

BrainMattersGriefAndCreativity_WVUA_11_29_22

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SPEAKERS

Kara Jones



00:00

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Kara Jones 00:26

It's six o'clock and time again for Brian matters. The official radio show the UAE Counseling Center we are broadcasting from the campus of the University of Alabama. Good evening. My name is Dr. BJ Gunther, and I'm the host of the show along with my colleague and producer Catherine Howell. In case you don't matter, the show is about mental and physical health issues that affect college students and in particular UA students, so you could listen to us each Tuesday night at 6pm on 90.7. FM, or online at WVU, a fm.ua.edu. You can also download the mod tuner radio app and type in Web UI FM 90.7 And find us there. Also, if you've got any ideas for upcoming show topics, please email those to Brian matters radio at WVU afm.ua.edu. And I'll consider using your show topic we're already booked out for the rest of this semester. But we've got next semester. I've got a lot of ideas already for next semester. But I always love entertaining new trends in college mental health, or just anything that you if you're listening that you might want to hear that we haven't talked about lately, or ever. We've been doing the show, it'll be 10 years in January, actually. And you think you've covered everything. And I feel like a lot of times I have and then something new, a new trend will come along and we'll need to talk about it. So if you have those ideas, definitely email those to me. And I'll try to remember to give out the email. Y'all I'm just coming off the flu. So I'm having to catch my breath and cough a few times. So I'm sorry, my breath said I mean, my voice. Don't you think it sounds a little weak Catherine. For me, I feel like it's a little weak. Tonight, we've got an interesting topic that I think honestly is a hard topic for people to discuss. I know when I have students come in, it's hard for them to talk about grief. But I think tonight we can make it a little more fun because the topics grief and creativity, whether it be the death of a loved one, or

the loss of a relationship or a job, or decline and health, grief and loss can trigger many emotions and physical responses. Some we can anticipate and some we can't. If you have ever grieved over a major loss in life, you know how profoundly painful it can be? So is there a way to creatively transform that pain into something else? Or something better? I hope so. That's why our guest is on the show today. She is joining us from Are you in California? No, I'm up in Washington and Washington. And I knew it was the west coast in Pacific time. So it's a little bit earlier out there. So I really appreciate you being Kara Jones Kara as she does everything. I mean, when I was researching you, I don't know how there's enough hours in the day. She's the author of I know one book and probably several more we're going to talk about that she's a coach and a hardest. That's H E A R T -ist at grief and creativity. Also creative grief educator and the creative grief studio at the creative grief studio. You're going to tell us what that is. I'm the co founder of kotapress. Kara, would you take over while I cough today. Tell us tell the listeners more about yourself your credentials and why you're interested in the topic of grief.

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Kara Jones 04:03

Yeah, sure. You know, I've always been a writer and an artist. I mean, I had that as a child and up through college and through my education, training and stuff. But in the spring of 1999 we had a full term supposedly perfectly healthy pregnancy. And our son died at birth. And so that sort of moment where you're supposed to hear you know, it's a boy, the line we heard was this baby is dead. Oh, and I just you know there is his death. But then there was this like just this pummeling of brief that shattered identity communication. Priorities just you know, the wide Yeah, it just so for me it was this like that. Those intersections of grief and creativity really came in that personal space. That's where it started. And of course, you know, for the first few years, our family, my partner nine or older living children, it was all about getting support, right, we were seeking the support we needed. And but after a few years, you know, you you get so grateful for the people who helped you put the pieces back together. Yes, we just had like a natural inclination to want to give back. Right. And so we started to, you know, doing trainings to be facilitators that would hold these spaces, to be moderators in online spaces where we're hosting different kinds of grief groups and and through different organizations and, you know, grief conferences and that kind of education and stuff. I, I got to a point where I really had this keen interest in like the Appreciative Inquiry around the grief experience, like how do we ask better questions for what people are experiencing. And particularly using the the hero's journey is a metaphor. And so I did some training through the lineage of Paul Rob Lowe, he was a drama therapist that use the hero's journey as a as a means of sort of embodying

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Kara Jones 06:19

for those who don't know, tell, tell the listeners that what the hero's journey is,

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Kara Jones 06:22

the hero's journey is sort of this, it's kind of the classic like, a hero goes on a journey of fights a demon and you know, comes out the other side wins, and wins, right comes out the other side. Wait, so I went down this path. And what was fascinating for me, and this is like, the creativity just like kept coming in these experiences. I got into the hero's journey paradigm, sort of as the

key model of my own studies. But for me, like the demon, or the dragon that was coming at me was grief itself. And I had felt like the grief experience had been so violent already. I had no interest in slaying that dragon. I went back to my supervisor, and you know, the people in my groups and stuff, my peers. And I said, What happens if we like offer the dragon some tea and scones? You know what I mean? It's something different. Just what, and people really, like it spoke to people, you know what I mean? Like, people just really kind of glommed onto it, I went, Oh, okay. Maybe, you know, there's some gap in our conversation about grief. So, you know, I also like, kind of went down a somatic path to because for me, a lot of the grief stuff was like, up here in the head and sort of emotional or intellectual. And I was like, I got this whole body. And so it was this wild combination of things. By 2011, I was also dealing with chronic illness, sort of an ongoing grief experience of that. And so I started doing a lot of my work online. And a woman found me out of the blue named Cath Duncan, and she'd had her own grief experiences. And we worked together for several months on Skype, she was in Canada, and I was dates. And at the end of it, she came back to me after we'd finished working, and a few months later, and she said, it took me so long to find you. And it's so profoundly changed the way I work. How can we, you know, what if we write something together to do an interview, when we didn't know each other, we'd never been in person. I mean, we knew each other from Skype, but we'd never met in person. But something just kind of came into me, clicked place into her. Let's throw both our hats in the ring. Let's just go 5050 Let's do this. Like how big can we make it till it scares us?

