

GRIEF RESOURCES

compiled by drawing from several people and sources: *A Year in Ceremony through Earthkeeper Wisdom School*, the compilation work of Carolyn Griffeth, *Entering the Healing Ground: Grief Ritual Leadership Training with Francis Weller*, and personal collection

Books

- The Wild Edge of Sorrow by Francis Weller
In this book Francis Weller describes “The Five Gates of Grief”, which are different themes that grief might take in our lives. They are:

First Gate: Everything We Love, We Will Lose
Second Gate: The Places That Have Not Known Love
Third Gate: The Sorrows of the World
Fourth Gate : What we expected and did not receive
Fifth Gate: Ancestral Grief
- Finding Refuge: Heart Work for Healing Collective Grief by Michelle Cassandra Johnson

Podcasts

Becoming the People Podcast:

- [Grief is Medicine with Malkia Devich Cyril](#)

Embodiment Matters Podcast:

- [Stretched Between Grief and Gratitude](#): an interview with Francis Weller
- [A Response to our Times](#): an interview with Francis Weller

Personal Rituals

 Inviting Earth's Holding

Quotes (see pgs. 2-3)

Poems (see pgs. 4-13)

GRIEF QUOTES

collected and compiled by Carolyn Griffeth of Earthkeeper's Wisdom School

"We never grieve to get over our grief. We grieve to realize what a wonderfully potent ally and friend grief is to help us feel more alive, more present, more connected, more part of the whole web of life. Grief helps us to begin to imagine what it is to be a people. It helps us to remember we need each other." – Laurence Cole

"Grief comes to initiate us, on the other side of grief we know joy again, but we are not the same. There is also something, a wisdom, an understanding, that continues to live within us, ripening us from within that we might become of real service." – Carolyn Griffeth

Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh was asked, *"What do we most need to do to save our world?"* His questioners probably expected him to identify the best strategies to pursue, but Thich Nhat Hanh replied: *What we most need to do is to hear within ourselves the sounds of the Earth crying."*

"As we grieve we also tap into our capacity to heal. We connect with our resilience and begin to piece back together the parts of ourselves that feel shattered. We come back to wholeness." – Michelle Cassandra Johnson

"If grief can be a doorway to love, then let us all weep for the world we are breaking apart so we can love it back to wholeness again." – Robin Wall Kimmerer

"The heart that breaks open can contain the whole universe." – Joanna Macy

"What we are dealing with here is akin to the original meaning of compassion: "suffering with." It is the distress we feel on behalf of the larger whole of which we are a part. It is the pain of the world itself, experienced in each of us.... We are not closed off from the world but integral components of it, like cells in a larger body. When that body is traumatized, we sense that trauma too. When it falters and sickens, we feel it's pain." – Joanna Macy

"The pain we feel is the price of consciousness in a threatened and suffering world. It is not only, natural; it is an absolutely necessary component of our collective healing. As in all organisms, pain has a purpose: it is a warning signal, designed to trigger remedial action." – Joanna Macy

“Grief expressed out loud for someone we have lost, or a country or home we have lost, is in itself the greatest praise we could ever give them. Grief is praise, because it is the natural way love honors what it misses.” – Martin Prechtel

“When you have two centuries of people who have not properly grieved the things that they have lost, the grief shows up as ghosts that inhabit their grandchildren.” – Martin Prechtel

*“When we grieve we must ask support from the ancestors. Call upon them. We are doing their work: we are freeing them. We are cutting the chords of how we bind our ancestors. They need us for their healing as much as we need them! **Our tears our like food for the ancestors.**” – Sobonfu Somé*

*“We must greet grief like a visitor that comes, who we must **all** attend to. The whole community must gather to share and witness the grief. Healing happens from witnessing and acknowledging your deepest pain, and by giving it a container for expression.” – Sobonfu Somé*

“What we haven’t grieved burdens our communities. Like a tapestry with a thread broken. Unexpressed grief crystalizes in our bodies causing sickness and numbing our creativity and joy. In our culture we translate depression as drowning under the weight of grief.” — Sobonfu Somé

In Sobonfu’s world No grief is personal grief...all grief is collective. When grief comes to one, they say, grief has come to visit us...And all must gather to welcome it.

“Another world is possible. Let’s allow our grief to radicalize us in the way we inhabit our imaginations to seed the future we want for our children and descendents. Call on your ancestors to offer courage and fortitude to grant us a glimpse of what lies behind the rubble. Ask those unseen what might sprout from the compost of these past failures.” – Rowan White

“Grief ripens us: it pulls up from the depths of our souls what is most authentic in our beings. It is the broken heart, the part that knows sorrow, that is capable of genuine love.” – Francis Weller

*“Grief work is soul work. Grief is truly an emotion that arises from the soul. It requires courage to face the world as it is and not turn away to not burrow into a hole of comfort. Grief exposing the truth of our need for others. **Grief reveals our undeniable bond with the world.**” – Francis Weller*

GRIEF POEMS

The Healing Time

by Pesha Gertler

Finally on my way to yes
I bump into
all the places
where I said no
to my life
all the untended wounds
the red and purple scars
those hieroglyphs of pain
carved into my skin, my bones,
those coded messages
that send me down
the wrong street
again and again
where I find them
the old wounds
the old misdirections
and I lift them
one by one
close to my heart
and I say holy,
Holy.

