

INFUSING POLITICAL GRIEF COUNSELING INTO PRACTICE

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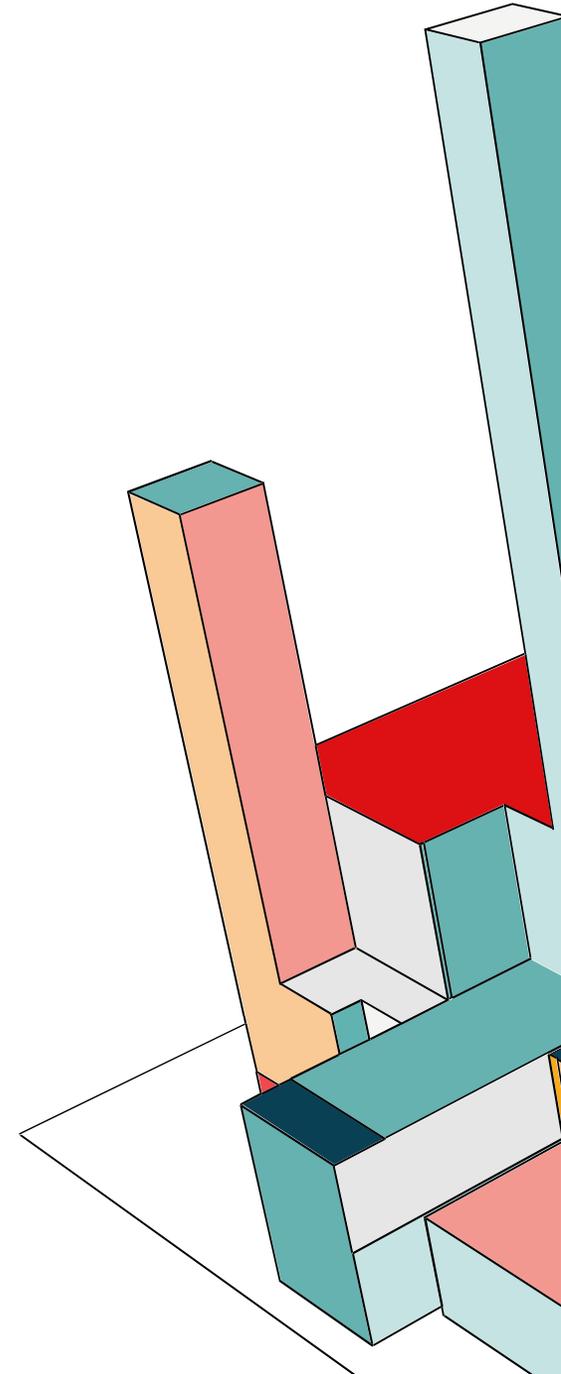
University of Denver

Colorado Counseling Association 2025 Conference



AGENDA

- Understanding Political Grief
- Trauma-informed/invested Lens
- Ethical Considerations & Counselor Self-Management
- Strategies to Foster Resilience & Empowerment
- Comments & Curiosities



ABOUT US

Jillian M. Blueford

She/Her/Hers

Clinical Associate Professor, Counseling Psychology

Program Director, School Counseling

Licensed Professional Counselor

Fellow in Thanatology



ABOUT US

Stacy A. Pinto

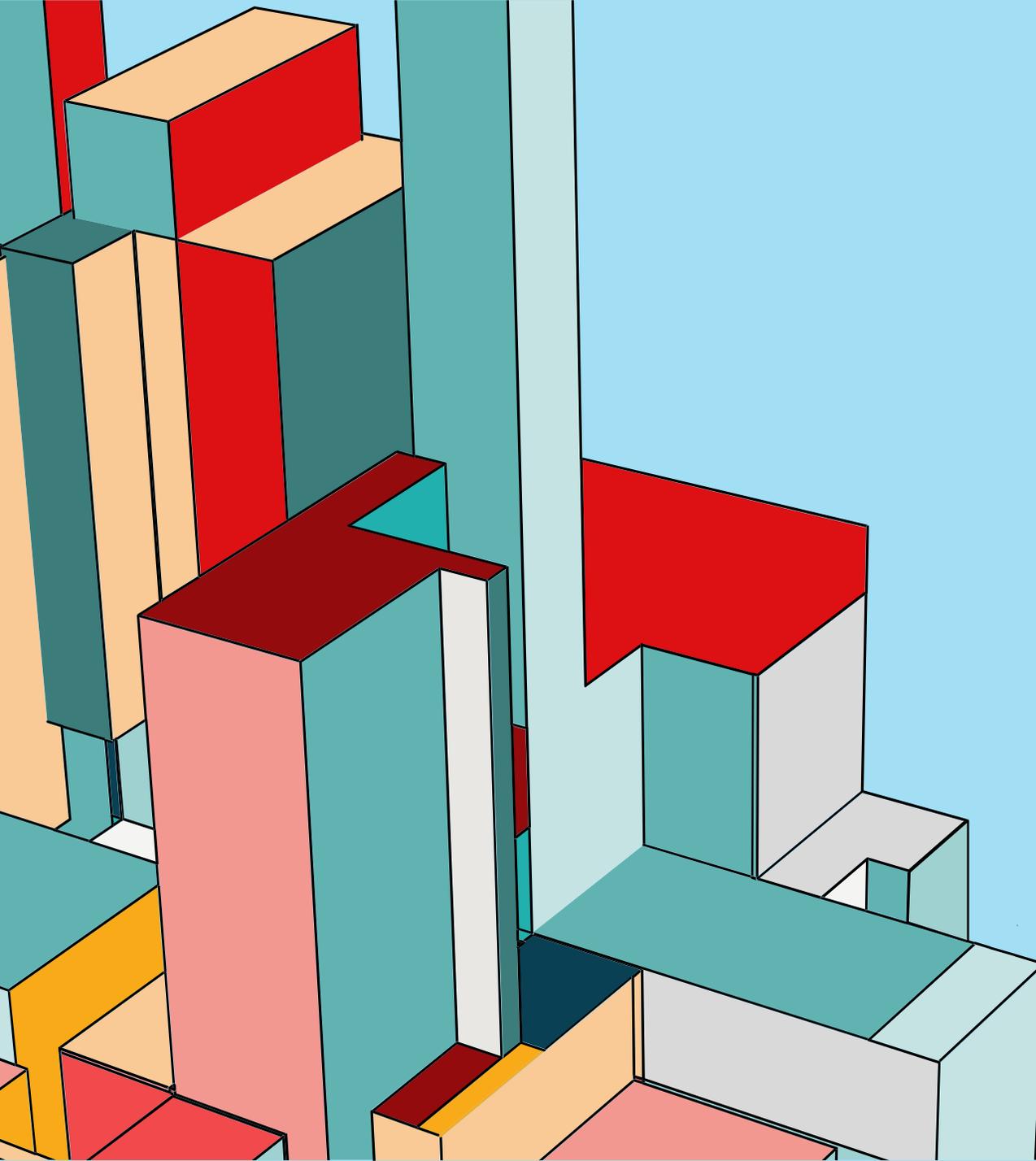
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Department Chair, Counseling Psychology

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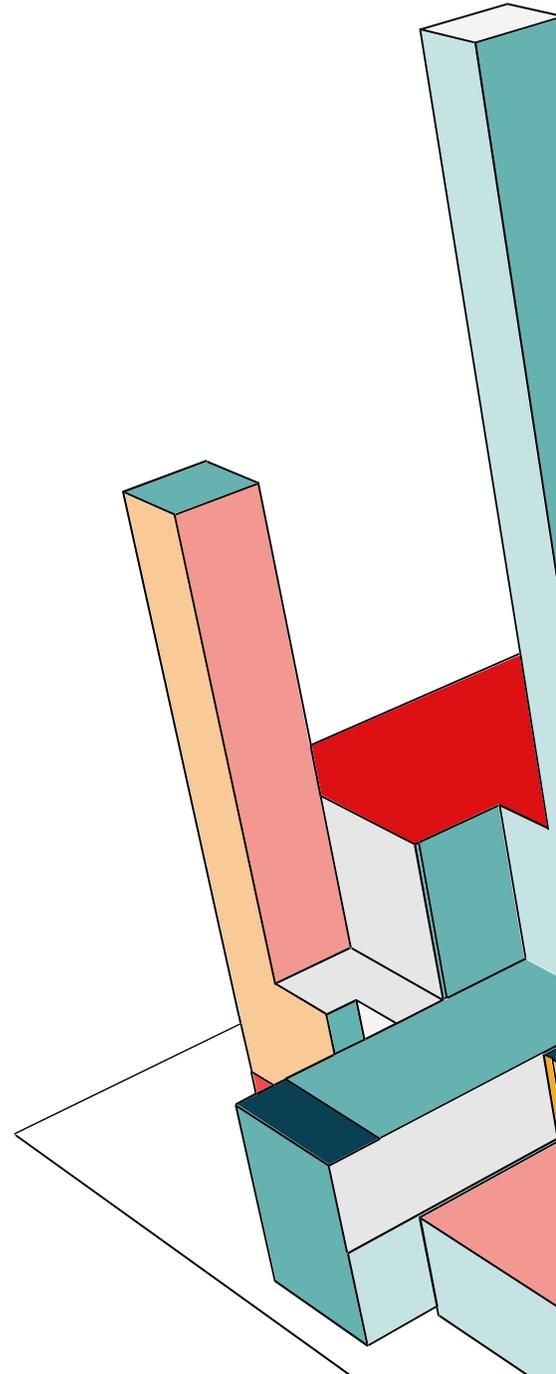


