Embodied Grief
A Mind/Body Wellness Approach to Restoring Resilience after Suicide Loss
How is Your Heart?

Love sorrow.

She is yours now...

Brush her hair,

help her

into her little coat,

hold her hand,

especially when
crossing a street...

~ Mary Oliver
Deep in their roots
all flowers
keep the light.

~ Theodore Roethke
KEEPER OF THE LIGHT

~ Harvey Reid
Acknowledgements

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- The brave, resilient individuals and families I have met who have been bereaved by suicide
- My Family and my brother’s friends
It Takes a Village to say goodbye...
Intention

- Impact of Suicide Loss on Grieving Process
- Restoring Resilience
- Restorative, Mind/Body Wellness Approach
Mourning Process

Understanding

Commemorating
 Remembrance Rituals

Grieving

Coping and Adapting
Continuing Bonds

Adapted from Sandra Fox’s model, (Zucker, 2009)
Life Interrupted...
Healing
To restore wholeness

Wholeness: *Sound in body, mind, spirit*…
RESILIENCE
“To Withstand” Masten (2015)
Resilience does not come from rare and special qualities but from the everyday magic of ordinary human resources in the minds, brains, and bodies of children, in their families and in their communities.

5 Principles → Resilience

- Promote a sense of safety
- Promote calming, ability to self-regulate
- Promote a sense of self-efficacy
- Promote connectedness
- Promote hope

Masten (2011)
Imagining the heart as shattered and scattered...or

Imagining the heart broken open into a new capacity, holding more of both our own and the world’s suffering, joy, despair and hope.

~ Parker Palmer, A Hidden Wholeness
Mind/Body Wellness Approach

What Helps Restore Resilience?

What Helps Us Heal?
Each Person’s Grieving Journey is Unique

Rethinking Resilience: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mlUuY9tUFok
Anyone can slay a dragon
she told me
But try waking up every
morning and loving the
world all over again.

That’s what takes a real hero.

~Brian Andreas, www.storypeople.com

Restoring Resilience

~ Susan Paradis
FAMILY AND SOCIAL SUPPORTS

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

MASTERY

SELF-REGULATION
Every Step of the Way I will walk with you. You will not be alone. ~ Rumi

I do my best because I’m counting on you counting on me ~ Maya Angelou
Resiliency Skills

★ Resourcing
★ Tracking
★ Grounding
★ Calming

iChill App

~ adapted from the Community Resiliency Model
(https://www.traumaresourceinstitute.com/crm

R. Buttle
Top-Down (Brain to Body )
– Support & Cognitive Skills
  • Reduce distressing, intrusive thoughts
  • Increase affirming thoughts & emotion

Bottom-Up (Body to Brain )
– Body Awareness & Regulation
  • Physical self-soothing & empowerment
  • Breathing, gestures, movement

~ adapted from The Community Resiliency Model
(https://www.traumaresourceinstitute.com/crm; iChill App)
Resourcing
★ SEEN
★ SOOTHE
★ SAFE
★ SECURE

(Siegel, 2013)

Exquisite Witness
Jeffreys (2011)
RESOURCES: Person, Place, Thing
Social Atom

- *social atom*: a term coined by Jacob Moreno MD to define the complex of all significant figures, real and imaginary, past and present, who relate to a person's psychological experience (also known as a social network diagram) ~ Blatner (1996).

**Adaptation: Life-Enhancing, Supportive Resources**

- Who/What is in your inner and outer support circles?
- What would these supports say to you now?
- Resources can be portrayed through an image or enacted in movement/drama/poetry/story.
Coping Crowns
Imagine someone, something, or someplace in your life that has special meaning to you.

In the presence of this person, place, or thing you feel accepted, strong, competent, alive, empowered, or any other qualities that you desire.

Acknowledge this presence as a resource in your life.

What is its message to you right now?

Notice how it feels in your body to hear this message.

This is a message to store within and return to when you need to hear it.
You will never forget a person who came to you in the dark with a torch ~ M. Rose
Imaginal Resource

Happiness can be found in even the darkest of times if we only remember to turn on the light.

~Albus Dumbledore  (Harry Potter)
Books as Resources

"Books are many things: lullabies for the weary, ointment for the wounded, armour for the fearful and nests for those in need of a home."

- Glenda Millard.

song: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uqkPdljjSFI&feature=youtu.be
HEAL by Taking in the Good

Have a beneficial experience. Notice it. Create it.
Enrich it: Stay with it, feeling it fully
Absorb it: Receive it into yourself.
Link it: Use it to soothe painful, harmful psychological material.

