

TBT 13

Hilary: [00:00:00] Hello, and welcome back to the body trust podcast. I am Hilary Kanavey, and I am with Dana Sturtevant. Hi, everyone. Serious Bonner. Hey everybody. And we are here to talk to you today about grief. Don't turn it off.

Don't turn it off. Wait. Don't go. Don't go.

I always pick the most popular things to talk about. Really fun at parties. So. Grief has been a topic, an idea, an experience that's central to body trust for forever, right? And yet it doesn't always make sense why we're talking about grief when folks are newer to body trust. So we want to bring you along with our thinking about that.

[00:01:00] There is, well, let's see, we started thinking about grief. And body trust together. How many years ago, Dana? 15? 15? I don't know. What is time? But yeah, we, I mean

Dana: that Jean Courtney paper, I think is 2008. Is it? I think. Okay. I can look it up while we're talking and see, I don't think we got that

Hilary: when it was brand new either.

And we

Dana: didn't get it. Yeah. But it was probably out for a couple of years when we discovered this. Gene Courtney paper, which we'll put in the show notes is size acceptance through the lens of grief or size acceptance as a grief process. Yeah. And that's really when we came across this, we were both really disillusioned with the traditional body image focus in eating disorder treatment.

It felt it, it lacked a systemic quality to it. And [00:02:00] it just didn't quite meet the mark. And so when we started to think about it through the lens of grief. I think it really opened up a whole conversation that's been helpful to the people who sit in rooms with us to explore this work. And they're often like, what does grief have to do with it?

Which is why we, uh, have a chapter in our book by that title. What does grief have to do with this?

Hilary: Yeah. So if you want the whole picture, the chapter of the book, we'll walk you right through it, which. Uh, can be helpful if it just to have a little bit more background, but, as someone who talks and teaches a lot about grief, I think of grief as like a core, core experience of being human.

I think in our culture, we think about grief in the context of bereavement a lot. And that is certainly how our culture is willing to [00:03:00] contextualize grief. Grief is far more than that. And grief is, we don't, we don't get out of the experience of being human without grief, without coming into contact with grief.

And so it is this kind of unifying element in humanity that we all grieve. And we all feel, I think a lot of folks feel very, very uncomfortable with the concept of grief and very, very like they don't really get it. And so, especially since we only talk about it in terms of bereavement. But we live in a grief phobic culture, and we live in a body oppressive society.

And the society, our society denies both grief and bodily autonomy. We, and I think of grief as something that's really housed, that comes from the body. Our bodies know how to grieve. It's a journey our bodies take us on. A lot of [00:04:00] people react strongly to grief because maybe it's one of the first times they've actually just been led by an emotional process.

Because it comes in these strong, well, there's acute grief initially if you lose someone, and then there's these strong waves of grief that come and kind of can be surprisingly strong and surprisingly frequent and kind of out of nowhere. And so grief is this body centered experience that feels like it gets control of us at times.

So it surprises us because we, in this culture, do not expect to not be masters of the body.

Sirius: I think in a similar way our Grief phobicness is also related to our fear of death and our disinterest in death or cultural disinterest in death. Yeah, we're very afraid of it. We don't want to talk about it or deal with it or engage with it. [00:05:00] In ways that are like healthy, I hesitate to use that word, but, uh, the way that we deal with death really impacts how we deal with grief.

And I think it's also connected on the other side around our bodies, we're in denial about death. And so some of the ways in which we treat our bodies as a reflection of that as well, and aging and all of that. And so grief can't get to us either way. And so it has to find its own way, which may not be the way that we

would have wanted it or anticipated if we had intentionally tried to engage with our grief.

Hilary: Yes.

Dana: I think when we grieve we're entering the wilderness.

Hilary: Yeah.

Dana: Like it's wild terrain. It has its way with us. It's, it's. It's really hard to control grief and I think of the Buddhism teaching of the second arrow that when we're resisting the grief, we don't just get the pain of the grief, we get the [00:06:00] pain of the pain, the resistance and not accepting that the grief is creates more pain.

There is a reckoning, right? This ties to the rupture, the reckoning, the reclamation in the narrative arc of body trust work. There's a coming to terms with the loss. There's a reckoning with grief, and it is why it's it's an incredibly wild ride and given this culture we live in that likes to be controlled and don't be too emotional.

Don't have too big of emotions can really make it hard for us to lean in. And take the ride, which can be incredibly beautiful, albeit saddening. There's tons of sadness in this as well. But it makes me think of, I think it was Hafez's quote, uh, in [00:07:00] his poem that says, welcome and entertain them all.

Welcome and entertain them all, talking about our feelings. And I think grief, if we don't do our feelings when we're grieving, we're going to have a really hard time. With the big emotions that come with this wild ride that is grief.