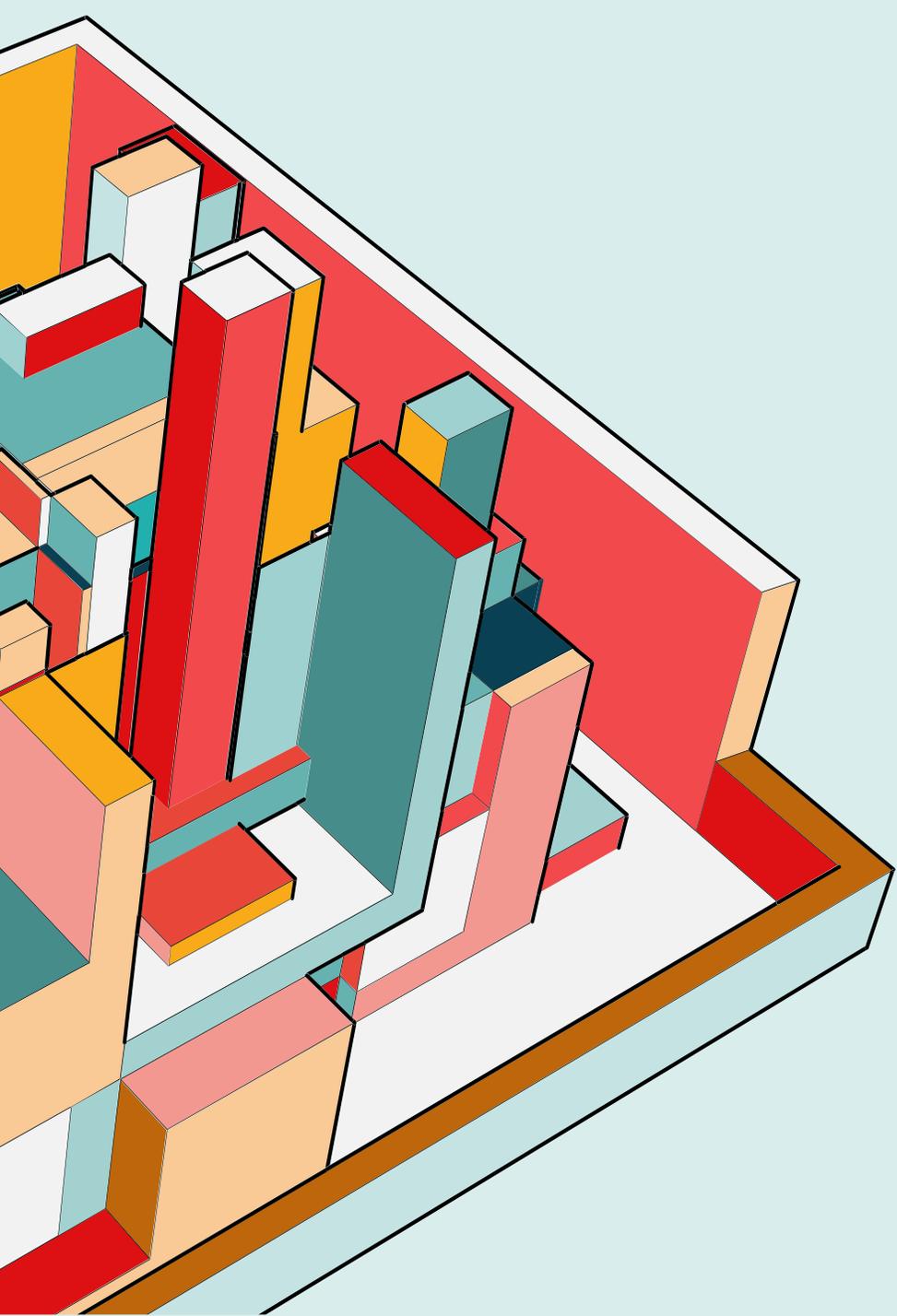


**WHAT ABOUT
YOU?**

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Recognize political grief in client distress.
- Identify strategies to address political grief with trauma-invested care.