Hanson, Resilient (2018)
Peaceful Place

Think about an environment in which you feel calm, safe, and peaceful—a place you would most like to be if you could be anywhere you choose, real or imaginary. Take a few moments to imagine yourself in this place. Option: Use art, writing, movement, drama, or poetry to portray this place.
In the midst of winter, I found there was within me an invincible summer…
…no matter how hard the world pushes against me, within me, there’s something stronger – something better, pushing right back.

~Albert Camus
Healing Mandala

Group Mural
Sensations
Images
Feelings
Thoughts

Siegel, D. & Bryson, T. P. (2012)
"The reality is that we all need a certain amount of stress, a certain amount of anxiety to perform well. ... But if all day, you feel like a truck is coming at you, day after day after day, that's gonna take a toll on the body."

The Biology of Toxic Stress (from Resilience)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z4CD6jyWw2A

ZONES OF REGULATION

TRACKING: **RED, GREEN, BLUE**

- Panic/anxiety
- Racing thoughts
- Hypervigilance
- Short fuse/angry
- Irritability

Too Hot!

Too Cold!

Just Right!

Calm, not tired
Alert, not anxious

Ogden, Minton, & Pain (2006)

Resilient Zone
Community Resiliency Model; I Chill App

https://www.traumaresourceinstitute.com/ichill
Anger Iceberg

Icebergs are large pieces of ice found floating in the open ocean. What you can see from the surface can be misleading. Most of the iceberg is hidden below the water.

This is how anger works. Often when we are angry, there are other emotions hidden under the surface.

https://www.gottman.com/

Arenal Volcano, Costa Rica
Mindfulness

Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response.

In our response lies our growth and our freedom.

~ Viktor E. Frankl

"Video: "Just Breathe" by Julie Bayer Salzman & Josh Salzman
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVA2N6iX2cg
Mindfulness Practice

Children, Teens, Adults

- Mind Jar / Wish Stick
- Distant Focus Breathing
- Sensory Focus (5 senses)
- Mirroring
- Rhythm and music
- Soothing, sustained movement

(See handout: Regulate, Re-Energize, Relax)
Breathing in, I know I am breathing in.
Breathing out, I know I am breathing out.
Breathing in, my breath grows deep.
   Breathing out, my breath goes slowly.
Aware of my body, I breathe in.
   Relaxing my body, I breathe out.
Calming my body, I breathe in.
   Caring for my body, I breathe out.

~ Thich Nhat Hanh
Place palms together
Breathe in
As you exhale
push/press INTO your palms
Repeat
Think of two qualities that help you to cope with stigma (e.g. courage/strength). Place your right hand on your left shoulder (or arm) and think of one of the qualities. Keep that hand in place and place your left hand on your right shoulder (or arm) and think of the second quality. Breathe in. As you breathe out, press your hands on your shoulders or arms. Take a moment to imagine/feel these qualities as you breathe in and out. Option: Think of a person, place, or thing that helps you cope. Option: Use slow bilateral tapping of arms or legs (or “butterfly hug” tapping) while imagining the qualities.
Embrace Tiger
Return to Mountain

- Breathe in, reach your arms out wide and imagine embracing something that is feeling very heavy to you.
- Breathe out, pushing your hands down
- Feel your feet firmly planted
- Imagine you are a large and beautiful mountain: Steady, Solid, Strong

(movement adapted from Tai Chi)

Levine, P. (2010). In an Unspoken Voice: How the Body Releases Trauma and Restores Goodness
If our center is strong, everything else is secondary.

~ Elie Wiesel, author of *Night*
I didn’t think I’d feel any relief from the internal pain and turmoil but then it came. It’s an indescribable feeling. This drawing is what the feeling looks like...

~ group participant
I had forgotten that my body was also a sanctuary, a haven ~ a source of light.
~ group participant
Take Flight

Take flight fragile wings--Wriggle out!
Unbind those frightening folds.

Too tight to soar
Too tight to breathe

Unfurl your pain before the sun;
Release your worries and give them rest...

Take flight fitted wings— Live boldly.
Your strength will carry me.

~ JCL (movement and poem)
Deep Peace

Deep peace of the running wave to you
Deep peace of the flowing air to you
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you
Deep peace of the shining stars to you
Deep peace of the gentle night to you
Moon and stars pour their healing light on you
Deep peace to you.

~ song by Libana
Keep a Light Shining...

Thank you!

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References

- Levine, P. (2010). *In an Unspoken Voice: How the Body Releases Trauma and Restores Goodness*
References (continued)