Hilary: I think we also lean into grief because grief has these alchemical properties, right?

Like grief transforms us. It transforms the way we think about things. It is the reckoning that Dana just talked about. But it also, by design, moves us. Is it healing? Maybe. But does it transform? Yes.

I think when we think about body trust work though, it's like, what are we grieving? What grieving when they're doing body trust work, I think might help illustrate what [00:08:00] body trust has to do with grief. And this is a question Dana and I ask often when we're introducing people to our framework, the Body

Trust Framework, or leading, facilitating, like what are we grieving, is a question we ask.

And so I ask that of you listeners. Are we grieving? What are you grieving? And specifically, what are you grieving in relationship to your body?

And in Body Trust Circles, People come up with a lot of answers that we hear over and over again. And one of the first ones I think of is time. People are grieving the amount of time spent trying to shift or change a body, their body, or time spent Trying to make themselves into something more palatable or that they believe they can accept the world will accept what else do you [00:09:00] think folks are grieving.

Sirius: I know I'm grieving, a sense of security and safety.

Hilary: Yeah,

Sirius: which may have been false all along I acknowledge that it's never safe for a black person in America was never the case. But The illusion was a comfort in itself, and to be in a moment to watch it crumbling, like that's rough. That's rough. And it like similarly to also know that because of some of the same dynamics.

The options for escape or plan B are limited or non existent.

Hilary: It's what it is, unfortunately.

Sirius: And I imagine that's the case for a lot of people right now who may have observed some of the mounting challenges for certain communities over the last few years, [00:10:00] but are starting to realize. Oh, I might be also in the light of fire.

Dana: Yeah, so for some it's the, the loss of thin privilege. People are grieving the loss of their privilege. We're grieving the loss of community, I think. That's one thing people really notice when they're doing body trust work, is how, and they start to become aware of diet culture, or diet talk, and how pervasive food and body talk is around them.

And so There can be a sense of loss of community because they are struggling in social situations where this is the topic of focus.

We're grieving the loss of money, time, energy. We're grieving the fact that we were duped.

Hilary: Yeah.

Dana: That we were duped, that we were lied to and we didn't know. We weren't able to see it and now we can [00:11:00] see it. And the culture hasn't changed and isn't changing. So then we're at this crossroads of deciding what we want to do, understanding that we've been duped understanding that it was never designed to work, that, that people have made money off of your shame.

And then that can lead to the death of the big reveal, like the after body. That there isn't going to be an after body, right? That there won't be a day you, you've arrived in the body that everyone, where you can step out in your outfit and everyone attagirls you. There's the loss of that big reveal, the dream of being thin.

And the distraction that provided

Hilary: the illusion that you can retain some control.

Sirius: Or that any of this is a permanent state, you might get that reveal moment, [00:12:00] but statistically speaking, your body's not going to stay that way. So,

I don't know how many of our folks are in the moment of realizing that, but they might be in the moment of realizing that I, I did have that at some point. I had that moment at some point, and I may never get back to that. Mm-hmm .

Dana: Yeah. No matter how temporary or fleeting it was. Yeah. And the loss, people, I imagine like the loss of being treated differently.

Sirius: Mm-hmm . Yeah. Mm-hmm . Mm-hmm

Dana: I also think about, as people explore this work they start to grieve the harm that they've upheld. Right. And the things that they professed. I know There's some blogs out there by providers who are like, I'm sorry for harming you and for not [00:13:00] knowing that I was harming you, right? There's a lot of grief and I know for parents as they explore this and they are looking back and thinking about their kids, there's a lot of grief and what they lost out on.

Sirius: With

Dana: their kids and the fact that they didn't know and here we are, you did what you could do and you didn't do what you couldn't do. That's a line somebody said to me in the middle of my grief around infertility is like I did what I could do and I didn't do what I couldn't do.

And it was that second part that was particularly helpful that I couldn't, I didn't do what I couldn't do. Yeah.

Sirius: That

Hilary: part's really important.

I think along the lines of grieving that harm, I think, there's ways that we've been complicit in anti fat bias, fat phobia that, that we have to reckon with. As I think about parents who, while they [00:14:00] want to. And put an end to, lineages of body hatred. When push comes to shove and your kid's fat, people have a lot of reckoning to do.

The

body trust the journey of body trust, the process of body trust, which is the never ending process, right? This isn't a work your steps and be done kind of process. means that, we come, we're coming into a relationship with grief. We're saying that this is something I'm engaging with, that this isn't something I'm going to easily resolve.

One of my teachers on grief is Francis Weller, and he talks about entering into an apprenticeship with grief, because It is a teacher and it isn't going anywhere, and our culture has spent an amount of time thinking of grief as a process that has an [00:15:00] end. And so if people are still grieving, especially after bereavement we even have diagnostic codes for that.