UNDERSTANDING POLITICAL GRIEF

POLITICAL GRIEF

Grief

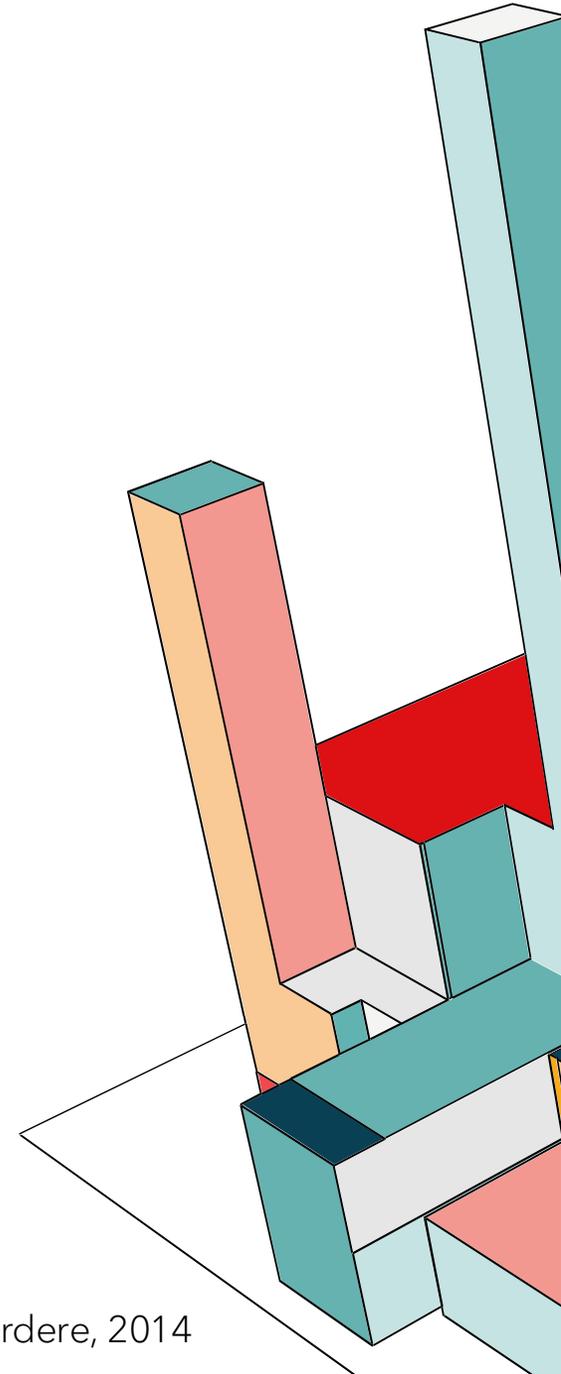
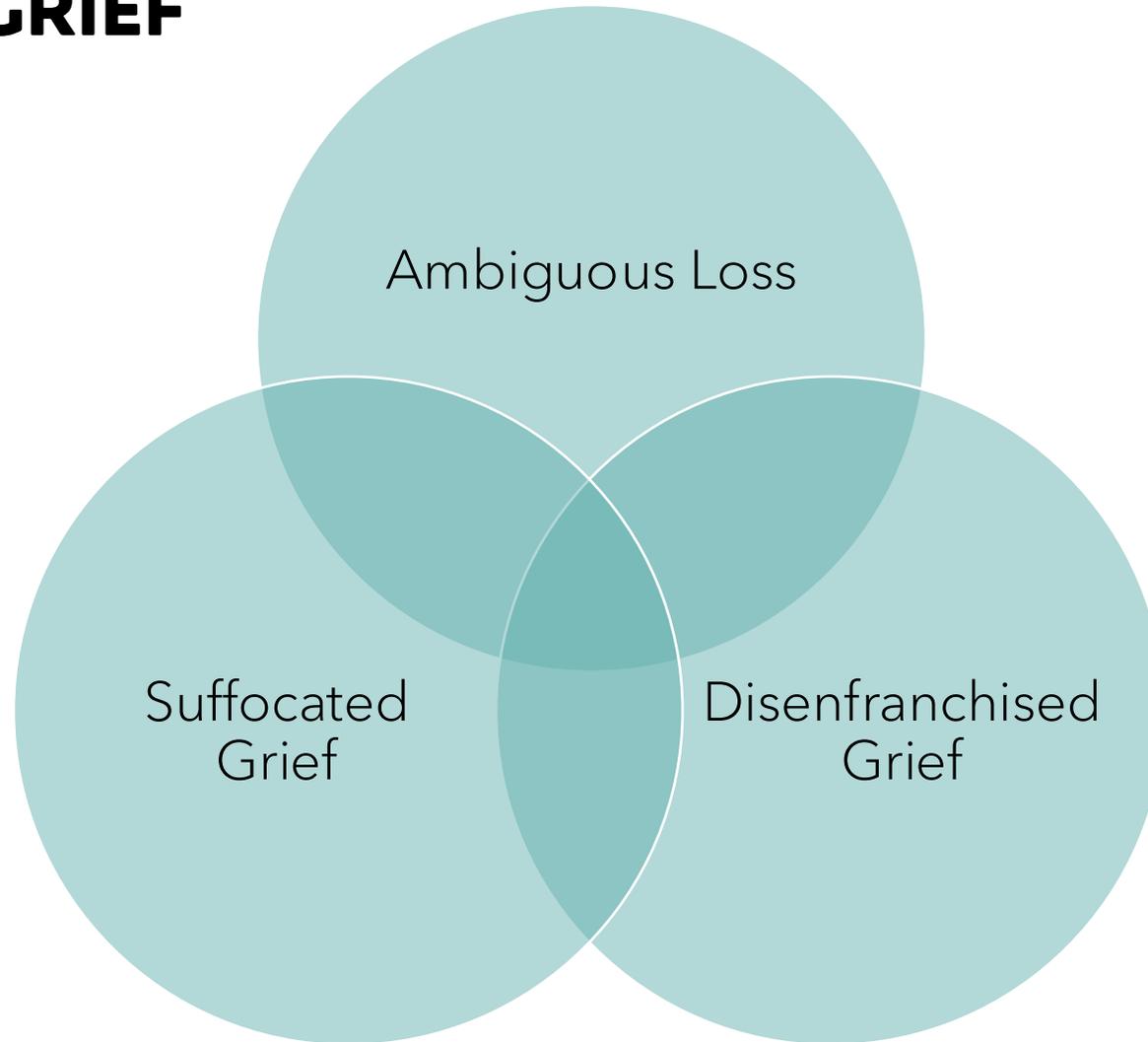
- A response to a meaningful loss; occurs simultaneously in the present and the future.
- Inclusive of death and non-death losses.
- Involves secondary losses (e.g., change in housing, new school, community, loss of stability and routine)

Political Grief

Collective Grief: Loss of shared assumptions and values due to sociopolitical events.

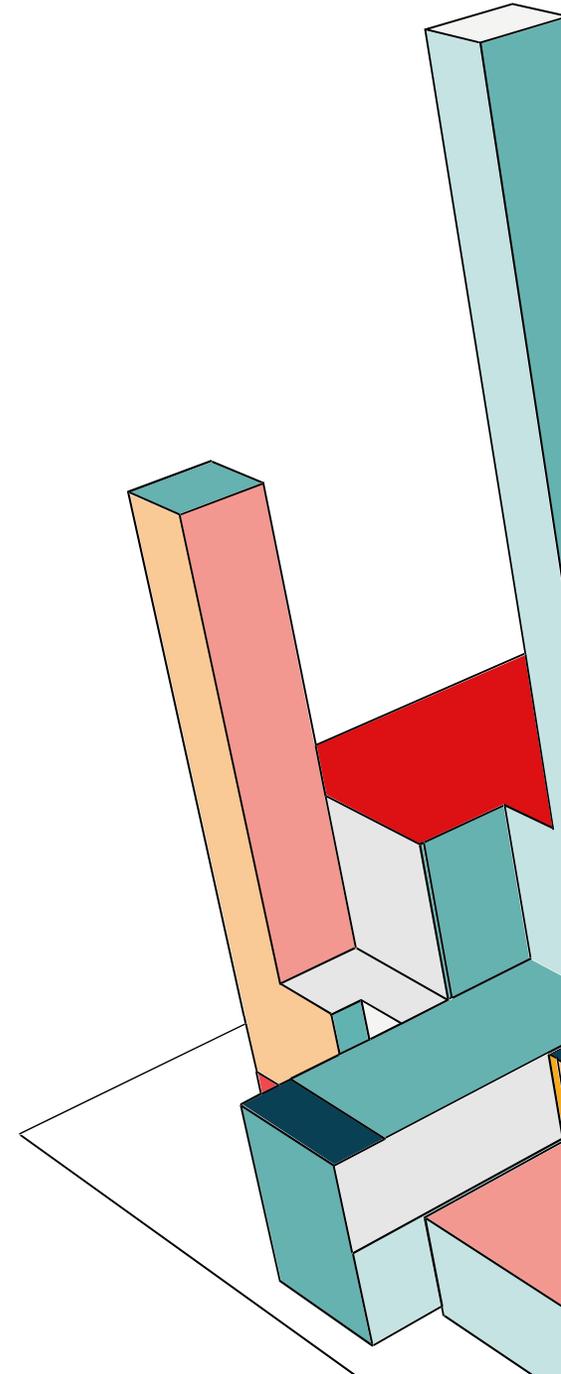
Individual Impact: Direct losses from political policies, ideologies, and oppression.

POLITICAL GRIEF



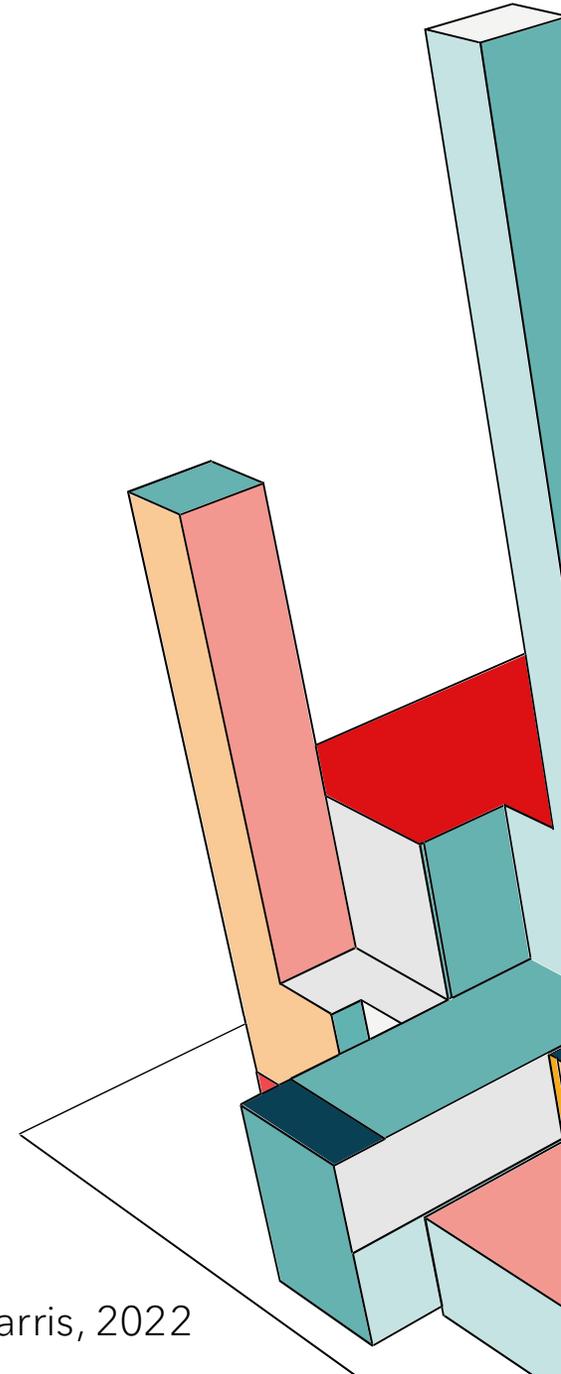
POLITICAL GRIEF

- Common activating events:
 - Policy/leadership changes
 - Threats (perceived or real) to communities
 - Loss in trust of governing bodies
- This is not new!
 - Historical events continue to have a lasting impact the way we thrive and survive
 - We now have language to describe these experiences



