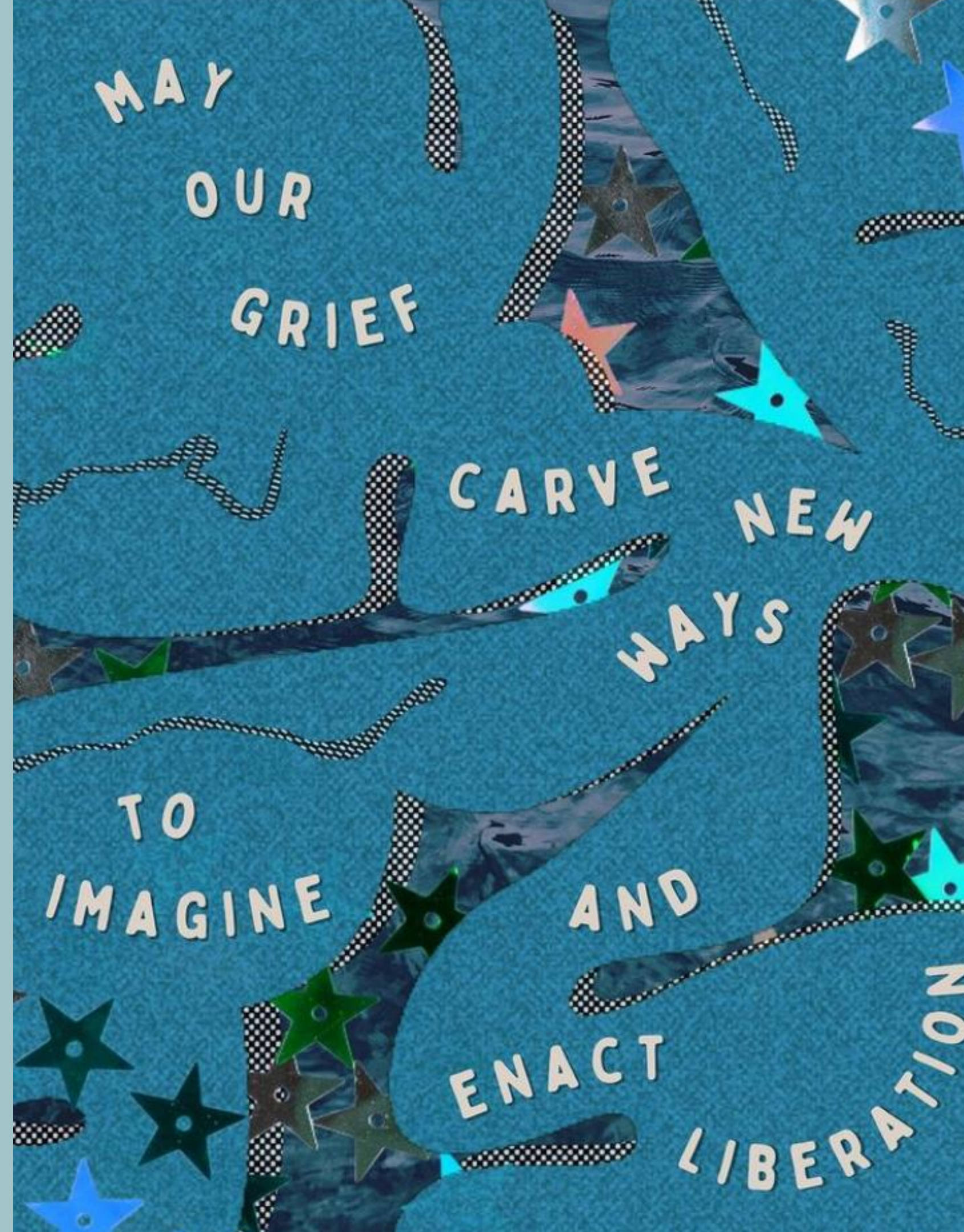
Closing with questions.

What rules about grieving am I clinging to?

Who can I share stories with today?

