

navigating grief and difficult feelings – some offerings

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As our communities continue to grieve, mourn, and heal, we wanted to make this offering to our community members. We hope these frameworks, reminders, and practices can give you tools to process grief in these hard times. If you also hold space for others, we want to share this piece "Tips and Reminders when holding space to support others" that we developed in March 2021 to support CPA staff who were supporting our Chinese immigrant and youth grassroots members.

About the Chinese Progressive Association

Founded in 1972, the Chinese Progressive Association educates, organizes and empowers the low income and working class immigrant Chinese community in San Francisco to build collective power with other oppressed communities to demand better living and working conditions and justice for all people.

www.cpasf.org | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#)

We are working on translating this document into Chinese. If you have questions, please contact justice@cpasf.org

"your heart is the softest place on earth. take care of it."— Nayyirah Waheed

We as humans don't always collectively know how to hold, process, or be with difficult feelings. We also all process events differently. We may need or not need to be around people. We may need to talk or not talk to others. We may need to feel or not feel our feelings. And there is everything in between and outside of this.

Remember that you are worthy of giving yourself the grace, love, & compassion to be with yourself and your inner world. And you're not alone.

Reminders about feelings:

- It's okay to not know how you're feeling.
- It's okay to feel however you're feeling (even if you can't feel your emotions, it's okay. They're still there).
- It's okay if all the emotions are tangled up like a ball of messy yarn. They will eventually get detangled.
- It's okay to not have the words right now. (If you want to identify your feelings, here's a [feelings wheel](#).)
- It's okay if the easiest thing or what you might default to is to perhaps just dive into work or focus on the external environment/other people.
- It's okay if you feel disconnected from your body.
- It's okay to not know what you need. (If you want to explore what your body may be telling you that it needs, here's a [body map](#).)

Give yourself permission to:

- Breathe
- Cry
- Do nothing
- Space out
- Say "no"
- Maintain boundaries
- Smile
- Laugh
- Heal
- Have fun
- Take a break
- Slow down
- Be in community
- Take the time to do something you need
- Not process (but eventually unresolved grief upon grief, trauma upon trauma, pain upon pain will surface and may come out in an unexpected way or time. You may feel them in your body instead and feel physical symptoms.)

"the wounds have changed me. i am so soft with scars my skin breathes and beats stars."— Nayyirah Waheed

how do you process your feelings?



Credit: doodlerama

"sadness doesn't say, 'please fix me, heal me, release me. numb yourself to me, rid of me, enlighten so i can die.' sadness only whispers, 'may i come in? I am tired and long for rest.' you reply, 'but sadness, i don't know how to let you in.' and sadness sheds a tear and warmly states, 'it's okay, you don't need to know. I'm already in.'" — comforting blanket

Any emotion can be inserted instead of "sadness."

Building a relationship with your emotions; feeling our emotions can be a gift.

the guest house

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.