ASSUMPTIVE WORLD

- Core beliefs about safety, logic, and identity
- Can be shattered by significant sociopolitical events, leading to grief
- Grief is an adaptive process to rebuilding our assumptive world.
 - Scars can be constant reminders



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How often are your clients bringing up political or societal issues?



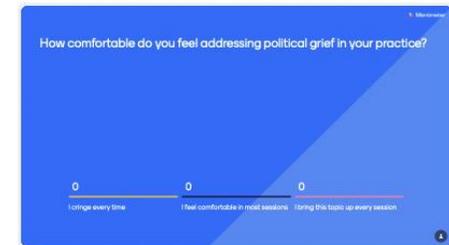
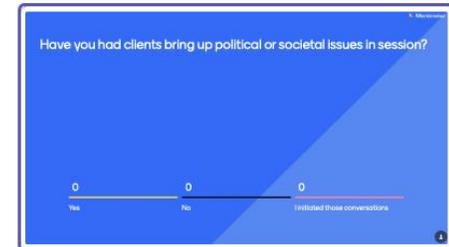
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Mentimeter

How comfortable do you feel addressing political grief in your practice?



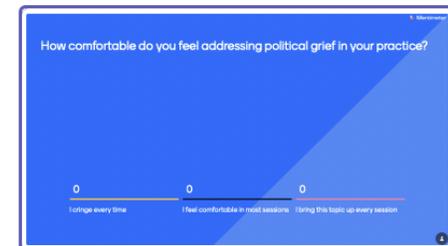
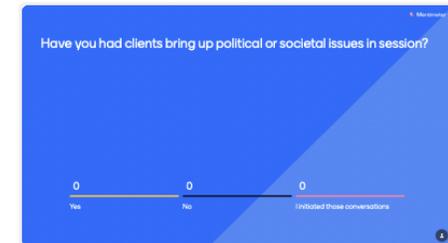
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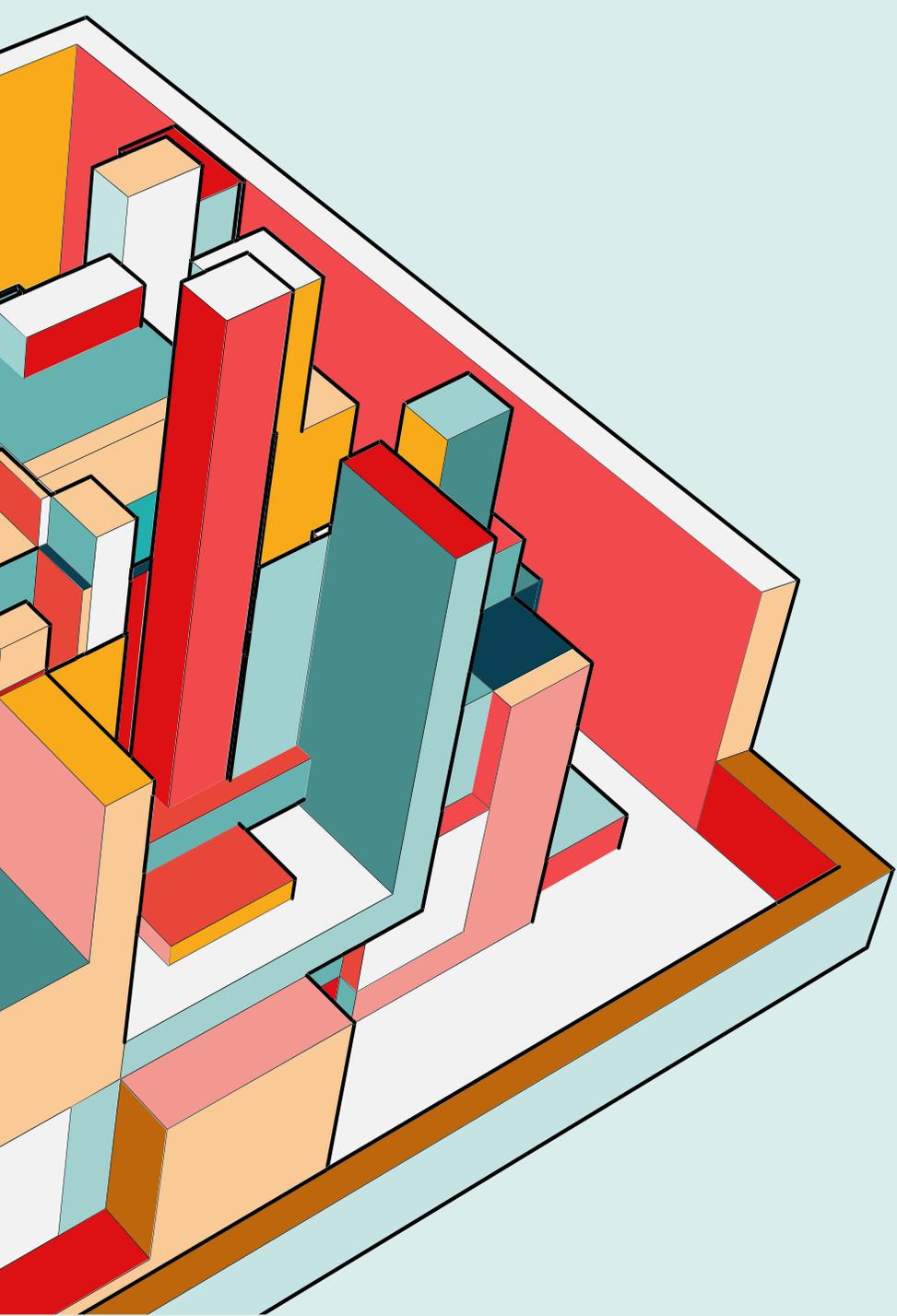
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TRAUMA-INFORMED/ -INVESTED LENS

