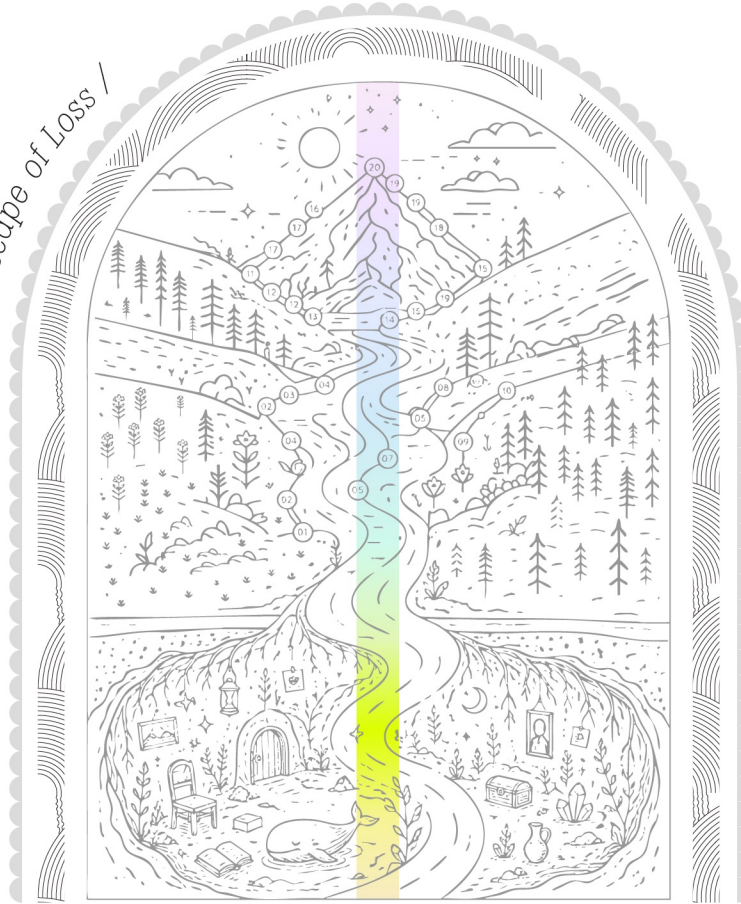


The Loss Landscape: Mapping the Landscape of Loss /



/ The Loss Landscape

/ b y CARRIE A. DYER

*/ A trauma-informed, existential, parts-aware,
sensory-integrated exploration tool*

*/ Instead of stages, think dimensions of existence,
places someone can visit, revisit, & move between.*

/ The Loss Landscape

Grief is not a linear process to be resolved, but a multidimensional experience that reshapes an individual's relationship to time, identity, meaning, connection, and embodiment. Contemporary grief theory has increasingly moved away from stage-based models toward more dynamic, individualized understandings of mourning that honor its nonlinearity, variability, and enduring presence across the lifespan (Margaret Stroebe & Henk Schut, 1999; Robert A. Neimeyer, 2001). Within this evolving framework, grief is understood not as something to "move on" from, but as an ongoing process of adaptation, integration, and meaning reconstruction in the wake of loss.

Existential perspectives further deepen this understanding by situating grief within the fundamental conditions of human existence, including mortality, freedom, isolation, and the search for meaning (Irvin D. Yalom, 1980). From this lens, loss disrupts not only external attachments but also the internal structures through which individuals make sense of themselves and their world. Grief can evoke profound questions of identity ("Who am I now?"), temporality ("How does time move forward?"), and meaning ("What remains, and what matters now?"), requiring a reorientation to existence itself rather than a simple emotional resolution.

Logotherapy, as developed by Viktor Frankl (1963), further contributes to this understanding by emphasizing the human capacity to find meaning even in the midst of profound suffering. From this perspective, grief does not negate meaning but instead invites a transformation in how meaning is constructed and experienced. Frankl proposed that individuals retain the freedom to choose their stance in response to unavoidable suffering, suggesting that even in loss, there exists the potential for purpose, connection, and existential orientation. This framework aligns with contemporary grief approaches that emphasize integration over resolution, and meaning-making as an ongoing, deeply personal process rather than a fixed outcome.

At the same time, attachment-informed and continuing bonds perspectives emphasize that grief reflects the enduring nature of love and connection. Rather than severing ties with what has been lost, individuals often maintain an ongoing inner relationship with the deceased or absent other, integrating this bond in new and evolving ways (Dennis Klass et al., 1996; John Bowlby, 1980). This shift reframes grief not as detachment, but as transformation, an ongoing negotiation between absence and presence.