When grief goes on too long. Yeah. Adjustment disorder. 309. 28. What? Yeah. That's also the code, uh, lots of therapists use to not give someone a diagnosis. It's overly pathologizing, like taking a long time to adjust to a life change. I'm doing a very short form on this, but

Sirius: yeah. Yeah,

Hilary: but it's a whole statement. The whole statement to think that grief could be disordered or pathologized is just about the most American thing ever.

Sirius: Well, but I think that also comes from the idea that grief can be limited commodified it, it has to fit with an appropriate [00:16:00] timeframe which a lot of that has to do probably with your job.

Labor. So, again, how much time do we

Hilary: have to get up,

Sirius: give

Hilary: off if that's not exactly. Or we can medicate people's grief,

Get them back in the workforce. Yeah.

Sirius: I remember years ago my, my father's side of the family, there was a number of great aunts and uncles on one of whom passed away.

Who was definitely like a matriarch among that generation. Uh, her name was sister. Uh, her name was actually you let, but, uh, everyone called her sister. And she was definitely like the mother figure of this group of. Kids. So when sister passed, the kids in the next generation, my father and his sister, my aunt's generation they all went to go to sister's funeral, but one of the cousins couldn't get the time off of work and was trying to figure it out.

And they were going to have to, share a an obituary or a funeral pamphlet or something in order to be able to have proof. And I remember my aunt, who [00:17:00] was always very crafty about these things, created a fake funeral pamphlet for sister and named her as my cousin's mother so that she would have a close enough relative that she could have the time off of work to go grieve someone who was, like, a mother to her.

It's just, I remember that so clearly, uh, the hubbub around, well, how are we going to get this person to the funeral? They can't get off work. Well, we could do this. Well, we could do that. I know. I'll create a pamphlet. And they created, they fake they faked a funeral pamphlet because they had to.

Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Dana: That is so fucked up.

Sirius: Yeah. It's ridiculous. It's, it's, it's comedic. It's the, yeah, right. There's I know for me personally there's a lot of humor in grief, uh, and that is one of those moments of really? This is [00:18:00] what we're doing now? This is what we have to do to get through this? Yeah, just the absurdity of it.

Mm hmm. Absolutely absurd.

Dana: And that only certain people would we actually need to grieve?

Sirius: Mm hmm. Mm hmm. Yeah. Mm hmm.

Dana: It's not really grief if they're, if this is how you know them, or if it's not really, it's not real grief if it's, or I don't know, but oh my, mm

Sirius: hmm.

Hilary: Mm hmm. If someone wants a day off work, you're gonna just have a day off work.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

A handmade pamphlet should suffice. Ridiculous.

Dana: Because people believe stuff in writing.

Oh, it must be real because it's a pamphlet with your name

Sirius: on it. Yes. And a picture, an old timey picture. Oh my gosh. I think they put in a fake church because [00:19:00] there wasn't going to be a church service. So there was a whole fake church that was created for the pamphlet. Yeah. Wow. Yeah. Mm hmm.

Hmm.

Dana: I'm thinking about and we could go here not as

Like understanding that we're grieving, I think, when we lose something, obviously there's in this situation, Sirius is talking about, it's we have to prove that we're grieving somehow and that this is a legitimate loss and that I should be allowed to have time to grieve. And there's some things we identify as grief and loss, it really clearly.

And then. I think when we start to talk about this work as a grieving process that reclaiming body trust is, there's a grieving process that's part of it, that just even identifying it as grief can be incredibly helpful to name the grief and to think of it as a grief process. [00:20:00] It changes our relationship with it a little bit.

It can be a bit more like a, a form of ambiguous loss. It's a loss. But it doesn't, it doesn't fit into our culture's idea of grief or loss. This really limiting idea of loss.

And sometimes when we're working with the body and starting to understand all that's come between us and being at home in our bodies. I mean, grief just naturally arises in that conversation.

Hilary: Mm-hmm .

Well, and I think when we allow for it to be grief, when we come into and are able to name it as grief, then we're less likely to be leaning into the kind of endless opportunities for self blame and pathologizing and having a plan and working some steps.

It's like when [00:21:00] we do that kind of putting down of that stuff and we sit with what's really real in us. That can't easily be changed, can't easily be shifted, then we're grieving and that shifts our process and our healing process significantly. Because now we are maybe, we've used the word reckoning, we use that word quite a bit in body trust, but now we are real, I think with ourselves a little bit.

Dana: Sometimes it can be helpful. Like when I'm working with clients who've dealt with a life changing medical diagnosis, a diagnosis of a chronic condition, an autoimmune condition that's where they can see this as grief. Like it can be really helpful to think of reckoning with a diagnosis, right?

