



holding what hurts

TOOLS FOR
LIVING WITH GRIEF

[HTTP://ANGIESCHILATY.COM](http://angieschilaty.com)

WELCOME TO THE COURSE

Whether you are here to learn more about the mechanics of grief, are currently navigating your own personal journey, or are seeking meaningful ways to talk about loss with family members, you are in the right place.

Grief is a universal human experience, yet it is often one of the most isolating challenges we face. Our goal in this course is to move beyond the silence and the clinical jargon, creating a space where we can speak openly about how grief impacts our minds and our bodies.

This is a partnership. We will explore how your nervous system responds to major life transitions and how to identify the physical language of your own healing process. My hope is that through this content, you will find both clarity and comfort, ultimately discovering that while your reality has shifted, you are inherently strong and capable of navigating these storms.

Thank you for trusting me to walk alongside you as you cultivate your own resilience. Let's begin.

With care,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angela Schilaty". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of each word being capitalized and larger than the others.

Angela Schilaty
Registered Mental Health Counselor Intern
Supervised by Cheyenne Starczewski, MH18469

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WHEN TO SEEK EXTRA SUPPORT

While grief is a natural part of life, you are not meant to walk this path alone. There are times when the intensity of the experience requires professional intervention. Please reach out for support if you notice:

- Thoughts of hurting yourself or feeling that life is not worth living.
- Persistent substance misuse as a way to numb or cope.
- Severe isolation or an inability to function in daily life.
- An inability to accept the reality of the loss.
- Constant, overwhelming despair or frequent panic attacks.
- Avoiding all reminders of the loss to the point that it restricts your ability to live.

Please Note: This program is for educational purposes and is not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or therapy. If you are in an extreme emotional storm right now, please reach out to a trusted friend or use these vital resources:

Emergency: 911

Florida 211: Dial 2-1-1

National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: 988 (Call or Text)

Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741

CONTENTS

01 DEFINING GRIEF

02 WHAT GRIEF FEELS LIKE

03 THE ROLLER COASTER OF GRIEF

04 SELF COMPASSION

05 HONORING YOUR CAPACITY

01

MODULE 1

DEFINING GRIEF

UNDERSTANDING THE MANY FACES OF GRIEF

Grief appears in our lives at unexpected times and in unexpected places, taking many forms. Chances are, you have already experienced a loss. While we often associate grief with death, it also encompasses a wide spectrum of life-altering experiences:

- **Relational Changes:** The end of a marriage or partnership, the drifting apart of a long-term friendship, or the pain of estrangement from a family member.
- **Life Transitions:** Children moving out of the home, retiring from a career that defined your identity, or the loss of a pet who served as a constant companion.
- **Major Life Moves:** Leaving behind a community, a home you loved, or the familiar rhythms of a city you once called your own.
- **Physiological & Identity Shifts:** Adjusting to a chronic illness, a permanent change in physical ability, or the internal process of navigating midlife and the changing expectations of your own aging body.
- **Symbolic Losses:** The loss of a dream for your future, the loss of financial security, or the loss of a sense of safety after a traumatic event.

Beyond the primary grief that follows an immediate loss, there are "**secondary losses**" – the ripple effects that alter your day-to-day life because of that primary event.

Grief takes many forms beyond what is publicly acknowledged. While **disenfranchised grief** involves losses that are minimized or unrecognized by others, **ambiguous loss** occurs when a person is physically present but emotionally absent, or when a situation remains in flux, denying us closure. Furthermore, many experience **anticipatory grief** – the emotional, often complex process of mourning a loss before it has actually occurred, such as during a long-term illness or a major life transition, which can leave us in a state of suspended sorrow while waiting for the inevitable.

Regardless of the specific nature of your grief, your experience is valid and real.

02

MODULE 2

IDENTIFYING HOW GRIEF SHOWS UP

Grief is a full-body experience, not just an emotional one. Because it is *somatic*, you may notice significant physical and mental shifts as you process loss. Understanding these responses is a vital step toward self-compassion.

Common Manifestations

- **Sleep & Appetite:** You may experience insomnia, frequent waking, exhaustion, or changes in your relationship with food.
- **The "Loop":** Mentally replaying events of the loss, searching for answers.
- **Bartering & Magical Thinking:** Attempting to regain control through internal deals, such as, "If I do X, the outcome will change."
- **Physical Sensations:** A heavy feeling in your chest, shortness of breath, muscle tension, digestive issues, or persistent fatigue.

Tuning into Your Body's Language

To move from experiencing these sensations to understanding them, practice somatic awareness. When you feel overwhelmed, pause and check in with your physical self using these questions:

- Where do you feel the weight of your grief? Is it in your jaw, shoulders, or chest?
- Do you notice a specific tightness or constriction in your chest or throat? When you are caught in "The Loop," what happens to your breathing? Are your breaths shallow? Are you holding your breath?
- Where do you carry your tension? When you are exhausted, which muscles ache or lock up first?
- Can you identify a physical "check-in" point? When you notice your body tensing, can you use that as a cue to take a deep, grounding breath?