What 'shoulds' are coming up that I can release?

What do you need to fall apart?



Join us tomorrow for
more.

Life After Loss

DAY 2: Special Space for Providers' Grief Processing

Jan. 23

OPENING & FRAMING:

"Finding Healing within the Storm"

Oriana Ides

OPENING KEYNOTE:

**"Grief: Guideposts to Personal & Collective
Freedom"**

Candice Rose Valenzuela

PANEL DISCUSSION:

**"Care Without Collapse: The Toll and
Truth of Helping"**

*Jerica Coffey, Ebony Johnson & Jesus Solorio,
moderated by Oriana Ides*

PRACTICE:

**"Finding, witnessing and attending to the
shape of grief in our bodies"**

Sue Kuyper

ART-BASED INTEGRATION

Oriana Ides

Find out more & register here >> bit.ly/life-after-loss-2026

Please let us
know how today felt.



https://bit.ly/LAL26_Day1

Untitled

by Naila Francis

Grief, I say, come in. Sit down.
I have tea. There is honey. This
will take as long as it takes.



**A closing,
collective
practice:**

METTA.

May your joy be
shared freely.

May your sorrow be
met with tenderness.

May your mind
find stillness.

May your heart
be your anchor.

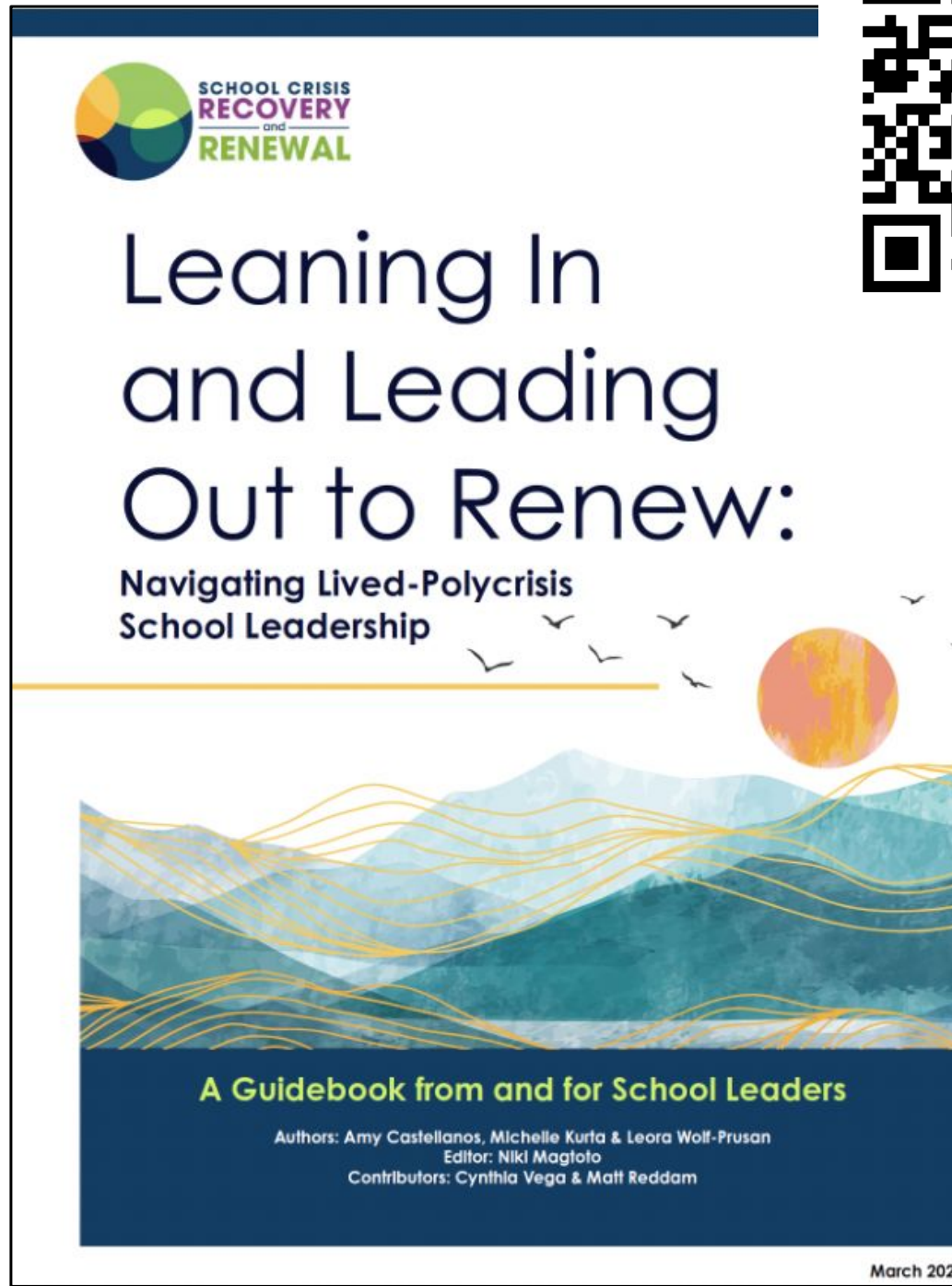
Spirit Rock



DANDELION.