We're coming to terms with. The fact that we've been diagnosed with something that is something that can be treated but not cured. It's not, it's, it's something we're going to [00:22:00] live with for the rest of our life. That, that as a grief process can be a really powerful reframing and that. That might give folks some access to this that chronic illness is something that does come between us and feeling at home in our bodies.

It really, uh, can wreak havoc on our relationship with our bodies. And if we, uh, and actually Elizabeth Kubler Ross Stages of Grief were actually, were written for people reckoning with a terminal illness or diagnosis, Hillary can maybe say more about that but sometimes looking at it through that can give

folks some access to this other part of grief and loss when it comes to body trust.

Hilary: Yeah. Accepting things we aren't super excited about as they are and letting them be,

which I think what Kubler Ross was trying to. To talk about in her five stages, [00:23:00] Kubler Ross gets a lot of crap, uh, these days for having this kind of grief model that's been interpreted as linear. And I don't know if that's what she intended, honestly, but I do think it has those descriptors of anger and bargaining and denial and acceptance and the other one I can't remember right now do you have a place, I think, in organizing something that is.

deeply disorganizing like grief. I also think it helps us know what we're up to sometimes, if all of a sudden you're like, I was totally into body trust last week. And now I'm like, but what about my health? And I'm bargaining with how much a body trust I want to be engaged with like that.

That is your grief at work, perhaps.

Dana: Yeah, finding, finding other reasons besides weight for continuing to engage in the restrictive eating patterns and the. Compulsive exercise patterns, et cetera, is a, [00:24:00] is a part of bargaining. I'm not doing this about my weight. I just wanna be healthy. I just wanna live a healthy lifestyle.

So there's so much coded language in there that's basically dieting and wow. When we started thinking of that as the bargaining phase of grief, it was like, oh my gosh, that is rich. That is really something people can hold onto.

Sirius: I think that bargaining in particular also underlies the connection between grief and change, and there are a lot of changes that happen for us in life that need grieving, and something as fundamental as Your relationship with your body, even small changes with that could require grief. And some of how we manage grief is through bargaining.

Some of it's through creating a plan. So [00:25:00] it's through, there's lots of ways of doing it. But either you willingly go through the grief or you don't. But the grief is still there.

Hilary: Yeah, it's already happening, whether acknowledged or not.

I always feel relief when I hear that. I don't know if that brings relief to others. No, it's oh, I might as well. I can just let go a little bit because it's happening, whether I like it or not.

Dana: I remember reading that the first time, like we accept it because it's what's happening and regardless of whether we accept it or not does not change the fact that this is happening.

So what happens when we move into it with acceptance, with an open hand instead of a closed fist. Yeah. It's oh yes.

So we want to make space for this grief.

Hilary: Yeah,

Dana: to acknowledge it as a grief that to name [00:26:00] it as grief and get curious, you know Maybe make your own list. What am I grieving if I were to look at this and my process of healing? My relationship with food and body is a grief process. What are you grieving?

What are you reckoning with? What are you coming to terms with? What are you struggling to accept?

Hilary: What do you, I think we talk a lot about divesting, right. And we're talking about divesting from structures and institutions that uphold, uh, disordered eating and, body, the body change industry. Right. So we're talking about divesting from some of that, but in order to divest, we have to probably feel the absence of those structures and institutions in our lives.

And what is that, what does that do, what does it mean to become, to be in opposition to that stuff that's so mainstream.

We talked earlier about how folks end up having a [00:27:00] lot of their relationships change and this is one of those places where oftentimes folks can't participate in the same, boring conversations about diet culture and body change that they were able to before and then what does that mean for them.

What choices does that present you with?

Dana: It makes me think of that question who's going to allow you to grieve? Who will, who in your life will allow you to have your grief?

Sirius: Yeah.

Dana: Because people are really shitty about grief.

Hilary: Yeah. People

Dana: are not good at holding space for people who are grieving. Yeah. When it's a, like a big obvious loss like your mother or something.

To let alone this process is a grief process. But hopefully there's at least one person that you can find to hold space for your grief.

Hilary: Yeah.

Dana: That will allow it to hurt.

That won't take [00:28:00] your pain away from you.

That doesn't need to have the answer

or the five step program or the diet plan or

Sirius: the,

Dana: I can just sit with you in the sadness and the loss. And trust you with it because that's interesting too, as I'm thinking like trust in my own experiences with grief. Like I can trust that, that it has a process that my body knows what to do with it if I just allow it to be here.

So trusting yourself with the grief. Yeah.

Hilary: Yeah, it's interesting parallel.

