



Center for Applied
Research Solutions

Writing Our Way Through the Aftermath

Making Meaning of Our Relationship to Our Grief

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What is calling you into today's space?

- Name, pronouns, location, role, how you identify
- What is your relationship to writing? And what are you hoping to explore with it today?

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.

Grief, a poem

Whether grief is a mountain range
towering high above you,

or an unsettling hum
in a desert
you didn't know
you'd have to travel through,

a volcano,
indiscriminate
as it wildly erupts,

or an earthquake
that never prepares you
before it breaks everything up,

a storm of waves that turn the ocean
into an inescapable dome

a starless void of silence
millions of light years from home,

for whatever shape grief takes,
its presence claims space,
unapologetically pushing the
boundaries
of logic, time, and place.

You are not a failure
when you cannot
make the grief just
"go away."

It'll take time
to move through this landscape
and I hope you know
that's okay.

- *Morgan Harper Nichols*



Overview

Together we will:



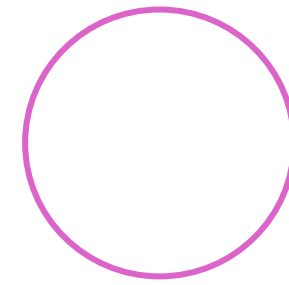
Explore a moment of 'aftermath' we have experienced



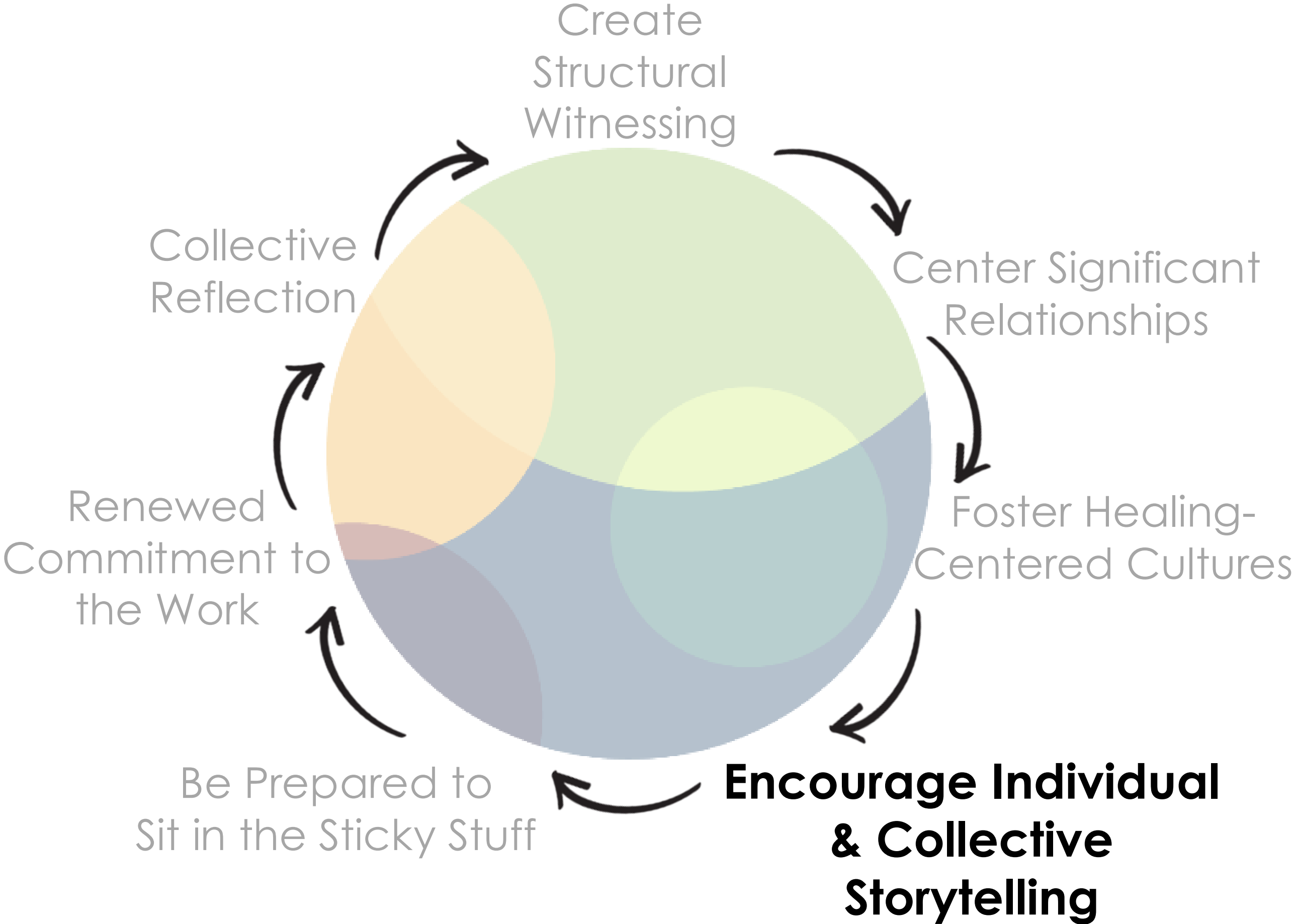
Identify how our grief showed up in that time