The Thing Is

by Ellen Bass

To love life, to love it even
when you have no stomach for it
and everything you've held dear
crumbles like burnt paper in your hands,
your throat filled with the silt of it.
When grief sits with you, its tropical heat
thickening the air, heavy as water
more fit for gills than lungs;
when grief weights you down like your own flesh
only more of it, an obesity of grief,
you think, How can a body withstand this?
Then you hold life like a face
between your palms, a plain face,
no charming smile, no violet eyes,
and you say, yes, I will take you
I will love you, again.

Bearing Witness

by Laura Weaver

Sometimes we are asked to stop and bear witness:
this, the elephants say to me in dreams
as they thunder through the passageways
of my heart, disappearing
into a blaze of stars. On the edge
of the 6th mass extinction, with species
vanishing before our eyes, we'd be a people
gone mad, if we did not grieve.

This unmet grief,
an elder tells me, is the root
of the root of the collective illness
that got us here. His people
stay current with their grief--
they see their tears as medicine--
and grief a kind of generous willingness
to simply see, to look loss in the eye,
to hold tenderly what is precious,
to let the rains of the heart fall.

In this way, they do not pass this weight on
in invisible mailbags for the next generation
to carry. In this way, the grief doesn't build
and build like sets of waves, until,
at some point down the line--
it simply becomes an unbearable ocean.

We are so hungry when we are fleeing
our grief, when we are doing all
we can to distract ourselves
from the crushing heft of the unread
letters of our ancestors.
Hear us, they call. Hear us.

In my dreams, the elephants stampede
in herds, trumpeting, shaking the earth.
It is a kind of grand finale, a last parade

of their exquisite beauty. See us, they say.
We may not pass this way again.

What if our grief, given as a sacred offering,
is a blessing not a curse?
What if our grief, not hidden away in corners,
becomes a kind of communion where we shine?
What if our grief becomes a liberation song
that returns us to our innocence?
What if our fierce hearts
could simply bear witness?

The Unbroken

by Rashani Rea

There is a brokenness
out of which comes the unbroken,
a shatteredness
out of which blooms the unshatterable.
There is a sorrow
beyond all grief which leads to joy
and a fragility
out of whose depths emerges strength.
There is a hollow space too vast for words
through which we pass with each loss,
out of whose darkness we are sanctioned into being.
There is a cry deeper than all sound
whose serrated edges cut the heart
as we break open
to the place inside which is unbreakable
and whole
while learning to sing.

Adrift

by Mark Nepo

Everything is beautiful and I am so sad.
This is how the heart makes a duet of
wonder and grief. The light spraying
through the lace of the fern is as delicate
as the fibers of memory forming their web
around the knot in my throat. The breeze
makes the birds move from branch to branch
as this ache makes me look for those I've lost
in the next room, in the next song, in the laugh
of the next stranger. In the very center, under
it all, what we have that no one can take
away and all that we've lost face each other.
It is there that I'm adrift, feeling punctured
by a holiness that exists inside everything.
I am so sad and everything is beautiful.

What if instead of grief...

by Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

What if instead of grief...
we call it pollination,
a process through which we realize
the gold of our hearts spills out
and if we are to survive as a species,
it requires we somehow exchange
this gold with each other—all our hearts
splayed open, all our hearts needing
what the other hearts have.
It's messy. Vulnerable.
And this is how we go on.
Your grief. My grief.
The quiet buzz of conversation.
This splitting open. This spilling.
This sharing with each other

No Matter What They Say

by Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

You do not have to get over it.
You will carry your grief
and be carried by loss
in any way the carrying happens.
As if you had a choice.
Grief builds rooms inside you
no one else will ever see,
rooms with doors
only you can pass through
filled with songs or silence
only you can hear.
Rest here. Or dance here.
Shout. Or whisper. Rise
like milkweed seeds on the wind.
Or lie. Here, you can only do it right.
Here, there are no other eyes
or ears to tell you what to do
or how long it will take
or what choices to make.
And if you are weeping, weep.
And if you are dry, you are dry.
The rest of the world
can talk about stages
of grief and how it should be,
but you, you do not have to listen.

The Prayers

by Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

When I asked the world to open me,
I did not know the price.
When I wrote that two-word prayer in the sand,
I did not know loss was the key,
devastation the hinge,
trust was the dissolution
of the idea of a door.
When I asked the world to open me,
I could never have said yes to what came next.
Perhaps I imagined the waves
knew only how to carry me.
I did not imagine they would also pull me under.
When I asked the world to open me,
I had not imagined drowning
was the way to reach the shore.
The waves of sorrow dragged me down
with their tides of unthinkable loss.
The currents emptied my pockets
and stripped me of my ideas.
I was rolled and eroded
and washed up on the sand
like driftwood—softened.
I sprawled there and wept,
astonished to still be alive.
It is not easy to continue to pray this way.
Open me.
And yet it is the truest prayer I know.
The other truest prayer,
though sometimes it frightens me,
is Thank you.

For When People Ask

by Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

I want a word that means
okay and not okay,
more than that: a word that means
devastated and stunned with joy.

I want the word that says
I feel it all all at once.

The heart is not like a songbird
singing only one note at a time,
more like a Tuvan throat singer
able to sing both a drone
and simultaneously
two or three harmonics high above it—
a sound, the Tuvans say,
that gives the impression
of wind swirling among rocks.

The heart understands swirl,
how the churning of opposite feelings
weaves through us like an insistent breeze
leads us wordlessly deeper into ourselves,
blesses us with paradox
so we might walk more openly
into this world so rife with devastation,
this world so ripe with joy.