Dana: If I think if big feelings are challenging wading through big feelings. Like one of the things I think we're doing in body trust work is getting better at understanding our emotional landscape and allowing for. Feelings to [00:29:00] arise. We don't say there's good feelings and bad feelings, right? That we welcome and entertain them all. And because grief comes with such wild feelings that can even be difficult to contain even when we're doing our best.

The more we can learn to ride out those waves of big emotion. We see that they peak and they go back out to see they don't peak. If we resist them, they peak and they stay there a lot. Right. But if we just, here's a big emotion. I mean, I even think my, my mother in law is dealing with the death of.

My father in law really facing the end of his life and she had probably a big emotional breakdown just reckoning with this, that this is where we've gotten and she was framing that as a nervous breakdown. And I was like, I don't think that's a nervous breakdown. I think you're just [00:30:00] having big feelings that you're not used to having.

And certain generations of people, and particularly women, weren't allowed to have big feelings. And but that's like what she was calling it was a nervous breakdown. I'm like, I think you're just like feeling the grief. I when I was anticipating the loss of my French Bulldog, Bosco, like that anticipatory grief was horrible.

Knowing he was going to die, watching him decline, anticipating the loss, not knowing when he was going to get better, uh, or knowing that he was not going to get better, but, and not knowing when, he, we would eventually have to make the hard decision and it was the anticipation of that brought on such big feelings.

And if I didn't, if I wasn't comfortable with feelings, I probably would have called it a nervous breakdown as well. Yeah. It's [00:31:00] wow, that's, I mean, keening, right? We keen when we're grieving. It is a full body sensation.

So it can be connecting to the body. And when we've been disconnected from the body, it can be really scary to start welcoming in the wide array of human feelings.

Sirius: No

Hilary: Stick with it. I'm thinking about reckoning with grief tends to send us back to coping mechanisms that we have deemed less than our favorite or not good for me or whatever the bigger the wave of whatever we're experiencing, the more likely it's going to send us back to some earlier forms of coping.

And in body trust work, that often means that, uh, folks are going to be, uh, having to [00:32:00] revisit or, deal with re emerging feelings around coping with disordered, using disordered eating from coping.

Yeah. And it's a bit of a paradox also that. Letting go of disordered eating as a coping strategy brings up so much grief. So just wanting to mention the complexity of that. And one of the tenets in body trust work is that all of our coping is rooted in wisdom. That what's happened with, between you and your body is not your fault.

And that the ways that you, uh, mitigated harm in this weight centric culture make sense either by developing Some kind of disordered eating or compulsive response to food or movement or whatever,

and that is real. [00:33:00] We don't talk about that enough, what kind of why I'm bringing up it sends everyone into the therapist's office. And I think it would be nice to have some permission lent around that. Or some normalizing around that. It's particularly true in eating disorder treatment that folks well being is judged by their behaviors.

And it's also been my experience treating disordered eating that behaviors aren't always the first things to go. Like when folks are working on disordered eating, there's usually, in my experience, a pretty heavy emotional process that precedes major behavioral change. And eating disorders are not made up of symptoms.

Eating disorders are much more complex than that, right? We're not just treating symptoms.

Which is to say that's quite a big container to return to when it's needed.

And I don't think, I don't think it's [00:34:00] dangerous to say that.

I think the wise places where you've coped before may not feel wise anymore. And you may have judgments about them and you may not want to return to them. But they're also a huge part of how you organized your well being over time and it made sense.

Dana: It's making me think of how people sometimes they get to this place you're kind of talking about where they're like, this just isn't me anymore. And there can be a strong pull and a longing for the coping and a longing for the eating disorder. And yet, also I just can't do it. It's just not me anymore.

Hilary: And

Dana: so that is it's this place that we sit that can be really hard because we don't know what to do with ourselves without the coping and yet we've grown

beyond it in some ways. And so then to sit on that precipice of what do I do, [00:35:00] knowing all of that, like our relationship to it changes. And I'm just aware of how, what a tipping point that can be in people's healing and how uncomfortable that place is for people when they know they can't do it anymore, even if they wanted to.

They're just not there.

Sirius: It seems like that could also sort of create a cascade of things, right? You, the grief. The impetus might have started you on the path towards reconnecting with past behaviors. You might have gone through a grief process around getting rid of those past behaviors and now you're like revisiting that again too.

It just seems , there could be a lot to unpack in that moment of grief being triggered or re triggered.

Hilary: How we tend to ourselves and believe what's happening. [00:36:00] In us, right? I think we've been so conditioned into labeling and pathologizing our choices, our experience, our emotions. And, uh, essentially I think body trust work is about developing a relationship with yourself that you want to be in for a lifetime and the practice of believing yourself.

