



Grief Support and the Church: It takes more than prayer

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Who Am I & What Do I Do

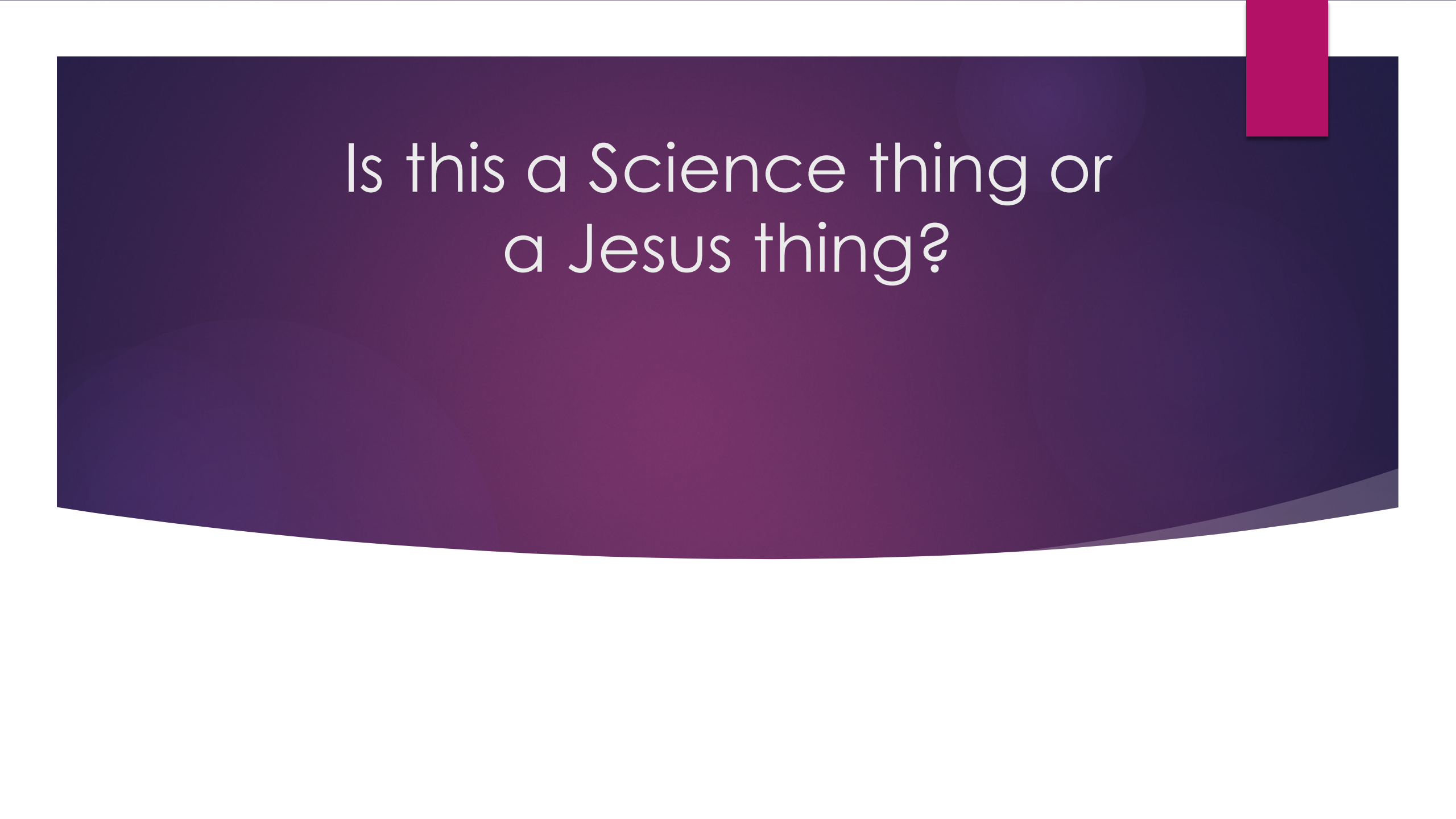


Objectives

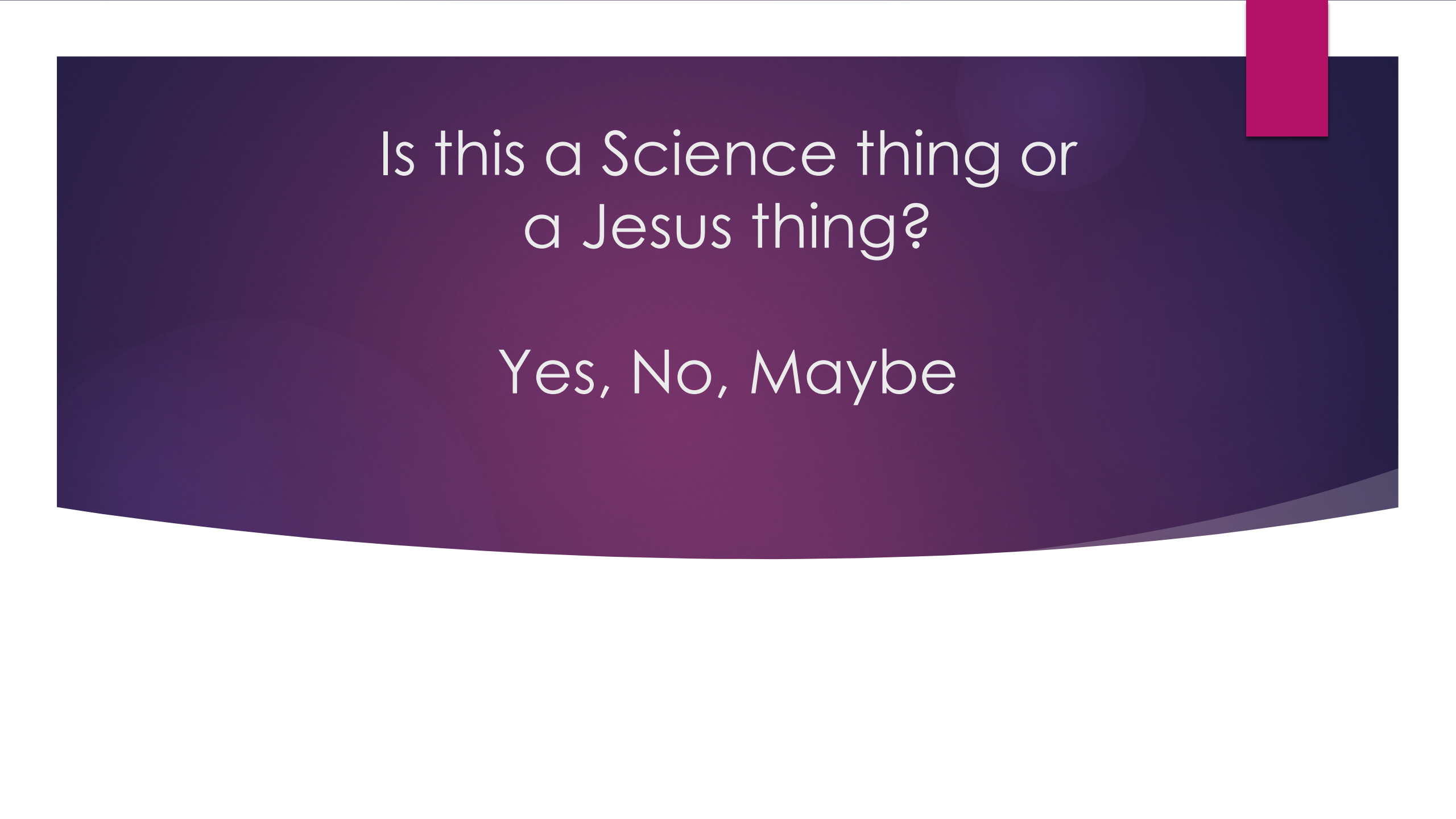
- ▶ Define terms associated with grief
- ▶ Review the history of faith-based grief support and beliefs
- ▶ Address painful faith-based responses to grief
- ▶ Discuss The 10 Touchstones of grief care
- ▶ The 6 needs of mourning