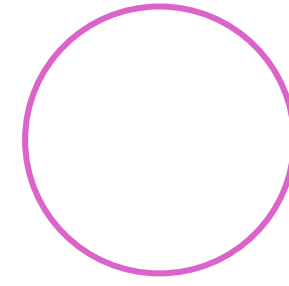
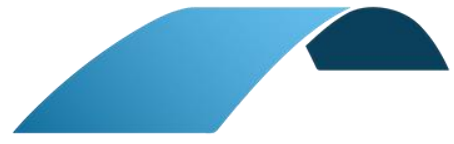


Characterize our grief and identify ways to tend to our grief through a creative writing exploration



RENEWAL: Toward Meaning-Making, Healing & Change





WHY GRIEF



Grief is a universal experience



Grief is complicated



Grief does not go away, it just changes



My Aftermath

Two weeks before the pandemic...

my mother suddenly passed away after a four-year battle with breast cancer.



My Aftermath

Befriending my Grief

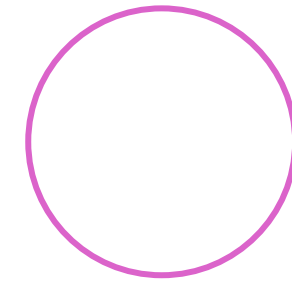
And four months later...

I wasn't sure if I would have a job with the changing landscape of schools.



My Aftermath

Befriending my Grief



As the pandemic persisted...

I was able to stay employed but my role shifted drastically, all while caring for my 93 year-old maternal grandmother.



I would leave that job in 2021 – choosing to take time for my own rest, healing, and dreaming. My grandmother would pass away in 2022.

During this time

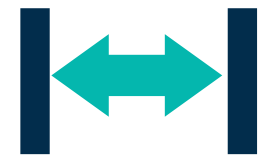
My grief lived, breathed and existed with me. It was:



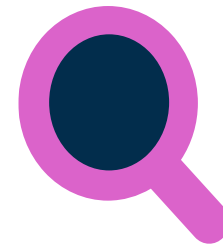
...**quiet** and sat with me in staff meetings



...**judgmental** and had to learn, along with me to manage facial expressions on Zoom



...**nosy** looking over my spreadsheets with curiosity



...**vocal** and spoke freely with friends, colleagues and sometimes strangers

My grief was like a **teenager** wanting to be seen and ignored, needing space to process out loud, and brood off to the side.

Exploring Your Aftermath

Think of a time you experienced “a big thing,” and the weeks, months and years after. How did your grief show up during that time? How does it show up now?

Exploring Your Aftermath

What does your grief sound like?

Is it loud, quiet, does it sing or scream?

Is your grief human? Is it animal? Is it something else entirely?

Where does your grief sit when you are...

...joyful,
...working,
...running errands?

What does your grief *look* like?

Is it big, small, shiny, dull, dressed up, dressed down?