Neuroscience and trauma-informed research further highlight the embodied nature of grief, recognizing that loss is experienced not only cognitively but also physiologically, through the nervous system and sensory pathways (Bessel van der Kolk, 2014; Stephen Porges, 2011). Emotional pain, longing, and disorientation are often held within the body, requiring approaches that engage somatic awareness, regulation, and nonverbal expression. Similarly, expressive and experiential modalities offer pathways for accessing and processing grief that may not yet be fully available through language alone (Cathy Malchiodi, 2020).

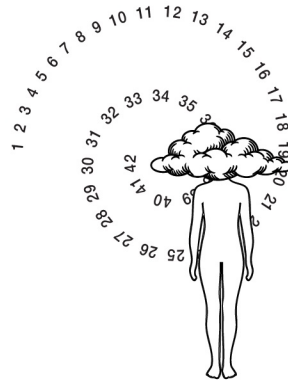
The *Grief Field Guide* emerges from these integrative perspectives as a therapeutic tool designed to support individuals in exploring grief as a lived, relational, and embodied experience. Rather than organizing grief into stages, this approach maps it across existential dimensions, time, identity, meaning, connection, and embodiment, offering a flexible framework for reflection, expression, and gentle reorientation. Drawing from constructivist, existential, attachment-based, and somatic traditions, the guide invites individuals to engage grief not as a problem to be solved, but as a landscape to be witnessed, navigated, and, over time, integrated into the evolving story of the self.

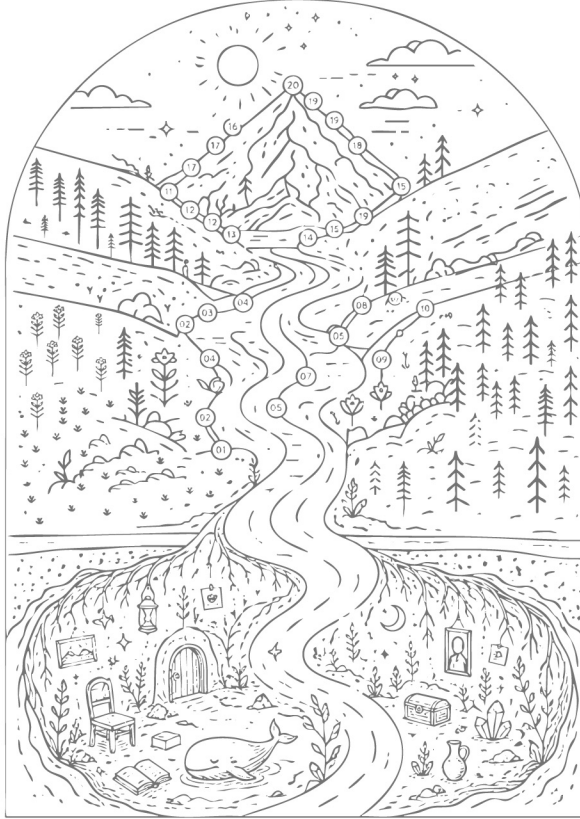
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*The Existential
Dimensions
of Grief &
5 Territories*

- 01. Time**
- 02. Identity**
- 03. Meaning**
- 04. Connection**
- 05. Embodiment**





01. Time

(Past-Present-Future Collapse)

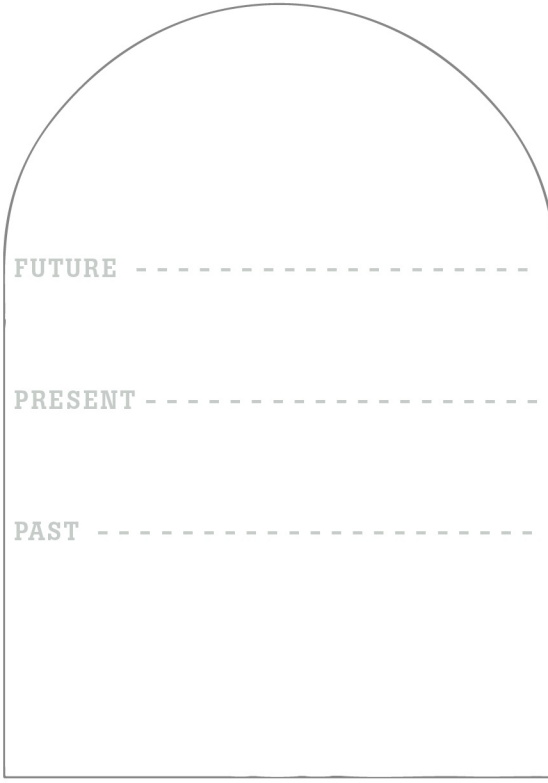
"Grief bends time."