PowerPoint

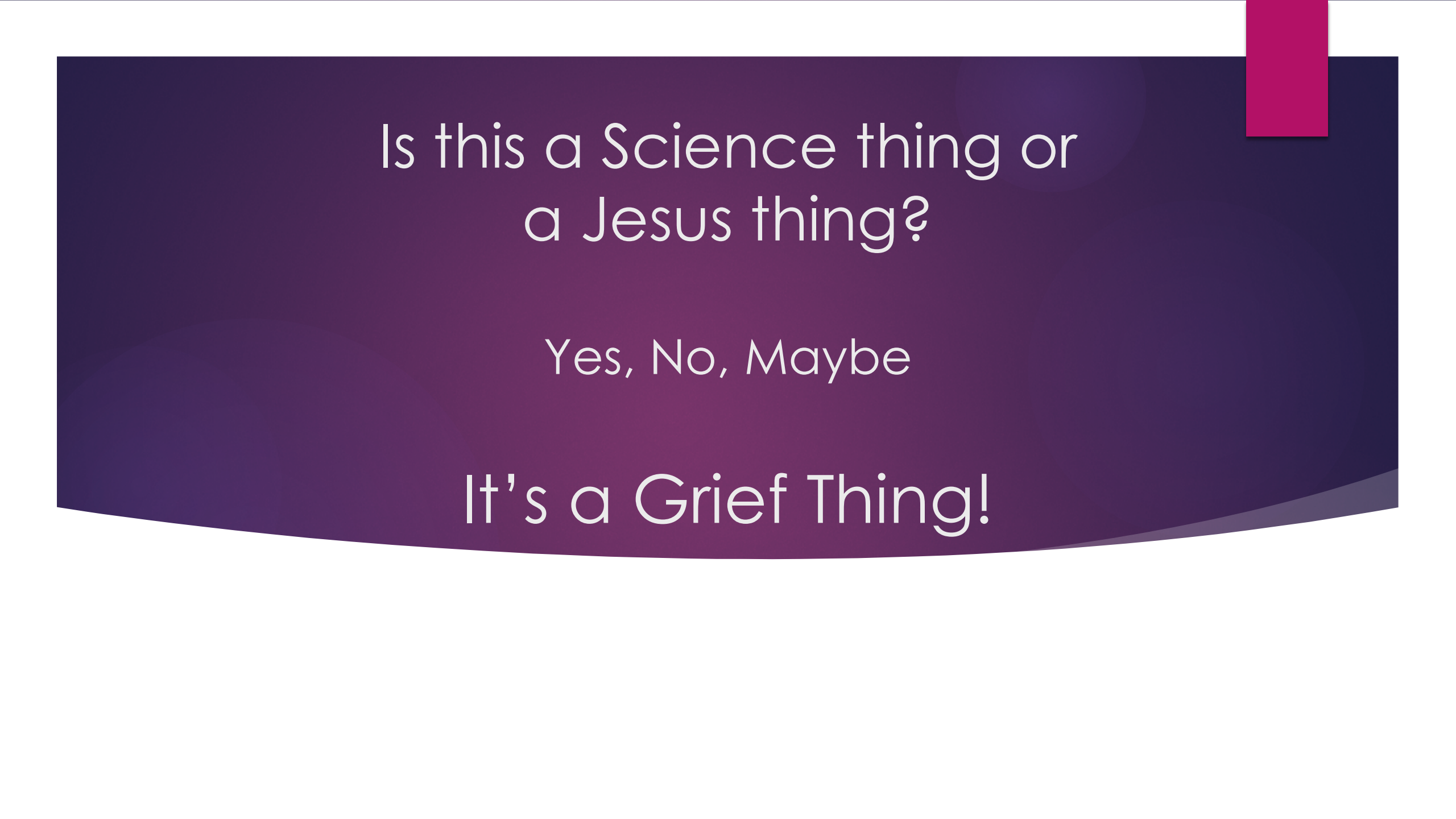


Is this a Science thing or
a Jesus thing?



Is this a Science thing or
a Jesus thing?

Yes, No, Maybe



Is this a Science thing or
a Jesus thing?

Yes, No, Maybe

It's a Grief Thing!