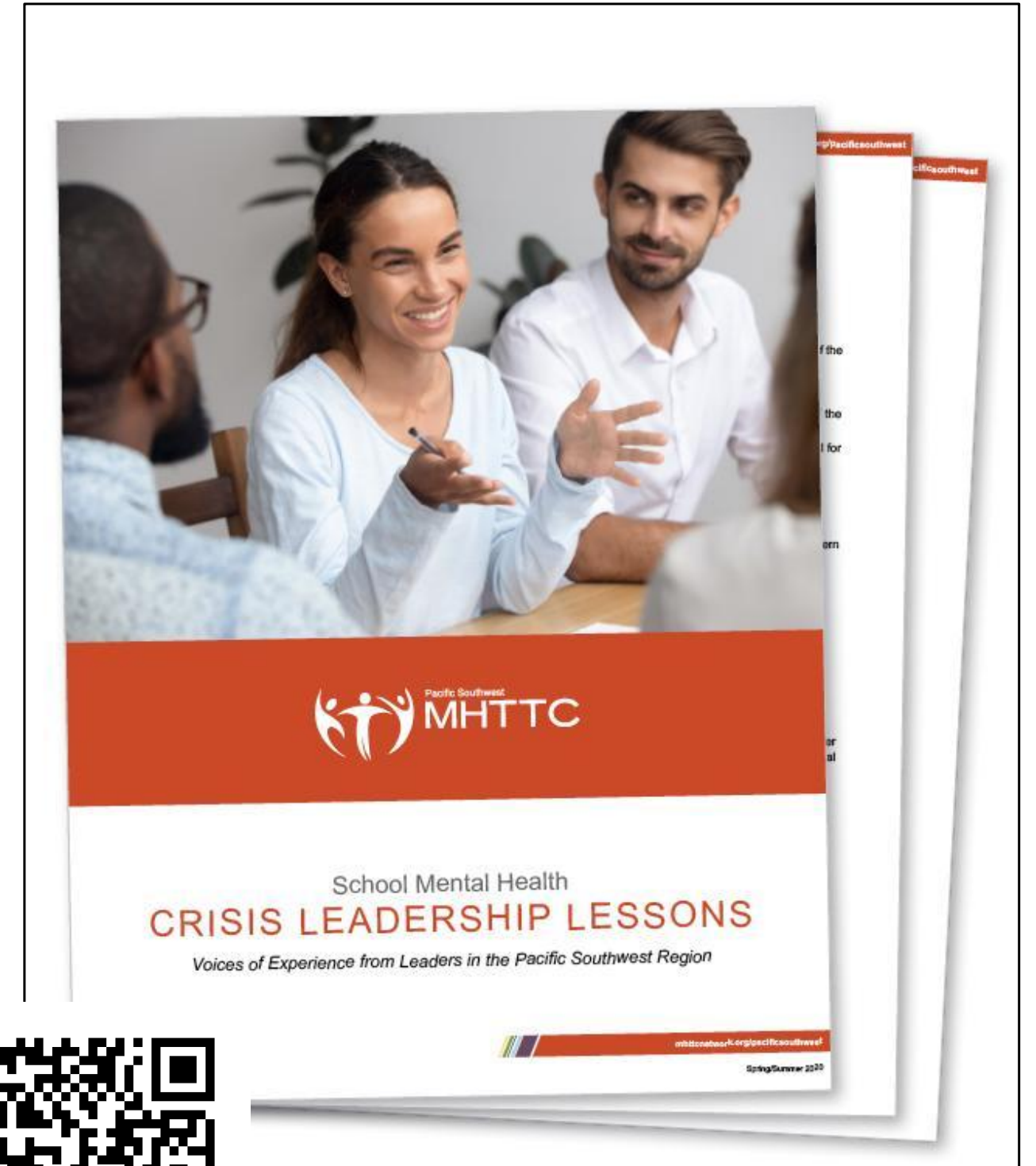
Thank you, community

**As you leave the room, we
invite you share a gratitude
for a person, idea, feeling,
question, or thought that is
leaving with today.**



School Mental Health Crisis Leadership Lessons: Voices of Experience from Leaders in the Pacific Southwest Region
(2020) edited by Leora Wolf-Prusan & David Schonfeld

Two Products



Leaning In And Leading Out To Renew – A Guidebook from and for School Leaders Navigating the Personal & Professional Intersections of Polycrisis (2025) by Amy Castellanos, Michelle Kurta, Leora Wolf-Prusan, & Niki Magtoto





Grief as an Invitation to Heal:

Extending Trauma-Informed Pedagogies, Research, and Praxis

Special Issue of Journal of Trauma Studies in Education
Edited by:
Sharim Hannegan-Martinez & Stephanie Cariaga

Cover art: Alanna Hurd



bitly

Peer-Reviewed Article

Journal of Trauma Studies in Education
Volume 3, Issue 2 (2023), pp. 136-154
ISSN: 2832-1723 (Print), 2832-1731 (Online)
<http://doi.org/10.32674/jtse.v2i3.6248>

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Grappling with Life After Loss as Educator Leaders: An Invitation to Transformational Educator Grief Healing Work

Leora Wolf-Prusan
Center for Applied Research Solutions
Oriana Ides
Center for Applied Research Solutions
Meagan O'Malley
California State University, Sacramento

ABSTRACT