By identifying how grief manifests, you can treat these sensations as signals that your body is working hard to process this transition. You are inherently strong and capable, and listening to these physical cues is a powerful way to honor your process.

03

MODULE 3

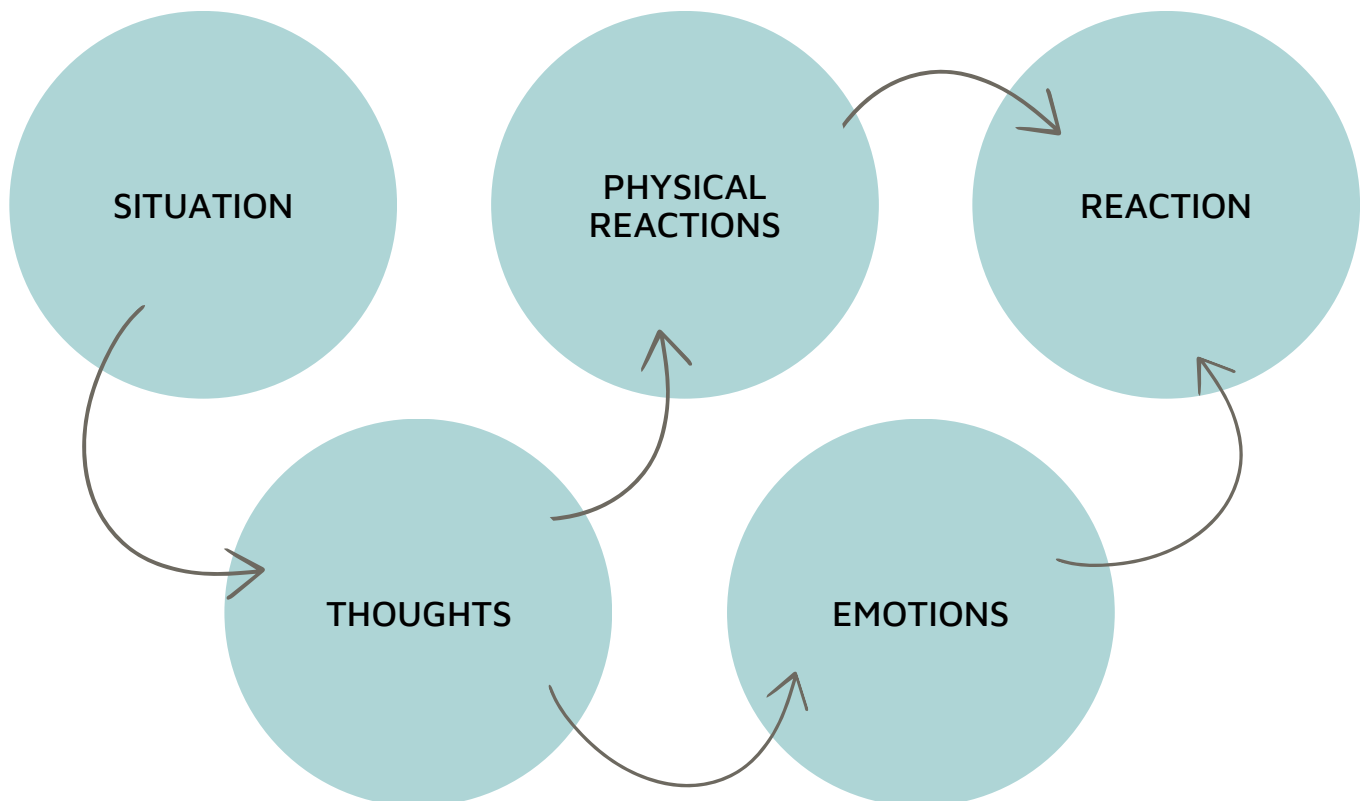
ROLLER COASTER OF GRIEF

Grief is like a roller coaster – full of unexpected twists, sharp turns, and sudden drops. You may feel a glimmer of hope one moment and be in a deep valley the next. These disorienting shifts can make you feel like you are "losing it," but please know this: you are not crazy; you are grieving.

When your "normal" is replaced by a difficult new reality, your mind and body need time to adjust. Grief is not a straight path from A to Z; it zigs, zags, and loops back on itself. Neurologically, your nervous system is working hard to remap how to live without what was lost. This biological adjustment is exactly what makes the process feel so physically and emotionally taxing.