Definitions

- ▶ **Grief:** deep and moving distress caused by loss
- ▶ **Mourn:** to feel or express sorrow or grief, to grieve or lament for the dead
- ▶ **Prolonged grief disorder (DSM-5 tr):** defined as intense yearning or longing for the deceased (often with intense sorrow and emotional pain), and preoccupation with thoughts or memories of the deceased (in children and adolescents, this preoccupation may focus on the circumstances of the death)

Definitions

- ▶ **Stigmatized Loss:** losses typically not openly acknowledged, publicly mourned, or socially supported
- ▶ **Traumatic loss:** the loss of loved ones in the context of potentially traumatizing circumstances. Ex: homicide, suicide, accidents, natural disasters, and losses resulting from war and terror
- ▶ **Misconception:** a view or opinion that is incorrect based on faulty thinking or understanding

History of Faith Based Grief Support

GriefShare

- ▶ **Video seminar with experts:** Each week your GriefShare group will watch a video seminar featuring top experts on grief and recovery subjects. These videos are produced in an interesting television magazine format featuring expert interviews, real-life case studies, dramatic reenactments, and on-location video.
- ▶ **Support group discussion with focus:** After viewing the video, you and the other group members will spend time as a support group, discussing what was presented in that week's video seminar and what is going on in your lives.
- ▶ **Personal study and reflection:** During the week you will have the opportunity to use your workbook for further personal study of the grieving process and to help sort out your emotions through journaling. Your group will spend time discussing questions and comments from the workbook study.

History of Faith Based Grief Support

Shiva

- ▶ In Judaism, the first period of structured mourning is shiva. The word "shiva" has different meanings across different cultures and in Hebrew it means "seven." Shiva, as it relates to Jewish mourning, is the seven-day mourning period for the immediate family of the deceased which consists of spouse, child, parent or sibling.

Purpose of Shiva

- ▶ The primary purpose of the shiva tradition, or "sitting shiva," is to create an environment of comfort and community for mourners: It helps guide friends and family members through the loss of a loved one. Throughout the weeklong shiva period, mourners come together in one family's home to offer their condolences and support. Specific observances may vary depending on the Jewish community and its beliefs.

History of Faith Based Grief Support

Islamic Mourning Traditions and Customs

- ▶ Islamic mourning rituals include prayer, readings from the Qur'an and moments of private meditation and reflection upon the goodness of God and the brevity of life. While sorrow and tears are an expected response to the loss of a loved one, Muslims will strive to express grief in a reserved and dignified manner. Loud wailing or prolonged outbursts of grief would be considered inappropriate because they demonstrate a weakness of faith.

Comforting the Bereaved

- ▶ Condolences offered to those mourning the dead are considered valued acts of kindness. When offering expressions of sympathy and sorrow, it is also appropriate to remind those grieving of the shortness of life and that everything belongs to Allah. Emphasis can be placed upon the merciful nature of God and the hope that one day they will be reunited with the departed loved one. Offering condolences often takes place within the three-day period following the death, but it can be extended much longer depending on the circumstances of the family and the convenience of those coming from an extended distance.