That if I'm drawn back to something that. I don't want to do anymore, or was shitty for me, then that is not a sign something's wrong with me, that's a sign something's going on in me, that needs my attention or attention, and that, that's a small distinction, but we keep, living in the medical model means that we keep getting pulled back towards this fixing, fixing idea.

Instead of this believing and trusting. It's annoying. It's annoying to get pulled back to those places. It's annoying to get [00:37:00] caught in old thinking patterns and old beliefs. But there's a reason why you're being pulled back. There's something there, or there's a level of comfort or dissociation or space, emotional space or distance or whatever there that is.

That represents how you know, how present you can be in this moment and how much help or you need.

Dana: It's, yeah, it's funny you brought up the what's wrong with me thinking because that's where I was in my head of, the internal dialogue can so often, especially when we feel like we've gotten some freedom from it. And then all of a sudden, here it is again. Wait a second. I thought I was done with this and

there can be this internal narrative of what's wrong with me and you're a human being have a having a very human experience, right?

That's what we [00:38:00] want you to know is you're a human being have a having a really human experience And that experience is what connects you to humanity. It's not what separates you

Sirius: Yeah,

Dana: and grief is like this it returns They call it, they sometimes use the wave metaphor for grief, where when the loss is new and you're early in the reckoning, the griefs are big and often, and they drop you to your knees. And then as time goes on, they're the waves are coming. in a little less frequently, and they're not as big, and they're not taking you down to your knees, you can hold your ground a little bit more in them.

And then, all of a sudden, You get these sneaker waves that just come in out of nowhere and take you out. Grief is something we will return to. It's a practice, it's not something [00:39:00] we check off the list. I'm done now with that.

It will come back. And that's, human, right? That's a big part of self compassion, is understanding your experiences is what connects you to humanity. Not what separates you.

And because these bodies are something we live with for a lifetime we deal with illnesses and getting better and getting sick and having other things that impact our relationship with our bodies, that this is something we're in process with.

In the book, we write about making an altar for your grief. Finding a place in your house to honor Your grief process.

Hilary: Yeah, bringing some physical form to grief. I think can be a little magical or a little helpful in the sense that, grief is something we have to remember is happening. And there's something about grief that doesn't always lend [00:40:00] itself to that.

So having a physical space where you can put symbols, ideas, letters, words, Uh, that remind you of what you're grieving can really help to the, for the griever within. It's a way of tending, I think, to your grief.

I also would love to see the question, what are you grieving on like intake forms at doctor's offices or therapist intake forms? I would like us to ask each other that in different ways, more frequently.

If we knew how to grieve, I just. I just don't know where else we might be

because we know what it looks like to be in a state of constant reactivity instead of grief.

This is super grieving as [00:41:00] human and kind of grows us up a little bit,

whether we like it or not. I will say I mostly have not liked it, but I'm most deeply appreciative of it. I run a I have a grief, I don't know, gathering program that I offer with. Uh, Carmen Kuhl, who's an amazing therapist and friend of mine. And one thing that she and I have noted, because we're newer to this, is that when we offer a grief vigil, people kind of come and bring whatever they have, and so it's a lot.

And there's something that's so deeply sad and a little overwhelming about that. But at the end, it always feels better. There's a relief. When you get to open your grief, there's a sense of truth that rises, and all of a sudden, all of a sudden we're living with the sadness, [00:42:00] living with the overwhelm, instead of reaction to, and I'm so grateful every time I find that state again, even though I still approach those sometimes with a sense of Oh, I don't know, come up today, which is my conditioned response.

Sirius: I think also with that, especially in the context that you're talking about, you're also getting a chance to build community. Yeah, exactly. Yes. There, there are some ways of moving through grief that are very individual, but there, there are a lot of ways of moving through grief that are Really about connecting with other people maybe they are moving through the same grief as you, we're talking about family members, a funeral, that sort of a thing, but in a context where you're just with other people who are grieving whatever they're grieving.

I think it's very powerful to not just make that connection, but to have examples and role modeling so that you can learn by observing and know that [00:43:00] it's okay and normalizes it. I

Hilary: think, I think the idea at least from my, from Francis Weller's work is that we are intended to grieve together, of course, and there's some ways that our culture privatizes it and that's better or something that, feels more natural to us in some ways. But yeah, we are grieving together.

We're sharing in so many griefs. Uh, planetary, ecological, right, things that we can't control, most of, many of us, at least in my world, are grieving what's happening every day with the new administration, the things that, the people we can't protect, the things that we can't do, the lack of protection, the way things haven't gone the way they were supposed to go, the ways that we all haven't been, Invited in and celebrated in the exact identity we showed up with and as [00:44:00] the exact person that we're here.