Mapping Your Ride

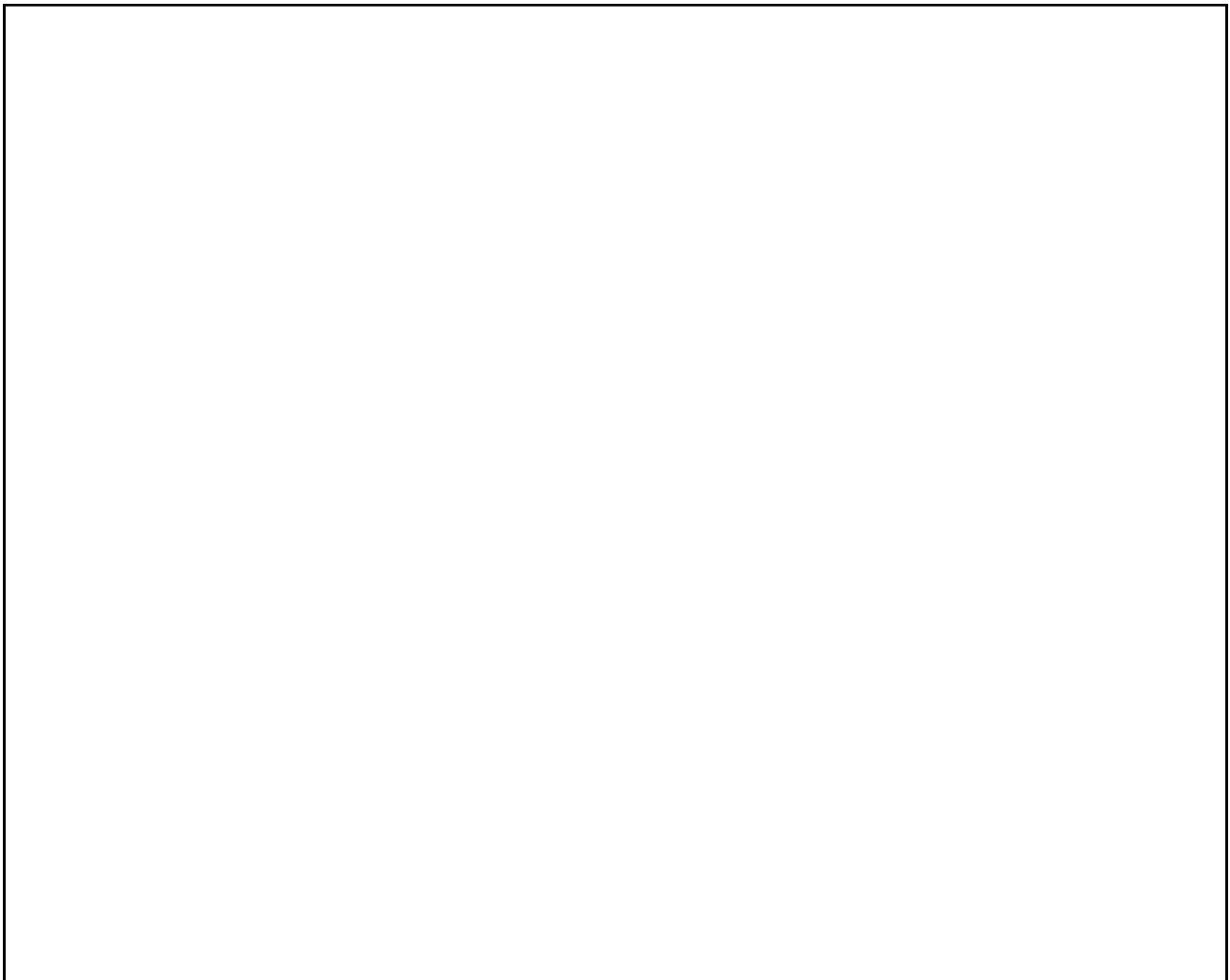
Understanding the mechanics of your grief helps you regain a sense of agency.



DRAW YOUR OWN TRACK

On this page, we will draw your personal map to visualize how you have been navigating your recent experiences. This is not about artistic skill; it is about externalizing your internal state to better understand your unique landscape.

1. **Draw Your Track:** Trace a line representing your experience over the last few weeks. Include the steep climbs (moments of hope or clarity) and the sudden drops (valleys of intensity).
2. **Mark the "Loops":** Draw a loop where you felt you circled back to a feeling you thought you had already moved past.
3. **Label the "Drops":** At your lowest points, jot down the event that occurred and the physical sensation you felt in your body.
4. **Pinpoint the Peaks:** Mark where you felt moments of steadiness or connection and note what was happening during those times.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to draw their personal map. It occupies the lower half of the page.

EXPLORING YOUR GRIEF MAP

When the ride feels like it's moving too fast, what is one 'safety brake' you have used in the past that helped you feel more grounded?"