TRAUMA-INFORMED LENS



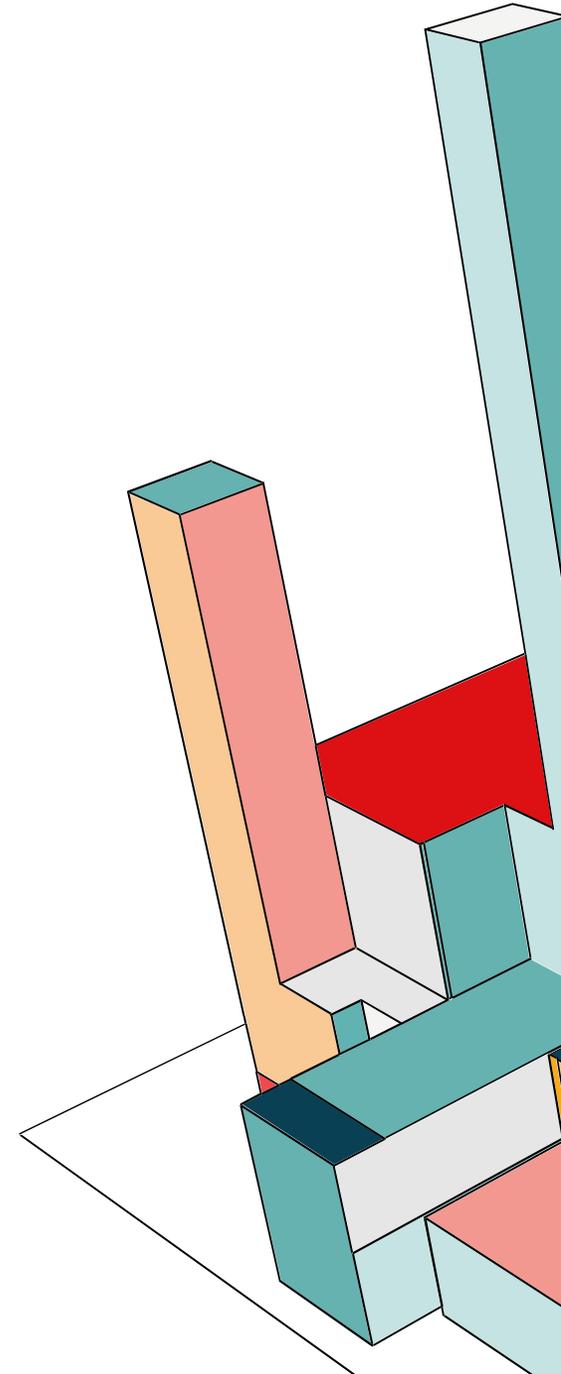
Recognizing Trauma in Political Grief

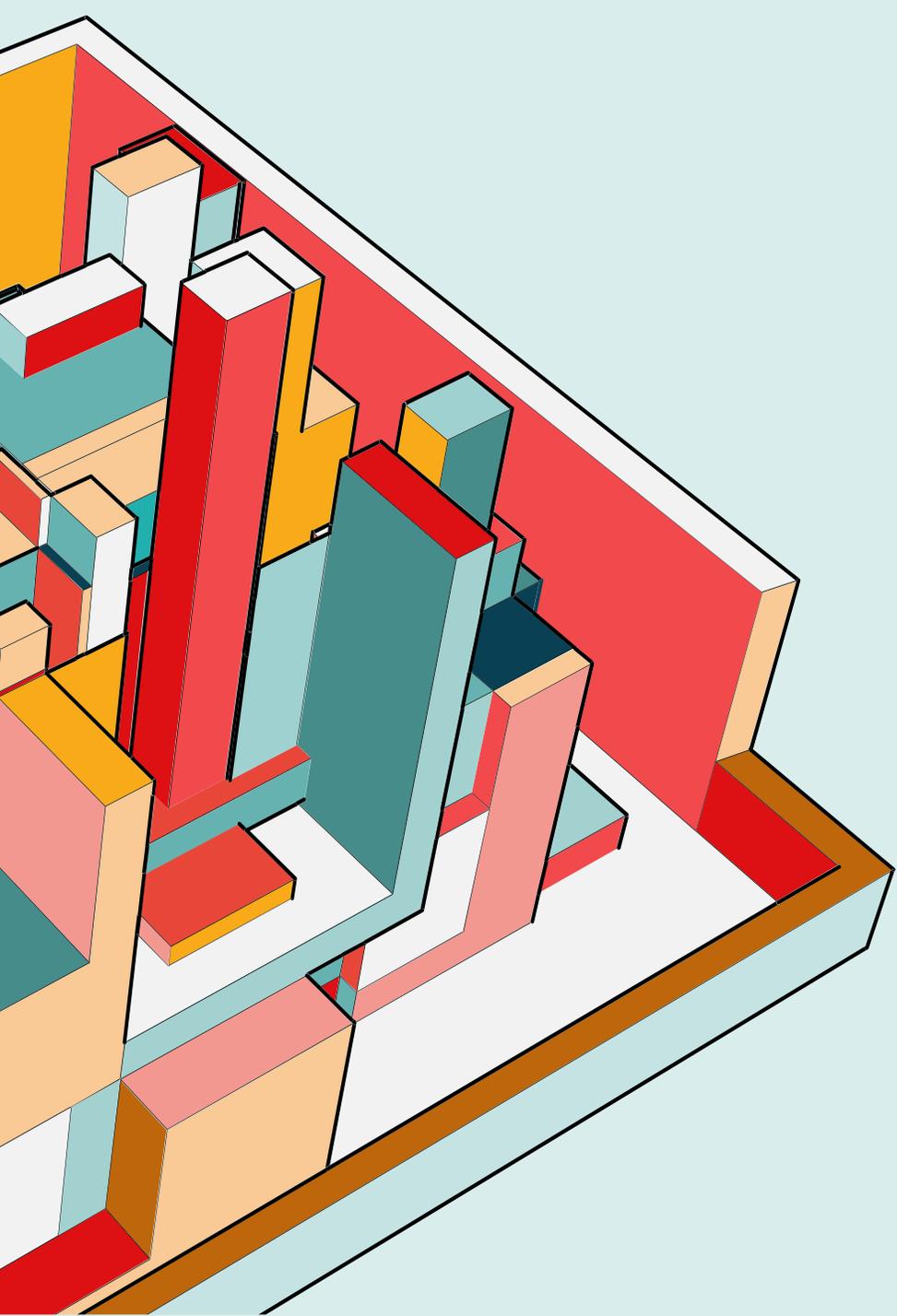
- Somatic cues
- Signs of hypervigilance or shutdown
- Disruptions in family dynamics
- Constantly struggling with their assumptive world
- Repetitive losses



SOCIAL IMPACTS OF POLITICAL GRIEF

- Strained or damaged relationships
 - Internet (e.g., trolls, cyberbullying)
 - Close family and friends
 - Colleagues
 - Role models
- Support systems are crucial to responding to trauma. But what happens when that system is gone?





ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS & COUNSELOR SELF-MANAGEMENT

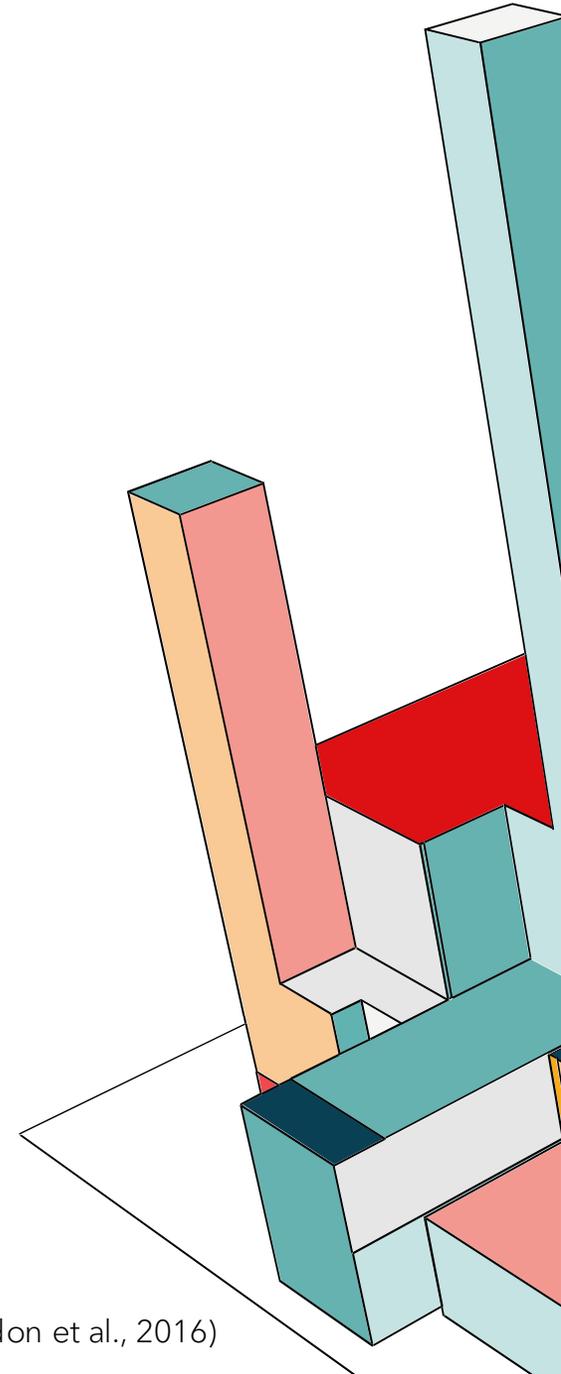
ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Balancing Validation & Neutrality

- Maintaining professional boundaries while acknowledging your clients' experiences of harm
- Agreement with clients is not necessary to provide support