Q: Where do you feel pulled backward?

[_____]

Q: What feels frozen? What feels like it's rushing ahead without you?

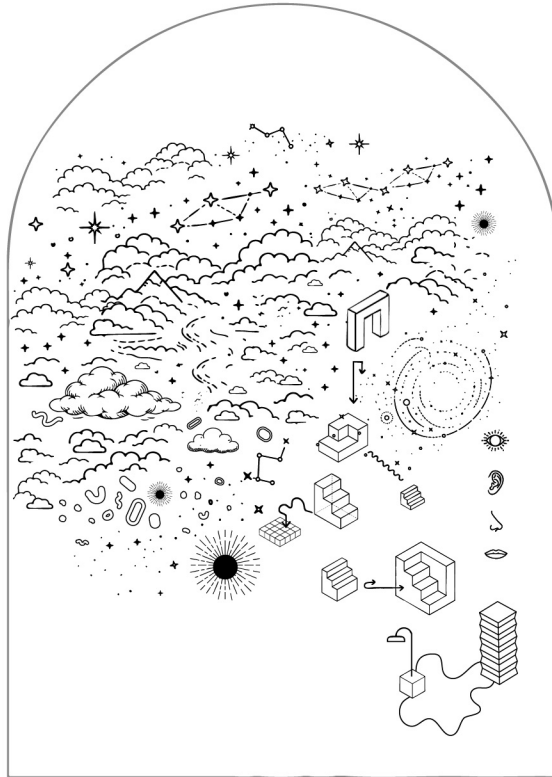
[_____]



/ Create a "time map"
(draw loops, breaks, spirals)



/ Somatic anchor:
Hand on heart + naming "I am here, now"



02. Identity
(Who am I now?)

*"Loss
reshapes
the self."*

Q: Who were you in relation to what was lost?

[_____]

Q: What parts of you feel missing?

[_____]

Q: What parts are emerging?

[_____]

[]. "Grieving part"

[]. "Functioning part"

[]. "Avoiding part"

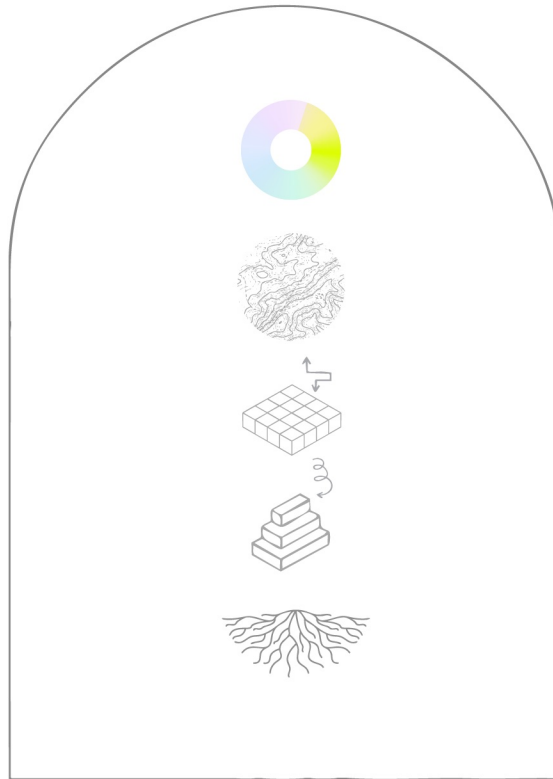
/ Parts-based mapping

Name your parts and draw them above.



**/ What would your Self
say to these parts?**

[-----]



3. Meaning

(Why / What now?)

*"Grief disrupts
the story we
thought we
were living."*

Q: What feels senseless?