As you look at your map, how does your current sense of self-compassion change the way you view your strength during that time?

REMEMBER, YOU ARE INHERENTLY STRONG AND CAPABLE. MAPPING YOUR JOURNEY IS A POWERFUL WAY TO HONOR YOUR PROCESS AND ACKNOWLEDGE THAT YOU ARE NAVIGATING A COMPLEX, DEMANDING TRANSITION.

04

MODULE 4

SELF COMPASSION

When intense grief hits, our internal dialogue might turn critical. Sometimes we judge our reactions, feel guilty for not being "strong" enough, or spiral into self-blame. Instead of fighting these waves with judgment, we can choose to pause and shift our perspective.

To begin healing, try offering yourself the same warmth and patience you would provide a dear friend or child in pain. You aren't trying to "fix" the grief, but rather learning to accompany yourself through it.

Reframing Your Narrative:

- **Release Judgment:** Instead of "I shouldn't feel this way," try, "It makes sense that I feel this way given what I have been through."
- **Release Guilt:** Replace "I am failing at this" with, "My grief is a testament to the love I hold. I am allowed to be human."

Practices for the Ride:

Grief and self-compassion can coexist. You do not have to be perfect to be kind to yourself.

- **The "Check-in" Pause:** When you feel overwhelmed, STOP. Place a hand on your heart, take a slow breath, and acknowledge: "This is a really hard moment, and I am here with myself."
- **The Comforting Voice:** Speak to yourself as you would to someone you cherish. Use your own name and offer gentle reassurance: "[Name], I know this hurts so much. I am right here with you."
- **Accept the Waves:** Give yourself permission to feel your sadness without the added pressure of trying to "stop" it or "do it better."

You are navigating a difficult, new landscape. Be gentle with the pace of your own healing.

SELF COMPASSION

How can I replace my current inner narrative with a perspective that honors my humanity?

In what ways does practicing self-compassion serve as a model for those around me to handle their own challenges with grace?

REMEMBER: YOU ARE NOT JUST NAVIGATING THIS SEASON - YOU ARE GROWING THROUGH IT, ONE SMALL, INTENTIONAL STEP AT A TIME.

05

MODULE 5

HONORING YOUR CAPACITY

We intuitively understand that a single tablespoon cannot hold a gallon of milk, just as we wouldn't expect a toddler to run a marathon. Yet, when it comes to our own lives – especially during seasons of grief – we often demand that we carry an ocean's worth of weight with only a teaspoon of capacity.

Recognizing your current limits isn't a sign of weakness; it is a vital act of self-preservation. Understanding and managing your capacity is not just helpful – it is an essential human reality.

You cannot hold everything at once, and when you are running on empty, your capacity naturally shrinks. Viewing these periods of limited capacity not as a failure, but as a signal to be patient and kind with yourself, is the first step toward true healing.

Outsourcing for Essentials

To prioritize what matters most, you may need to clear your plate. Outsourcing tasks is not an admission of weakness; it is a strategic choice to protect your energy. Ask yourself: What can I pause, delegate, or release right now to create necessary space?

Recharging Your Capacity

Your capacity is not fixed; it fluctuates based on how you care for yourself. By acknowledging your limits and identifying what you need to nurture your well-being, you create the space necessary to honor your grief and care for your own needs.

You do not have to carry it all. By respecting your limits and actively recharging, you are not just surviving this season – you are honoring your own journey toward healing and the depth of what was lost.

HONORING YOUR CAPACITY

What is one small, manageable change I can make today to honor my current capacity and create more space for myself?

When I feel my capacity shrinking, what is the most effective way I can advocate for my needs or delegate a task to support my own well-being?

GRANT YOURSELF THE GRACE TO MOVE AT YOUR OWN PACE; YOUR CAPACITY IS NOT A MEASURE OF YOUR WORTH, BUT A SIGNAL OF YOUR NEEDS.

NEXT STEPS IN YOUR HEALING

Thank you for taking the time to work through this workbook. Together, we have defined what grief is, explored how it physically and emotionally manifests, and navigated the unpredictable "roller coaster" of the grieving process. We have also practiced the vital skills of self-compassion and learning to acknowledge your own limits.

By honoring your journey and the depth of what was lost, you have taken significant steps toward nurturing your well-being. Please remember that you do not have to walk this path alone.

I am very proud of you and the steps you are taking to heal.

You are navigating a lot of big shifts, and you are doing an incredible job finding your way. Please remember that you don't have to do this alone. I provide mental health counseling services and accept insurance, and I also have a sliding scale fee structure to ensure that those who need support are able to access it. If you ever feel like you need a little extra support navigating these shifts, please reach out.

With Care,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angela Schilaty". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of each word being capitalized and larger than the others.

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