History of Faith Based Grief Support

Buddhist Methods for Coping With Separation, Loss, and Grief

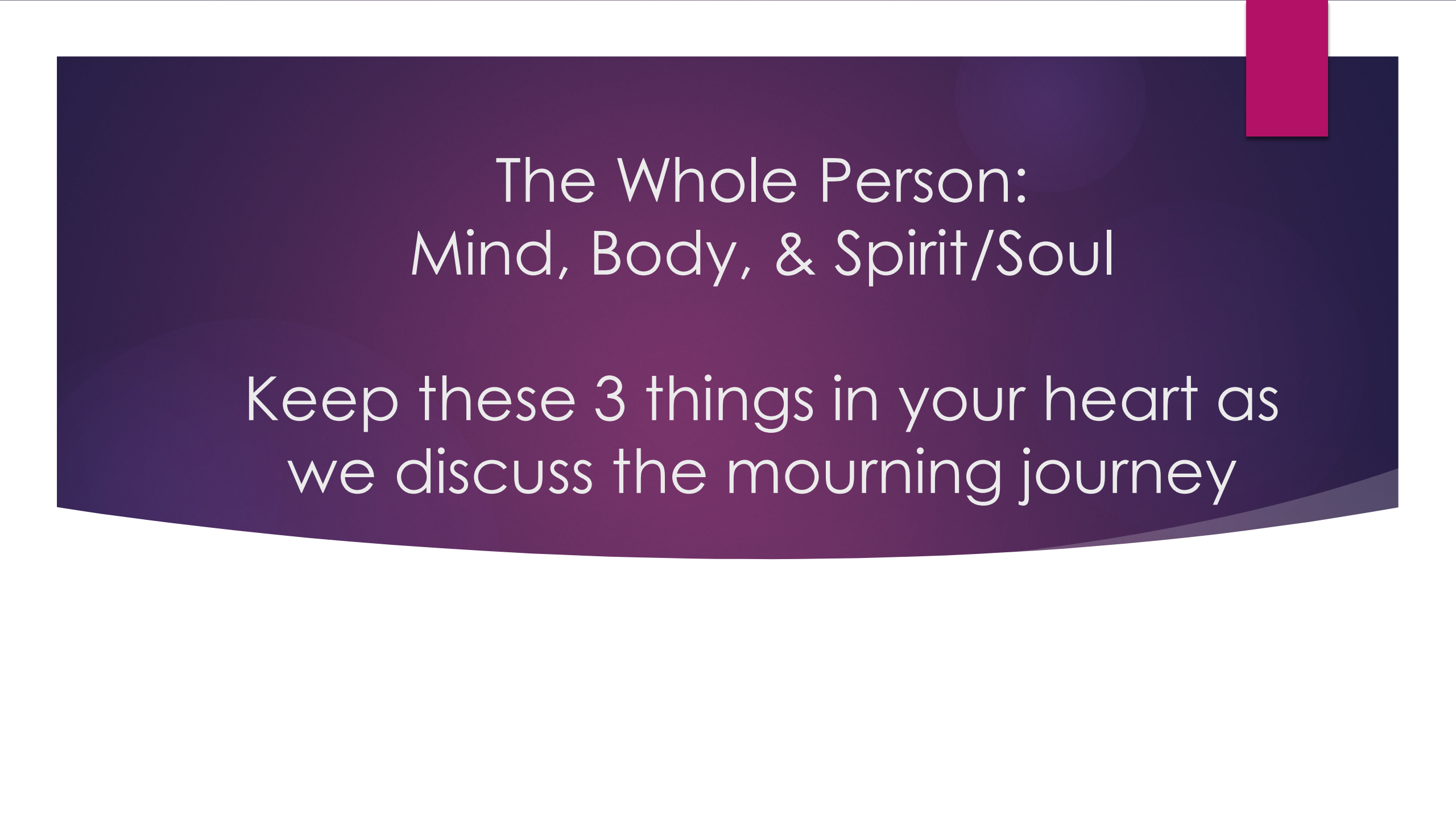
- ▶ I am not alone
- ▶ There are others who may be worse off than me
- ▶ I will survive; grief can be finished
- ▶ Suffering is like a disease we have all contracted
- ▶ Why do bad things happen to good people and good things to bad people?
- ▶ Death is certain; but its time is most uncertain
- ▶ White light visualization
- ▶ The Tonglen practice
- ▶ Don't Let Grief Become Self-Cherishing

(Wheel of Life Palliative Care Support Group: Hayagriva Buddhist Centre 2011)

History of Faith Based Grief Support

What about those who don't believe?

<https://www.npr.org/2013/01/16/168563480/after-tragedy-nonbelievers-find-other-ways-to-cope>



The Whole Person: Mind, Body, & Spirit/Soul

Keep these 3 things in your heart as
we discuss the mourning journey



Support Group Guide

“...if you are to be one of the group’s co-leaders, you should be in a place in your own grief journey where you have emerged from the wilderness and have successfully integrated the death into your life. If you are too early in your own grief journey, you are probably not ready yet to be an effective group facilitator.”

Basic Grief Support Group Guide

- ▶ Plan, Plan, and Plan again!
 - ▶ Research the need in your community (type of loss)
 - ▶ Find a **suitable** co-leader
 - ▶ Online or In-person (location)
- ▶ Closed-ended, with possibility of transitioning into open-ended
- ▶ 12 weeks/90 minutes/10 members
- ▶ Prescreen



Grief Support Group Lessons Learned

Find a suitable co-leader!



Grief Support Group Lessons Learned

Find a suitable co-leader!

Facilitation Skill Training!



Grief Support Group Lessons Learned

Find a suitable co-leader!

Facilitation Skill Training!

The Griever is the Expert!