Being Confident in Your Dialogues

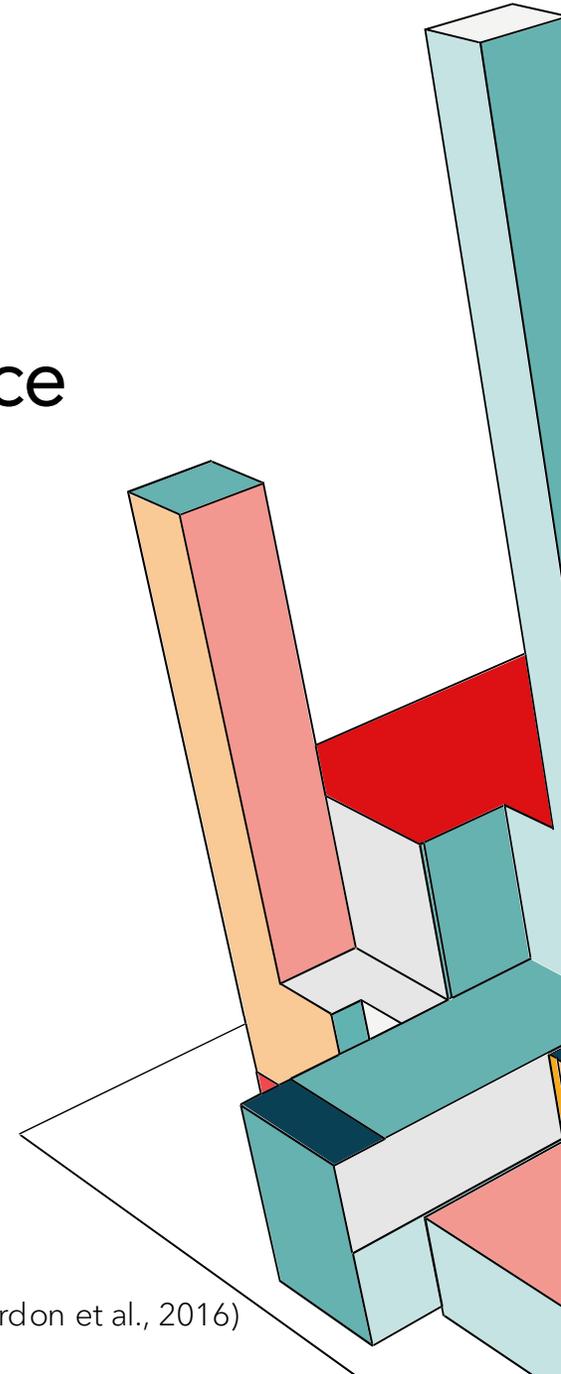
- Encouraging your clients (and yourself) to be mindful consumers of information
 - Critically reflect on your sources of information
 - Set and adhere to boundaries related to your engagement with information

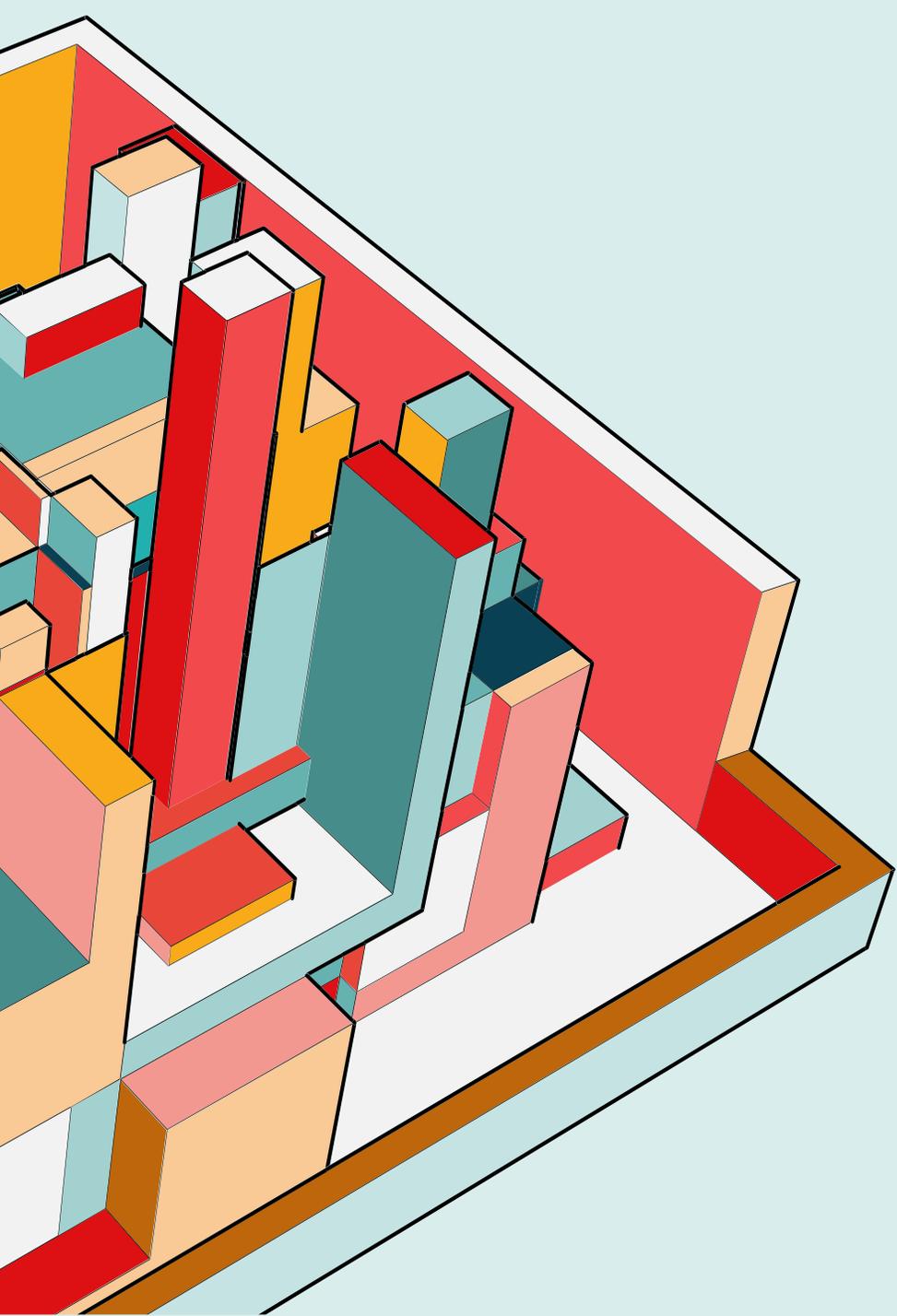


ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Compartmentalizing & Avoiding Countertransference

- Self-Disclosure – When clinically appropriate, integrate your identities and values into the therapeutic session
- Self-Care – Take the time to engage and release authentic feelings to trusted individuals
- Supervision/Consultation – Consult to discuss gaps and need for more education