When a student dies, educators must cope with their own grief while supporting the grief of their surviving students. Educators have navigated student death for centuries, but today's educators face new circumstances—gun-related violence, the COVID-19 pandemic, and increasingly-common natural disasters—and persistent reminders of student death via 24-hour news cycles and social media feeds. Such experiences occur in the context of a Western propensity to dismiss grief as a distraction from production. Having few or no preparation or processing supports to depend on, school leaders may lack the ability to effectively care for educators in the wake of a student's death. Outlined herein is the School Crisis Recovery and Renewal (SCRR) project. Described in detail is the Life After Loss Tables: Educators Edition (LALTs) program, a set of practices that aim to rehumanize the educator grief healing process by hosting educators in a co-created supportive and regenerative space. Practical recommendations are outlined.

[Vol. 2 No. 3 \(2023\): Special Issue on Grief as an Invitation to Heal: Extending Trauma-Informed Pedagogies, Research, and Praxis](#)

GUIDE

Creating and Holding Space for Ourselves and Each Other After Student Death

A guide to processing, meaning-making, and integration as educators for our collective recovery and renewal

February 2023

The DINNER PARTY labs



WORKSHEET

CREATING THE CONTAINER:

Designing Collective Rituals to Metabolize Grief Together as a School Team, Community, and Culture

WORKSHEET

Created By:

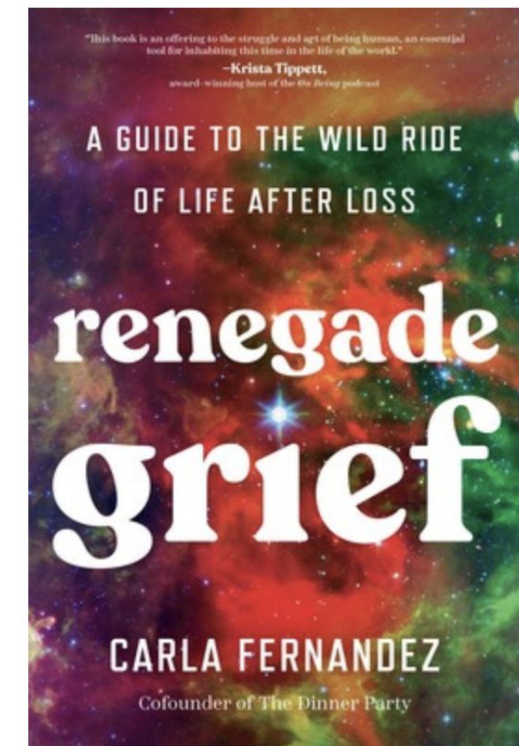
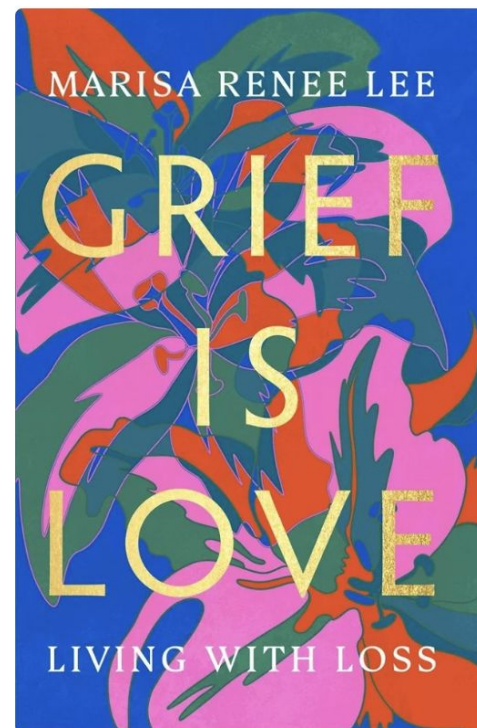
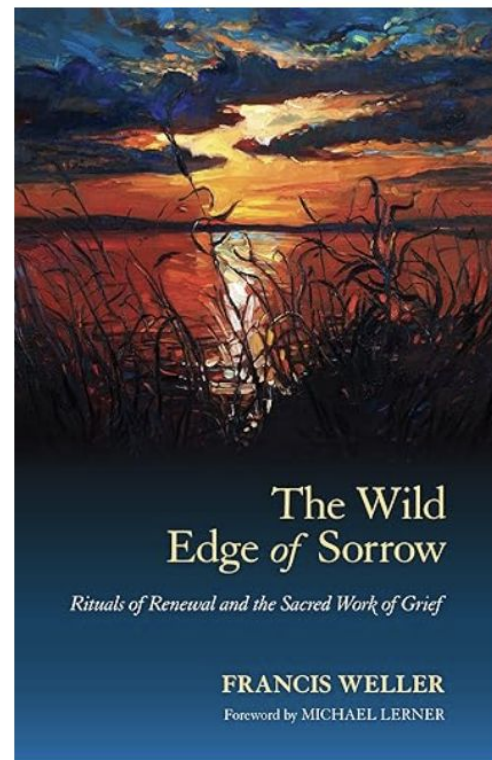
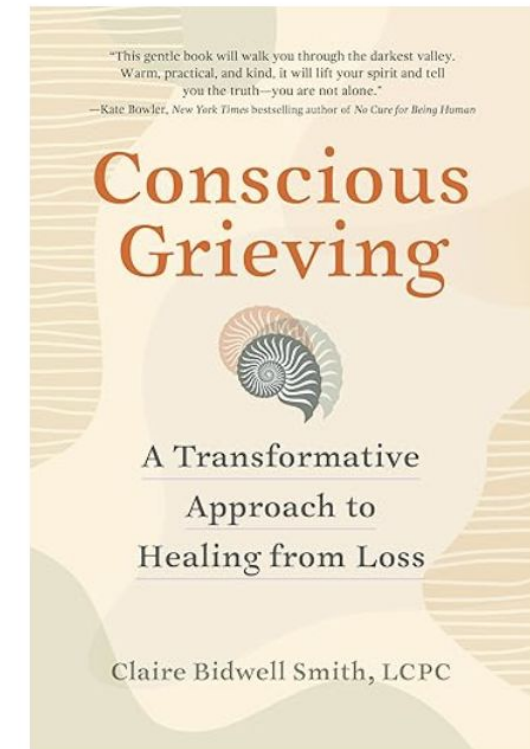