Grief Support Group Lessons Learned

- ▶ Plan, but be Flexible!
 - ▶ Know your Body of Knowledge/Curriculum
 - ▶ In-person is best for suicide support
- ▶ Closed-ended with offer to repeat group a 2nd time
- ▶ 10 weeks; 90 minutes + 15min before & after; 8 members
- ▶ Prescreen, but once again be flexible

Understanding Your Grief: 10 Essential Touchstones for Finding Hope and Healing Your Heart



Understanding Your Grief: Touchstone 1

Open to the Presence of your loss



Open to the Presence of your loss

“When God talks, and we attentively listen, wonderful beautiful terrifying things happen.”

Dr. Curt Thompson “Anatomy of the Soul”

- ▶ Setting your intention to heal (p. 22)
- ▶ Befriending your grief
- ▶ No reward for speed
- ▶ Attention, Compassion, and Expression
- ▶ Grief is not a disease
 - ▶ They are not sick, they are in pain
 - ▶ treating vs companioning

Understanding Your Grief: Touchstone 2

Dispel Misconceptions about grief



Misconceptions:

Grief and Mourning are the Same Thing

- ▶ Grief is what happens **To** us (internal)
- ▶ Mourning is what we **Do** with our grief (external)

- ▶ Being upset and openly mourning means you are being “weak” in your faith

Understanding Your Grief: Touchstone 3

Embrace the Uniqueness of your grief



Embrace the Uniqueness of your grief

Invitation to Explore “The Whys”

- ▶ Relationship with the person who died
- ▶ The circumstances of the death
- ▶ People in your life
- ▶ Your unique personality
- ▶ The unique personality of the person who died
- ▶ Cultural background

Embrace the Uniqueness of your grief

Invitation to Explore “The Whys”

- ▶ Religious or Spiritual background
- ▶ Other crises or stresses in life right now
- ▶ Experiences with loss and death in the past
- ▶ Physical and mental health
- ▶ Gender
- ▶ Ritual and funeral experience

Understanding Your Grief: Touchstone 4

Explore your Feelings of Loss





Activity Time:

Helpful and Unhelpful?

They Said What!

- ▶ “I forgive you for being such a B!@tch. I know you’re grieving.”
- ▶ “Everything happens for a reason.”
- ▶ “God needed him more than you do.”
- ▶ That my loved one who wasn’t baptized was floating around in “purgatory.”
- ▶ “God never gives you more than you can handle.”

(64 of the Worst Things Ever Said to a Griever)

They Said What!

- ▶ “If my child died, I would be happy because I would know he is in heaven.”
- ▶ “You should be rejoicing!”
- ▶ “At least he made it to 92.”
- ▶ [When telling someone how I believe seeing cardinals is a sign] “That’s not theologically possible.”

“But it Hurts so Much”

- ▶ Only way to lessen your pain is to move toward it, not away from it.
- ▶ The cycle of experiencing a feeling in grief:
 - ▶ feel it,
 - ▶ acknowledge it,
 - ▶ befriend it,
 - ▶ share it,
 - ▶ have it witnessed and empathized with by others.
- ▶ Repeat...

Understanding Your Grief: Touchstone 5

Understand the 6 Needs of Mourning



The 6 Central Needs of Mourning

- ▶ 1. Acknowledge the reality of the death
- ▶ 2. Embrace the pain of the loss
- ▶ 3. Remember the person who died
- ▶ 4. Develop a new self-identity
- ▶ 5. Search for meaning
- ▶ 6. Let others help you – Now and Always

Understanding Your Grief: Touchstone 6

Recognize Your Are Not Crazy



Recognize Your Are Not Crazy

- ▶ Time Distortion
 - ▶ “Time is an Asshole” G. from drug related loss group
- ▶ Self-Focus
- ▶ Rethinking and Retelling your story
- ▶ Sudden Changes in Mood
- ▶ Powerless and Helplessness

Recognize Your Are Not Crazy

- ▶ Griefbursts
- ▶ Crying and Sobbing
- ▶ Linking Objects
- ▶ Identification Symptoms Physical Illness
- ▶ Suicidal Thoughts
- ▶ Drug or Alcohol Use