We grieve not being able to live out our soul's purpose, which in Jungian psychology is connected with ambition. We're grieving, I think so many of us are grieving wanting connection with family that doesn't know how to do it.

Wanting deeper friendships.

Sirius: What's hitting me right now is thinking through the intersections. Yeah. Like of identity and grief and particularly thinking about the ways in which grief is or could be gendered and how men in American culture, Western culture aren't allowed to show emotions except for anger or on the very rare occasion grief.

And it's a very specific kind of stoic internalized. One little teardrop kind of grief. [00:45:00] And I've heard men that I know talk about that's how they learned. How to grieve, was watching their father at their, this other relative's funeral or whatever. And that is so limited. It's so limiting. And just like, all of the ways in which patriarchy affects all of us it hurts men and their ability to express a range of emotions in ways that feel authentic.

And in some ways, bottling that up creates other problems that we see on an individual and cultural level.

Hilary: Yeah. And in relationships.

Sirius: Absolutely.

Hilary: I live with all men. Which didn't know my whole system could even do, but that's what's happened. My husband, I have two sons and a giant male dog, who I love dearly.

But I, when they watched soccer. My husband's British. Uh, so we watch, they watch Premier League. It's a big, huge [00:46:00] part of life. And whenever I walk in, I'm like, Oh, look, we get to watch men feeling feelings today.

Which is soundly irritating, of course, to them, which is the point, but and they're not big feeling, they're big feelings. It's not a big range of feelings that we get to see, but at least, it's like all the emotional contentment experiences all channeled into like these. Sports experience, it seems.

I'm sure there's other places that I'm not witnessing, but yeah, but I think about, what is the impact of unprocessed grief on relationships? That is a big conversation that I could have for a long time and probably my partner and I could have for a very long time.

And who's carrying, if only, if you're in relationships with a lot of folks that aren't able to access grief, chances are you're carrying it for them. Chances are. And [00:47:00] sometimes we do that because that. It's a role we want and sometimes we do it because that's what happens.

Sirius: I'm about to say some things that we may have to cut. It's on my heart. When my mother passed when I was 16 listeners of the pod will know a little bit about that story. My father was dating within a month.

Wow. And at the time, I had no skills to process that.

Dana: Right.

Sirius: I was holding, right, the very recent death of my mother. My life is completely upended in ways that I could and could not anticipate. At that, a month in, I'm looking at having to go back at school, back to school, or maybe already back at school.

And also another place where your grief needed to be limited. Right. Once you come back to school, you're you need to be on again. My home life changing in really dramatic ways. Uh, and all of that. And then my father's [00:48:00] is dating. Who does woman. Who dis? Why is she here? What? I'm supposed to be nice to her?

Why? I don't know her. Like just, I, it was very hard to add this on. And as people were in the family were noting like, Oh, Reggie's dating again. Oh, Reg, that kind of stuff. There was a lot of Oh, well, men deal with grief differently. My grandmother said it. My auntie said it. Other, a lot of women in my life said that sentiment men deal with grief differently.

Sure. I assume that's true, but the lack of awareness on how that way of dealing with grief could impact a lot of people that seem to be missing and totally allowed.

Hilary: What do you do with that series? [00:49:00]

Sirius: I don't know. Yeah, I don't know. I did know that I, I was not kind to the first couple of women who sort of came into my dad's life. Mm hmm. I do regret that I was not kinder to these women, but the circumstances in which they entered my life were just really fucked up and it was not necessarily their fault. And culturally I'm being told I shouldn't blame my father either because men just grew differently.

Hilary: Right.

Sirius: But

Hilary: I'm also, I mean, This is not, I might be going too far here, but I'm thinking I'm dating a man who recently lost his wife, who was the mother of a 16 year old.

I'm not dating that man. Just saying.

That's an interesting perspective, isn't it? Yeah. Yeah. What would an adult do here?

Dana: Yeah. Or you [00:50:00] would think, Oh I probably need to tread lightly because there's a big loss here. Yeah. Just pretending like nothing happened.

Hilary: What is the 16 year old need?

Sirius: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And I'm not going to lay, there were one or two of them that. We're trying to be respectful and trying to be thoughtful.

I just wasn't in a place to receive that. No. But then there were ones who were not in that vein at all. Mm hmm. Wow.

Dana: Yeah.

Yeah, grieving with people and seeing the differences and grief process can often wreak havoc on a relationship actually, because people do grieve so

differently and some people are like, what grief? What grief? Are you kidding me? Yeah, but that's sometimes how, yeah.

Sirius: I think I was what grief?

Yeah, of

Hilary: course.