[_____]

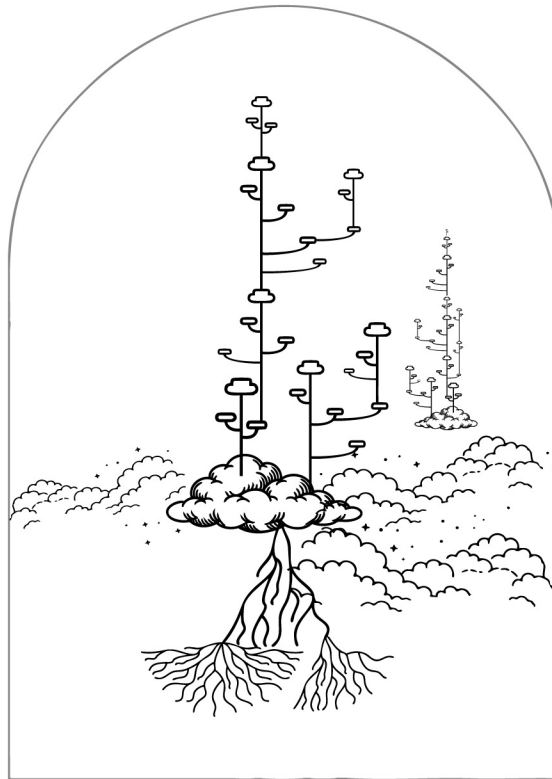
**Q: What questions
keep returning?**

[_____]

Q: "What I
believed
before"

Q: "What feels
uncertain
now"

/ Draw a symbol for how I feel above



04. Connection

(Love, Absence, Continuity)

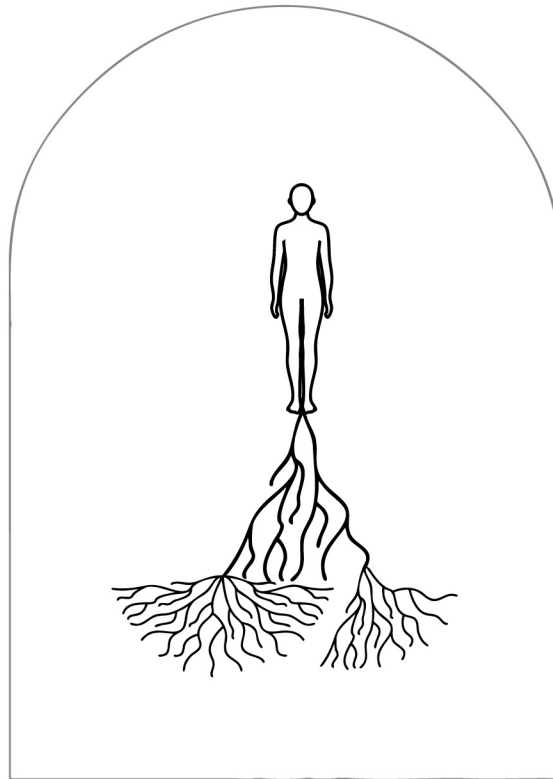
*"Grief is the echo
of attachment."*

**Q: How does your connection
continue, if at all?**

[_____]

Q: Where do you still feel them?

[_____]



5. Embodiment
(Where grief lives
in the body)

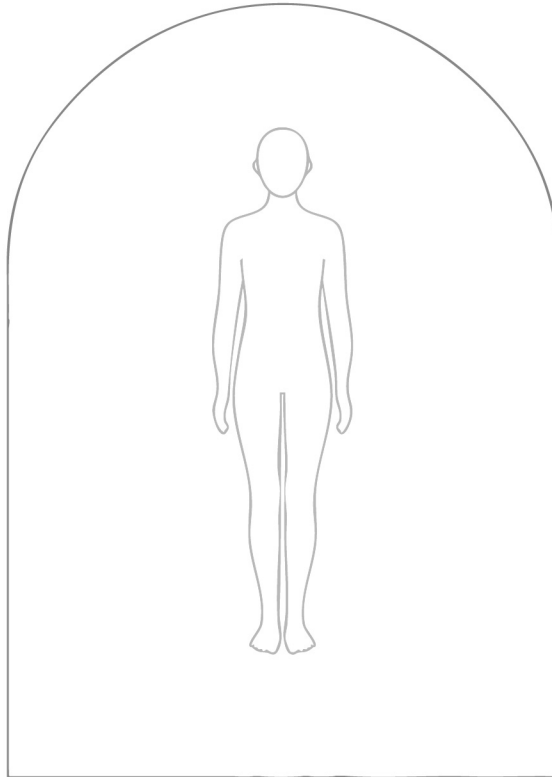
*"The body
remembers
what words
cannot hold."*

Q: Where do you feel grief today?

[_____]

Q: Does it have a shape,
weight, temperature?

[_____]



/ Body outline drawing

(color/texture mapping)

/ Regulation: Pair with grounding

(butterfly hug, breath, texture)