Recognize Your Are Not Crazy

Dreams and Mystical Experiences

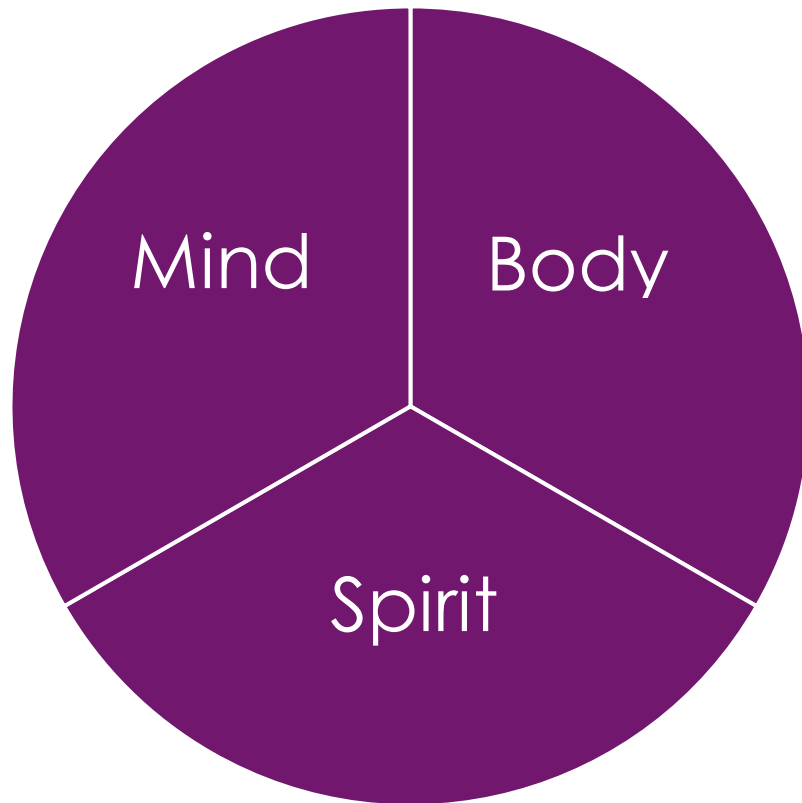
Any Examples?

Understanding Your Grief: Touchstone 7

Nurture Yourself



Nurture Yourself



“If your compassion does not include yourself, it is incomplete.”

Jack Kornfield

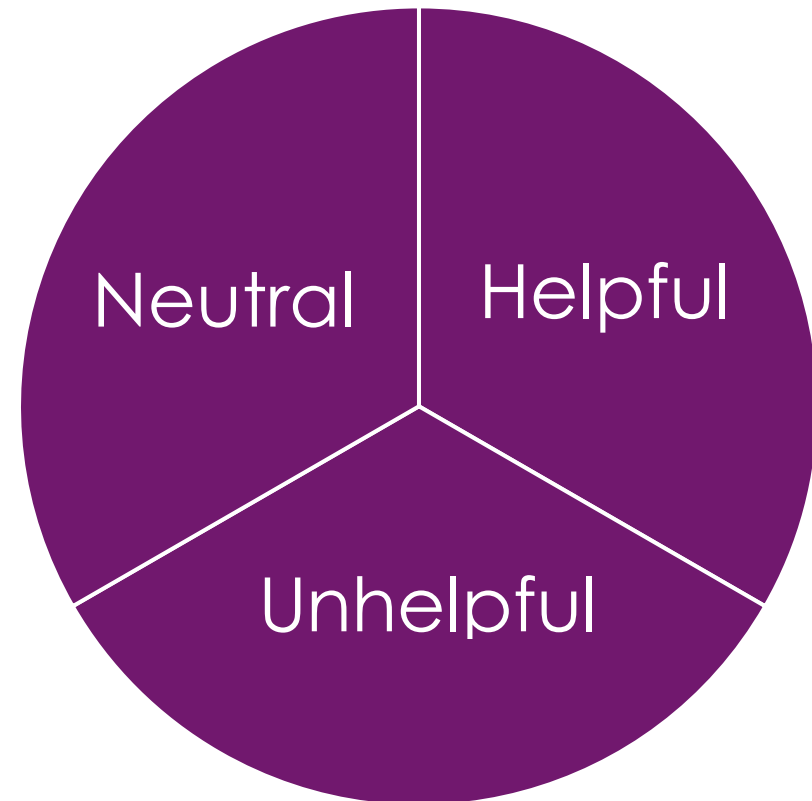
Understanding Your Grief: Touchstone 8

Reach Out for Help



The Rule of Thirds

Great commandment of Jesus:
Love God. Love neighbor. The
third one is to Love yourself.