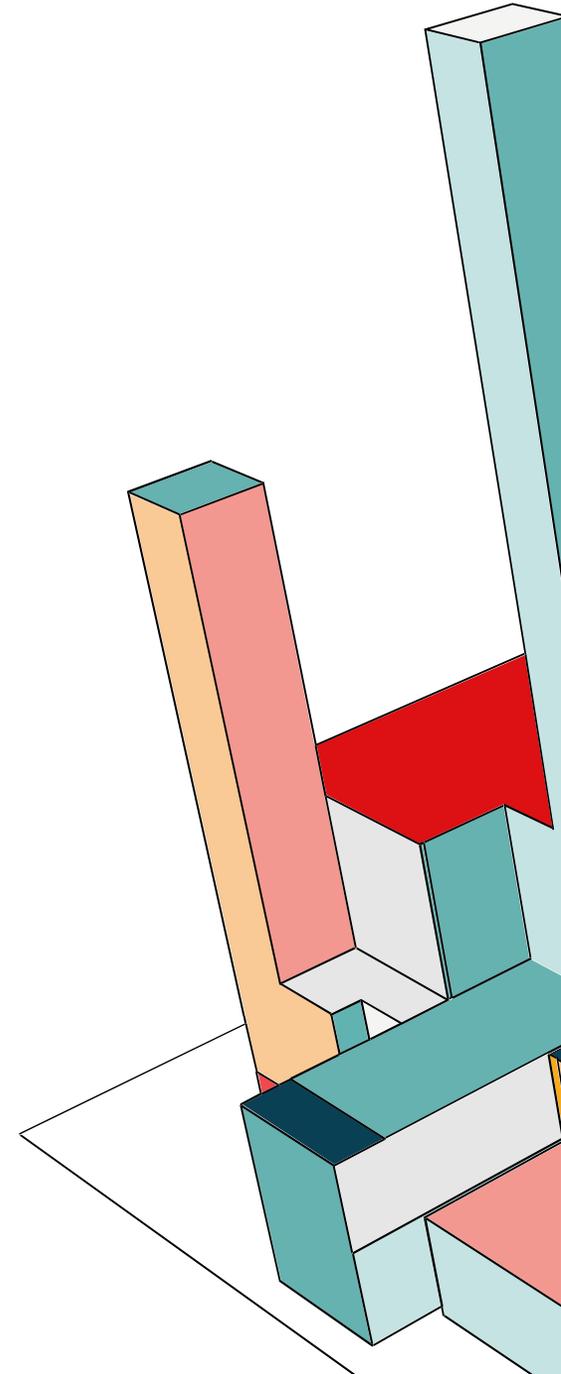




STRATEGIES TO FOSTER RESILIENCE & EMPOWERMENT

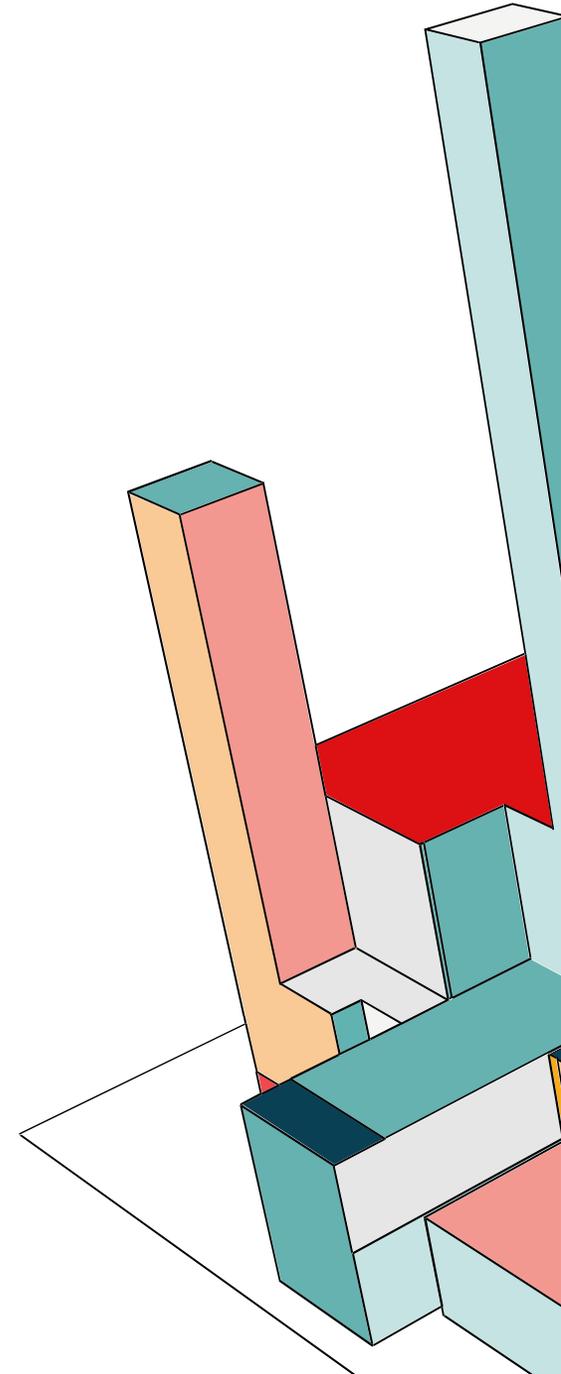
REBUILDING OUR ASSUMPTIONS

- Changing expectations of self and others
- Building protective walls
- Tolerating ambiguity
- Developing biases



FOSTERING RESILIENCE & EMPOWERMENT

- Narrative therapy for meaning-making
 - What's the story clients wish they could have?
- Education in self-advocacy
 - Which systems are hardest for your clients to navigate?
- Skills for grounding and emotional regulation
 - When are they most likely to encounter their grief?
 - What are their creative outlets to express their grief?