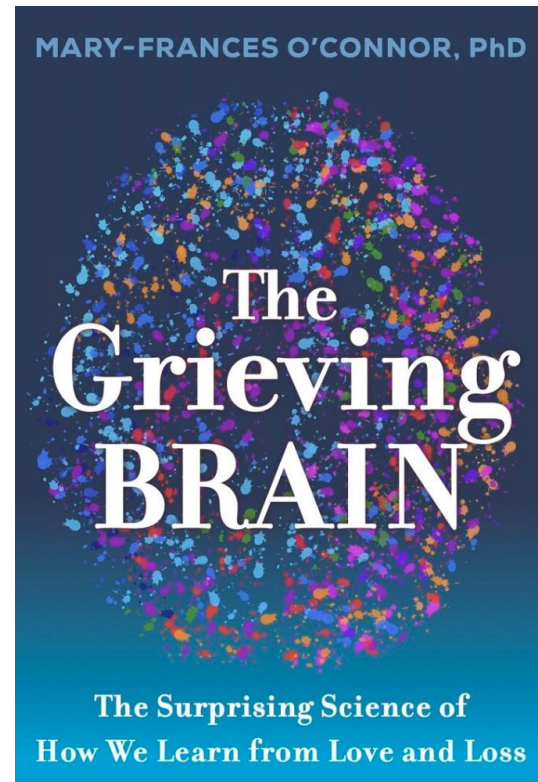
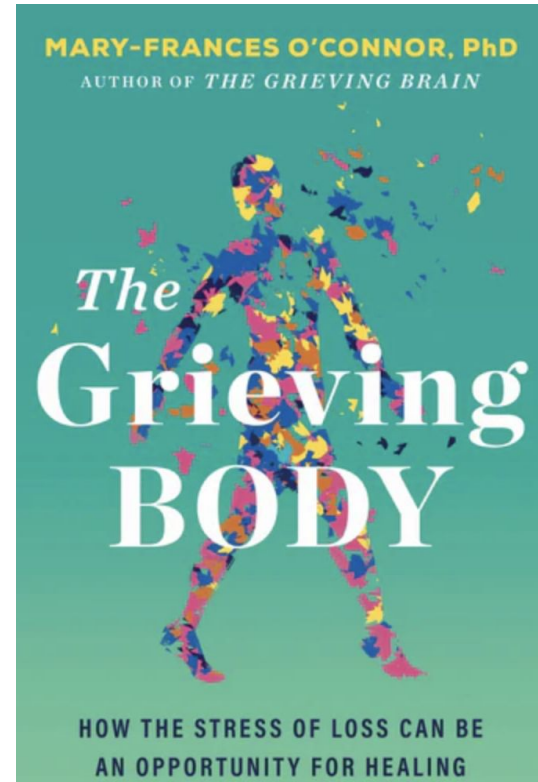
School Crisis Recovery & Renewal
and The Dinner Party Labs