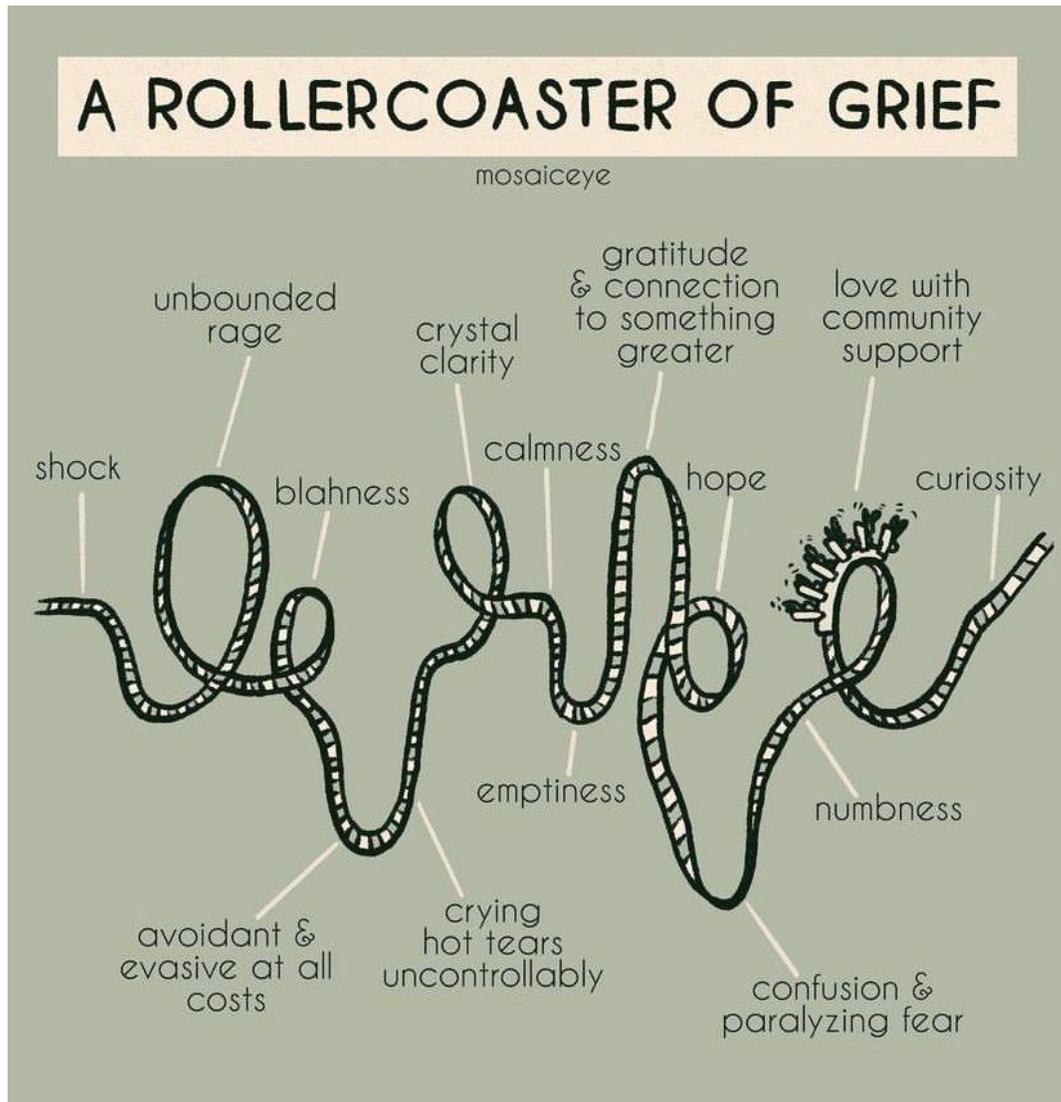
A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

by rumi



Credit: mosaiceye

A note around processing grief:

- Allow yourself to feel all of the emotions in all of their complexity and messiness. Acknowledge them. Listen to them. They will wait for you to be ready to meet them.
- We often can numb, avoid, distract, minimize, hide, sweep away, and busy ourselves out of feeling painful feelings because it can be really scary to feel them in their entirety. We do this because there may be a part of us that feels we won't be able to handle it/we feel there's no time/fill in the blank. But if you imagine an ocean wave 🌊: in that moment when it reaches the peak and you feel like it's too painful and you'll be stuck on that top wave, remember that it **will** wash over you and come back down and eventually settle. It will also show us what matters to us.
- As our capacity to hold pain increases, our capacity for healing will also increase.
- Grief is like a river, and flowing water needs to flow out.

Practices for processing grief:

- Seek out beauty, strength, magic, and resilience in what surrounds you. It helps with not feeling stuck or hopeless.
- Don't try to follow your brain when it tries to rush into meaning-making, explaining, and justifying. Instead, allow yourself to listen to your heart.
- Breathe:
 - Practice "square" breathing
 - Sync your breath with this gif (scan qr code)



- Journaling and free-write, brain dump, write what you're grieving using "I" statements
 - Here's a poem [template](#) I created to start with.
 - Write a letter. Burn it. Rip it apart. Let the feelings flow from your heart, your stomach, other parts of your body, through your finger tips.
 - Draw, paint, use clay to create what you feel your grief or other feelings look like. Honor it. If part of your process is to smash it and then bring it back up, do that instead. Do what you feel is moving you.
- Try the emotional freedom technique (eft)/tapping acupuncture points for stress, trauma, big feelings including sadness and anxiety (here's a good [script](#) to follow).
- Connect to your body and see where you're holding and where. Name the sensations. Follow them as they change or sit.
- Speak it aloud to others. It doesn't have to be stifled and swallowed.
- Be with others. Healing happens in relationship.
- Read [this](#) for validation and understanding related to collective grief and trauma.

"be softer with you. you are a breathing thing. a memory to someone. a home to a life."
— Nayyirah Waheed