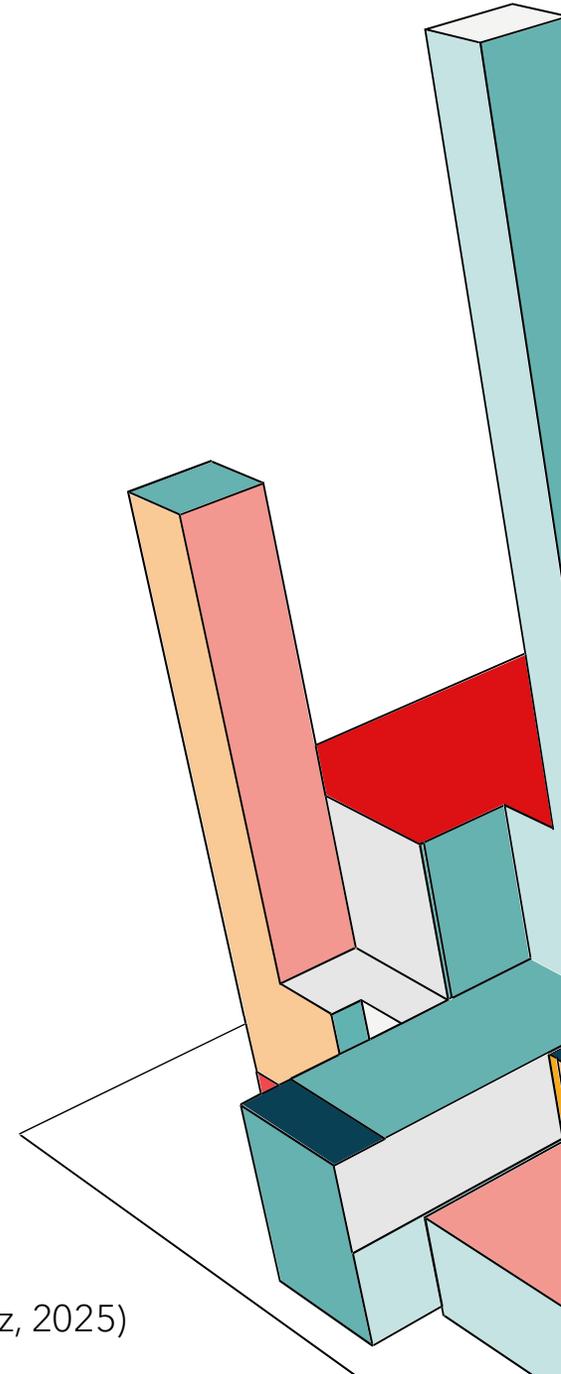
FOSTERING RESILIENCE & EMPOWERMENT

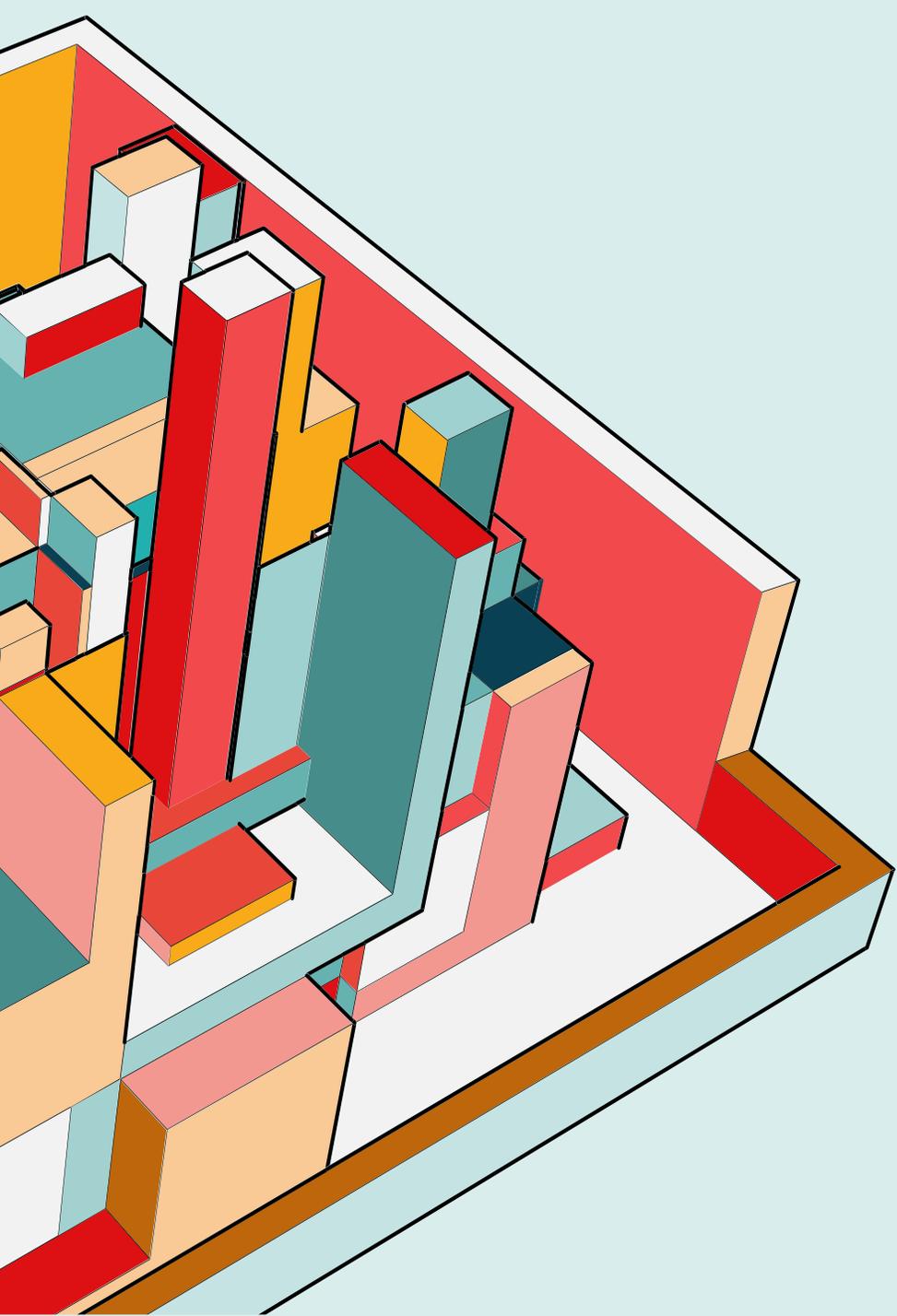
Implementing rituals

- Recognizing the loss(es) when others do not
- Can take place in private settings or with others
 - E.g., memorials, artwork, reflection, educating others

(Re) creating community

- Activism
- Joining like-minded organizations

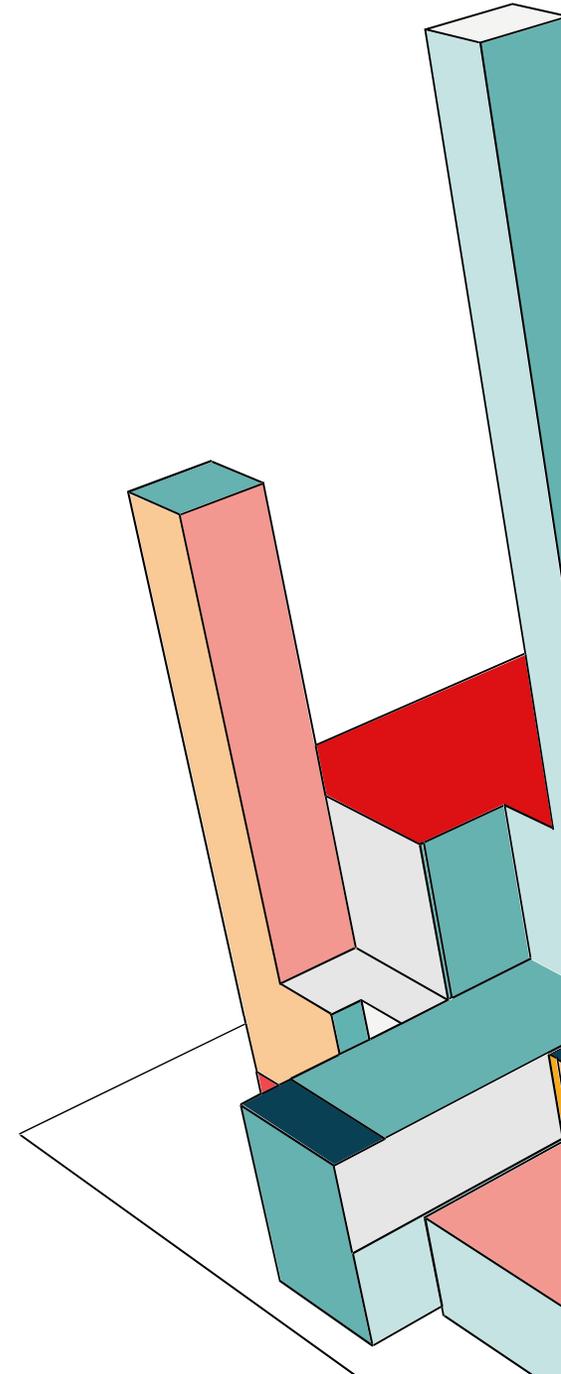




COMMENTS & CURIOSITIES

SUMMARY & TAKEAWAYS

- Political Grief, like all grief, evolves and can affect individuals differently
- Trauma can permeate throughout political grief, potentially hindering the grieving process
- Professional counselors can maintain ethical boundaries to create therapeutic conversations for all clients
- Intentional counseling approaches can foster resilience and empowerment



WHAT WILL YOU DO TODAY?

Identify one concrete action you will implement into your practice.

Share with a partner or small group.



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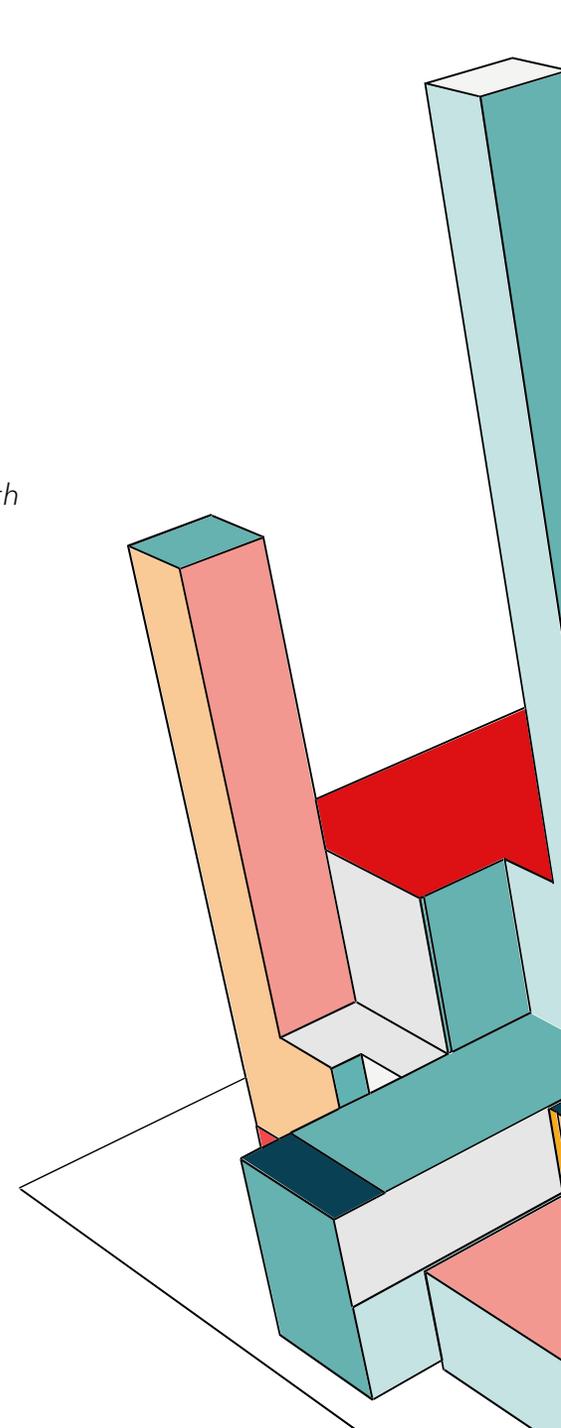
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THANK YOU!

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