



Center for Applied
Research Solutions

Creating the Container- Holding Space

Life After Loss Workshops ~ 1/22/26

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Center for Applied Research Solutions



Our agreements for today

- **Give and receive welcome.**
- **Safety and self-preservation first.** You know yourself best. Turn the camera on or off. Do you.
- **Be present as fully as possible:** We've all got a lot going on. And this time is for us and our growth and learning.
- **Only offer what you need to:** Share only whatever your soul calls for, and know that you do it with our support.
- **No fixing, saving, advising 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.** This session will not be able to speak to everything, but it will speak to some things. Know that there is always room for more learning, listening and leading.

Adapted from the Center for Courage & Renewal

What is calling you into this space?

**Name, pronouns, location &
how you identify**

**Who are you dedicating
your learning to today?**



“Trauma is not what happens to us, but what we hold inside in the absence of an empathetic witness.”

— *Peter A. Levine*



“What if the way we
respond to crisis is
part of the crisis?”

— **Bayo Akomolafe**



“Before you ask ‘How do I reach them?’ ask, ‘How do I hold myself?’”

— Zaretta Hammond



“The healing of our communities
does not come from the top
down or the outside in—

It happens when we show up for
each other, in all our imperfect
humanity.”

— *Prentis Hemphill*





What makes you feel held or brings you joy in holding space for others?

Compassion...

1: “is the feeling that arises in witnessing another’s suffering and that motivates a subsequent desire to help”

-Goetz, J., Keltner, D., & Simon-Thomas, E. (2010)

2: “...is a relational process that involves noticing another person’s pain, experiencing an emotional reaction to his or her pain, and acting in some way to help ease or alleviate the pain”

-(Kanov, Maitlis, Worline, Dutton, Frost & Lilius, 2004)

3: “...comes into the English language by way of the Latin root “passio”, which means to suffer, paired with the Latin prefix “com”, meaning together – to suffer together.”

-Lilius, J., Kanov, J., Dutton, J., Worline, M., & Maitlis, S. (2011)



Recall a moment in your healing when you needed something more (or something different) than your community could offer.

How did it feel?

Why were your needs unmet?

What resources did you wish you had?

How did you know you needed more/different?

What did you do/where did you go to take care of yourself?

Next, close your eyes, and think of a time when you felt fully welcome and truly supported.

Draw a picture in your head, in as much detail as you can:

What time of year is it?

How old are you?

Who are you with?

How familiar are you with the space: is it a place you know intimately, or is this a special occasion?

What do you see? What do you hear? How does it feel to be there?

Slowly open your eyes, and think about what — and who — it was that made you feel that way.

What are 1–3 words you would use to describe what they did?



How

“Being an empathic witness doesn't require us to have all the answers or to make the pain disappear.

Instead, it's about holding space for the other person's emotions, allowing them to express themselves freely without judgment or interruption, to convey that their feelings are valid and worthy of attention, even if all we do is listen.”

-Esther Perel

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/estherperel_in-moments-when-our-loved-ones-confide-in-activity-7193972996112289793-PQFM/



“Many times, when we help we do not really serve...Serving is also different from fixing...

Seeing yourself as a fixer may cause you to see brokenness everywhere, to sit in judgment of life itself. When we fix others, we may not see their hidden wholeness or trust the integrity of the life in them. Fixers trust their own expertise.

When we serve, we see the unborn wholeness in others; we collaborate with it and strengthen it.

Others may then be able to see their wholeness for themselves for the first time.”

— Rachel Remen

Where do you see yourself / your loved ones' / your community in this text?



Reflection and attunement

When imagining holding space for someone, what kinds of grief or loss...

Irritate you?
Upset you?
Surprise you?
Move you?

What ways of mourning might align with your own ways of mourning?
What cultural rituals or ways might collide?



**Glitter, Glue, or
Grease:**

*Am I the person
behind the scenes
of the container? In
front? Alongside?*

Are we holding space
from the **wound or
from the scar** (or
both)?



**“What does it mean to ‘hold space’
for someone else?”**

**It means that we are willing to walk
alongside another person in
whatever journey they’re on without
judging them, making them feel
inadequate, trying to fix them, or
trying to impact the outcome.**

**When we hold space for other
people, we open our hearts, offer
unconditional support, and let go of
judgement and control.”**

— Heather Plett



— NINE “HOLDING SPACE” MOVES —

- **Give people permission to trust their own intuition and wisdom.**
- **Give people only as much information as they can handle.**
- **Don't take their power away.**
- **Keep your own ego out of it.**
- **Make them feel safe enough to fail.**
- **Give guidance and help with humility and thoughtfulness.**
- **Create a container for complex emotions, fear, trauma, etc.**
- **Allow them to make different decisions and to have different experiences than you would.**

Collective Wisdom

- Ask Open-Ended Questions
 - "What kind of a day (or week) has this been for you?"
 - "How are things? I want the long version"
- WAIT (Why am I talking?)
- "Do you want me to ask about your grief when we spend time together, or would you rather bring it up on your own?"
- "What is something you wish people understood about what you're going through right now?"

Others?



What I **received**

What I **learned**...

What I **valued** in this space...

What I'm still **wondering**...



THE WORLD CRUMBLES

And still, we keep it together.

Rebuild, replenish, love, hope, dream.

The weight settles, and still, we keep breathing.

The pain growls, and still, we find way to quiet
the ache.

Open arms, hands reaching for each other.

How are you?

Me too.

I'll help you carry the day.

L.E. Bowman

Helpful Resources

[Ritualizing Remembrance in our School Cultures: Día de los muertos \(SCRR, 2021\)](#)

[Creating and Holding Space for Ourselves and Each Other After Student Death \(SCRR, 2023\)](#)

[On Backpacks and Baggage: Life After Educator Loss – Reflections from A First Year Teacher \(SCRR Blog, 2022\)](#)

[Our Right to Grieve: Grief-Informed Recommendations and Resources for Healing-Centered & Racially-Just School Cultures \(SCRR, 2023\)](#)

[Still, In Motion A Gentle Guide for Loving People Who Heal at Different Speeds \(Dr. Zelana Montminy\)](#)

[Why Holding Space Is The Most Important Leadership Skill To Learn In 2024.](#)

[The Art of Holding Space](#)

[Holding Space Resources - Heather Plett](#)

[Setting Boundaries: How to Help Out Without Burning Out](#)

[Empathetic Reflection at Work](#)

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

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



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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





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NEW YORK LIFE
FOUNDATION

Life After Loss

A vibrant hummingbird with iridescent green and blue feathers and a long beak, shown in flight on the right side of the banner.

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