Sirius: In fact, uh, at the time there were [00:51:00] many jokes about this in the family. I had a great uncle, Uncle WJ. He just started saying, fine, because I was always saying fine. How are you? Fine. Are you okay? I'm fine. How's school going? Fine. Right. That was my response to everything. And so, especially, I mean, like even in the first couple of days, that was my response to everything.

And so uncle WJ, he just started saying fine. I mean, it was, and it was kind of a joke in the family because I didn't feel like I could deal with any of that.

Hilary: And that's, I mean, that is traumatic grief response. There's no way in. And sometimes that's the extent to which you can.

Dana: Yeah, and if you're not seeing other people grieving, feeling the sadness of the loss. I mean, I imagine there were a few days there where there was more permission, but then it was like, well, the funeral's over. And it's no, this is when it all begins, usually.

Hilary: [00:52:00] Right.

Dana: And 16 is so young to

Hilary: Yeah,

Dana: deal with a loss like that and all that comes with it

Hilary: around you is

Dana: and if the adults of mine our friend Ken Who's a lovely human being?

Talks about when his dad died. He was just given a baseball Glove told to go play outside and that's what happened. And then he later in his life. He was

doing some healing work and, he was just raised to be very stoic and non emotional. He said, I'm from the land of the frozen chosen where a handshake is intimacy.

He used to say, a handshake is intimacy. And he said it was when somebody in a retreat was having a really, and it was a man who was having a really big emotional. Release that he literally got on the floor and crawled over to the guy and got as close to him as possible To see if he could feel what he [00:53:00] was feeling because he was so disconnected That he just wanted to be as close to it as possible To just see if he could tap into whatever that was

Hilary: Yeah,

I lost a I gave birth to a baby that died at 24 weeks and That was such a lonely death because I had carried the baby, no one else knew the baby, but I did know the baby because the baby had been moving and responding and, was connected to me and I could tell more of that, I always thought maybe I'd tell more of that story if we talked about abortion and reproductive rights a little bit, but

I, it was almost as if because I carried the baby, I was the only one grieving, even though other people were impacted by the loss, there was [00:54:00] no one in close on it, and it was super lonely for a long time, and I think it took about 10 years before I could get to a place where I wasn't like, I'm so sorry that happened to the baby, and it could be I'm so sorry that happened to us.

He and I, but it took that long.

And, I think when we have these traumatic losses, we don't know how to get in close ourselves. I didn't. And other people don't either.

Sirius: I mean,

Hilary: I was planning the week after I gave birth to him to go down to California where my dad was on hospice. Or not yet. He was, he had lung cancer that had metastasized.

To his brain. And so he was about to start radiation on his brain [00:55:00] and he wanted to go to Anna Nuevo in California where the elephant seals come. It's something we'd done as kids. And so the part of me that had been taught to prioritize his pain because he was a narcissist was like, great, I can ignore the fuck out of this and get on a plane.

With my two year old and go down there and hike around the dunes carrying my two year old less than a week after I gave birth and no one stopped me. No one stopped me.

I had a big emotional response after that day at home. We'd gotten home and my parents who aren't great feelers were both like, You seem to be taking this really hard. But this is the shit. That [00:56:00] happens. This is how we do grief. We do it so badly.

We do it so badly. Because we don't know how to go towards the fear and pain in the room with someone. We're afraid of that. We're afraid to disorganize someone or to bring up their pain. We think that's gonna fuck them up somehow. And we don't know that is the opposite of what fucks people. And that people can cry and wail and lament.

and still be okay.

And I think so many of us and so many people listening have probably been denied that. And as you're listening, you may be thinking of times that hasn't been coaxed from you or you weren't met there because nobody knows how, except for a therapist. Hopefully, I don't think therapists are always good at moving towards grief in the room either, frankly, [00:57:00] but,

but that's one thing that we can do as we're kind of getting to the end here today. Is, see what is, what it would take to be less afraid of the grief that's already here.

And see what it would take to believe in your own grief. And please bring some physical form to your grief so you don't have to be remembered and shocked over and over again the way it does that.

And if you haven't been met in grief, then I really recommend that you find someone that can, and that may mean someone in this culture,

Sirius: frankly.

Hilary: But it is all chemical, it changes us. And the last thing I'll say is that grief and love are intertwined. There is no grief without love and there is no love without grief.

So essential to our nature as humans.

Thank you everyone for listening and taking this ride [00:58:00] with us today. It was a bit of a ride.

Dana: We hope you , tune in next time. Yeah.

Hilary: If you made it all the way to the end. Gold stars. Yes. Yes. Darius and Dana, is there anything else you want to say?

Sirius: I think there's a lot of collective grief moving around right now.

And again, this is a time where we need to step up and hold each other because no one else is going to. That's right. Yeah. It's not therapy. We need each other.

Dana: Yeah. Thank you for listening and holding you with tenderness.