The DINNER PARTY labs

<https://schoolcrishealing.org/creating-and-holding-space-dinner-party/>

[https://schoolcrishealing.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Creating-the-Container Worksheet -SCRR-TDPL 2023.pdf](https://schoolcrishealing.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Creating-the-Container-Worksheet-SCRR-TDPL-2023.pdf)



Glossary (thank you, The Dinner Party!)

- anticipatory grief – related to an impending loss (e.g., considering a diagnosis, anticipating that the person will die or that they or you will not be the same)
- collective – a shared experience (e.g., coworkers losing someone they worked with; a school shooting can have an impact on teachers/youth/parents all over the country; genocide)
- traumatic – the loss may be sudden or due to a traumatic event, the death may be learned of in a traumatic way
- cumulative – may be several deaths in a short period, a series of related deaths over a long period of time, or intergenerational
- ambiguous – someone is physically present but psychologically or otherwise lost, or vice versa (e.g., missing persons, dementia)
- disenfranchised – the griever does not have the opportunity, time, resources, etc. to move through grief
- delayed – feelings of grief (re)surface later than “expected”

Glossary (more!)

- **Disenfranchised grief:** The kind of grief that is not openly acknowledged, socially validated, or publicly mourned. It addresses the unique psychological, biological, and sociological issues involved in disenfranchised grief (Doka, 2002).
- **Moral injury:** The psychological and emotional distress experienced when an individual feels they have acted against their own deeply held moral values, often by participating in, witnessing, or failing to prevent actions that violate their ethical code, leading to feelings of guilt, shame, and a troubled conscience (Sugrue, 2020); the social, psychological, and spiritual harm that arises from a betrayal of one's core values, such as justice, fairness, and loyalty (Leland, 2024).
- **Self-Attunement:** A process of sensing what is real and what is true for ourselves at any moment (Wolf-Prusan, O'Malley, & Ides, 2023).
- **Titration:** The controlled and gradual process of experiencing or releasing intense emotions in small, manageable doses (Lanktree & Briere, 2013).
- **Relational safety:** The sense of trust, security, and mutual respect within interpersonal relationships that allows individuals to show up authentically without fear of harm, judgment, or rejection. It is built through consistent, attuned interactions where people feel seen, valued, and supported. Relational safety is deeply personal and shaped by the quality of connection, empathy, and emotional responsiveness between individuals. It is essential for fostering vulnerability, open communication, and healing in personal, professional, and crisis leadership spaces (Trout et al. 2022)
- **Psychological safety:** An environment where individuals feel safe to take interpersonal risks, such as expressing ideas, asking questions, admitting mistakes, or offering feedback, without fear of embarrassment, punishment, or negative consequences. In psychologically safe spaces, people trust that their voices will be heard and valued rather than dismissed or ridiculed, fostering collaboration and innovation (Edmondson, 2019).

Introducing Our Global Learning Community



CARS
LEARNING
EXCHANGE



SCAN TO LEARN MORE AND JOIN
cars-community.mn.co

- **FREE & Secure Online Community** – Supporting work in behavioral health, crisis response and recovery, student and staff wellbeing, and community wellness.
- **Extensive Resource Library** – Tools, trainings, and webinars for ongoing professional growth.
- **Engage & Connect** – Join discussions, learning collaboratives, and live sessions with peers nationwide.



Center for Applied
Research Solutions

Ready to
connect?
Get in
touch
with us.

- Learn more about our work:
cars-rp.org
- Request support:
bit.ly/work-with-cars
- Explore partnership opportunities:
carsinfo@cars-rp.org





Let's Stay in Community!



Connect with us on social and keep up with **what's new at CARS.**



LinkedIn



Instagram



facebook



Center for Applied
Research Solutions



NEW YORK LIFE
FOUNDATION

Life After Loss

A vibrant green and blue hummingbird is shown in flight on the right side of the banner, its wings spread and tail feathers visible.

**A Special, No-Cost Two-Day Virtual Summit Exploring Grief Aftermath
for Educators, Mental Health Providers, School Leaders, and Child Advocates**