Understanding Your Grief: Touchstone 9

Seek Reconciliation, Not Resolution



Seek Reconciliation, Not Resolution

- ▶ Managing your expectations
- ▶ Not attached to outcome
- ▶ Choosing Hope for your healing
- ▶ Borrowing Hope
- ▶ You Will Get There
 - ▶ as long as you are doing the hard work of mourning

Understanding Your Grief: Touchstone 10

Appreciate Your Transformation



Appreciate Your Transformation

“The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen.”

Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

Let's Get Coffee!

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The 6 Central Needs of Mourning

#1- Acknowledge the Reality of the Losses

- ▶ Gently confronting the reality of the death
- ▶ Could take weeks, months, and sometimes years
- ▶ Healthy to move between protesting and encountering
- ▶ Be patient with this need

The 6 Central Needs of Mourning

#1- Acknowledge the Reality of the Losses Possible Reflection Questions

- ▶ Right now, where do you see yourself in acknowledging the reality of the death/loss/trauma?
- ▶ Do you think the passage of time is playing a part in where you are with this need? If so, how?
- ▶ Do you understand and allow yourself the need to sometimes push parts of the reality away?

The 6 Central Needs of Mourning

#2- Embracing the Pain of the Loss

- ▶ Embracing is the combination of living in a state of encounter (grief work) and surrender (embracing the mystery of not understanding)
- ▶ Befriend pain by sitting with it, being present to it, and thinking about & feeling it
- ▶ Opposite of embracing is attempting to stay “in control” (running from the pain through avoidance, repressing, and denial)
- ▶ Dosing the pain: not overloading the hurt all at one time.

The 6 Central Needs of Mourning

#2- Embracing the Pain of the Loss

Possible reflection questions

- ▶ Where do you see yourself in allowing yourself to feel the pain of the loss?
- ▶ With whom have you shared your feeling of hurt?
- ▶ Share about what sharing your painful feeling has been like for you.

The 6 Central Needs of Mourning

#3- Remember the person who died

- ▶ Convert the relationship from one of presence to one of memory
- ▶ Funerals are for opening not closing
- ▶ Storytelling, Linking objects, visiting special places, photos
- ▶ The receiver of the story must have an open heart

The 6 Central Needs of Mourning

#3- Remember the person who died

Possible reflection questions

- ▶ How does it feel when memories of the person who died come to the surface?
- ▶ Share a meaningful story about the person who died.
- ▶ What do you miss most about the person? What do you miss least?

The 6 Central Needs of Mourning

#4- Develop a new self-identity

- ▶ Forever changed by significant losses
- ▶ Redefinition of the self is a slow process
- ▶ May experience heightened dependence on others, feelings of helplessness, frustration, anger, & fear
- ▶ Integrating forced identity changes brings about opportunities for growth

The 6 Central Needs of Mourning

#4- Develop a new self-identity

- ▶ What identity changes have you experienced as a result of this death?
- ▶ How do you see people treating you differently as a result of your changing identity?
- ▶ What are some positive changes in yourself have you noticed?

The 6 Central Needs of Mourning

#5- Search of Meaning

- ▶ “Why” & “How” are common during this part
- ▶ Soul Work; Moving from head to heart
- ▶ Liminal Space: Unsettled, forcing them to reconsider who they are, why they are here, and what life means
- ▶ Takes time, loving companions, and humility

The 6 Central Needs of Mourning

#5- Search of Meaning

- ▶ Do you have any “Why?” or “How?” questions right now?
- ▶ Are you wrestling with your faith or spirituality at THIS moment?
- ▶ How do you feel your faith or spirituality has helped and/or hindered your grief/mourning process?

The 6 Central Needs of Mourning

#6- Let Others help you = Now and always

- ▶ Acknowledges the reality that mourners need support long after the death
- ▶ Quality and Quantity of support is very important
- ▶ Must perceive grief not as an enemy but as a necessity to be experienced
- ▶ Understanding that finding help outside of family may be necessary

The 6 Central Needs of Mourning

#6- Let Others help you = Now and always

- ▶ Have you reached out for help since the death/loss? If so who to?
- ▶ Was that effort to seek help accepted or rejected?
- ▶ How are you at accepting help from others if it is offered?