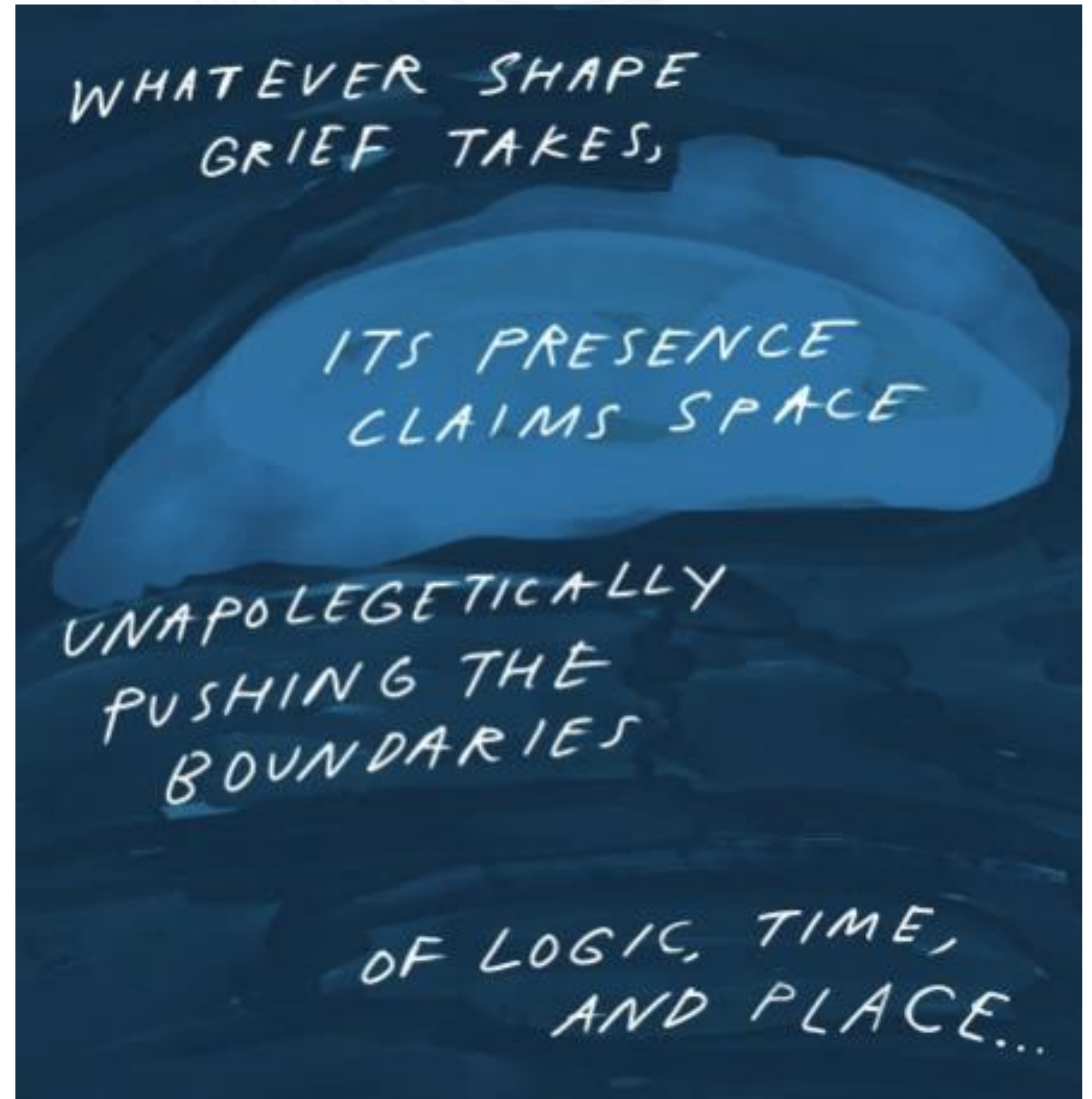
What are other visual or physical characteristics of your grief?

Where in your life or your day does it hangout most?

How does your grief let you know what it needs?

Exploring Your Aftermath

**Using your
brainstorm,
characterize
and describe
your grief.**



Exploring Your Aftermath



Now, brainstorm **what your grief is asking of you?**

How can you **show it care**, what does it **need you to tend** to?

What does it need you to **witness** and what does it need you to **let flow?**

Six Word Story

- Tell you and your grief's story in six words

Look at me, no wait, don't.

Leaning in, no control, stuck together.





Life After Loss

A vibrant green and blue hummingbird is shown in flight on the right side of the image, 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**

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