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Kara Jones 09:04

So okay, so what's the first? Did you have like, a book that you wrote together? Is that the first thing you did together? Or did you offer groups together online?

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Kara Jones 09:15

We wrote a curriculum together. We just dove in and put a 16 week curriculum together. Wow. And in 2012, she had a she is a kidney transplant. So she has her own sort of immunocompromised stuff. Yes. So 2012 We went online 100% with the program, just convinced. My background I in my internship years in college. I worked at Mr. Rogers Neighborhood when they were still in television production. Yes, yeah. And Fred's, you know, his, his latest technology for him. The cutting edge technology for him was television. And he had this idea Dia that it was, you know, we can have fun and it was a, you know, a nice environment. So but when we got in Studio A, and we started filming, he impressed upon all of us if you are going to be here, this space from where we are creating to the space where the child is interacting with the screen, this is sacred space. Yes. And I need you present. If you're going to be here, exactly. So, for me, my class was the first at CMU to have email outside of the robotics program. So here's all of his ideas about that cutting edge technology translated into the internet, for me. And so Kathy, and I launched this thing in 2012, with this idea, that from where we are, to the screen where we're connecting with you, this is sacred space. Yes. How do we teach here? How do we offer grief support here? How do we create here? And it's been 10 years that we've never looked back. It's amazing. We teach it now. It's

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Kara Jones 11:09

when you when you first started the curriculum? And you said 16 weeks? Yes. So when people

just enroll from all over the world? And yeah, do you have a limit? You know, like you do like a normal group like Katherine, I'm sure you've got a limit of people who can attend the group, you know.

K Kara Jones 11:32

And Cath and I decided from the beginning that we didn't want to work with more than 20 people at a time. Yeah, yeah. Because it's such an intense experience you very, even if you think you're just coming to it for professional continuing education, like, you know, your stuff comes with you, your humaneness comes with you. And so 20 people fell. And we eventually added on team members, we teach as a team. Now there's a team of us about six of us that teach every session, and we never do more than 20. We never have more than 20 students, because it's just an intimate process. Yeah. And what we did was we did it as an application process. So it's not like a process where you just click the Buy Now button, and you're there's an actual application process, because we also felt like, this isn't a beginners, this really is a continuing education. Yes. And if you want to take these tools into what you're already doing, you need to have some foundations that you're building on to do this skill building. And, you know, we opened up for all over the world, and we have had students from all over the world, we really thought our audience was going to be coaches. That was you know, Cath has a background as a social worker and a counselor. But we were both pretty, you know, doing online work in the coaching world. We were blown away. We had social workers and hospice people and funeral home directors and artists and painters, and musicians, and all of these people across these fields, or showing up saying, my client, you know, hit this wonderful Baker, should people are coming into my bakery with grief experiences, and how do I be present for them? What did you

K Kara Jones 13:14

What did you call the curriculum? What was the name? And is it still call that is still

K Kara Jones 13:18

the creative grief studio, we call it the creative, a certification in creative grief support practice. And we talk about it as a practice. So if you come out of it, you you are a certified creative grief practitioner. And then but most people honestly, truly they're already doing something. They they come into this program, and then they're taking the tools back to whatever their niche is, because they're already Yeah.

K Kara Jones 13:47

I've been here I've been at the counseling center about 17 years. And when we started trying to present groups, support groups, of course, we were smaller campus, and now we're up to almost 40,000 Students enrolled. Yeah. And so it was, I can't remember maybe 20 25,000. When I first started here, I'm just making that up. But it was way smaller. And it was very, very hard. You know, we tried to start groups, just the basic groups like, I guess, anxiety, adjustment, stress and time management and grief. And grief was very hard group to get

going. And it's I think it's because of like what I said in the intro, I just don't think a lot of college students want to talk about grief in a group setting necessarily. I think that's changed but in the beginning, I just struggled with people making my group you know,

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Kara Jones 14:45

yeah, you know, I think there's a there's, it's such an interesting thing. There's a cultural aspect to it when so when our son died in 1999, there was a generation of our family that was still alive then. That were World War Two survived. errs, and they have lived whole lives with unprocessed trauma and grief. They just had, you know, and they weren't going to change. No, no, but our approach to grief and what are other living children needed and what we needed. It confounded them. They could not make sense of it one way or the other. And so it was interesting to see like, you know, we're grief is a lot of things. And we are individuals having grief experiences. But we, you know, you'll know talks about this and madness and creativity. You cannot get uninvented from your kinship systems, no. And so your grief experiences are shaped by that. Also, it's true. And I just think if you came from a background of family, a community of a religious one ass yeah, whatever, that didn't talk about it that didn't name grief, or names. Grief only as death didn't mean non death as grief. It's so hard.

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Kara Jones 16:15

And I think I mean, I'm a pretty blunt, don't you think I'm a pretty blunt person, Katherine. I'm pretty blunt. So I'll warn my students when they come in. I'm pretty blunt. So if you can't handle that, we need to schedule you with somebody else. But I'm not saying this out of, you know, trying to be mean, or anything I'm really interested in. So I just blurted out, what happened? Tell me what happened. Because I find most people want to talk about what happened. They really do. I don't know if you feel that way to Katherine. And other people are tiptoeing around the person who've lost somebody.

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Kara Jones 16:51

Yeah, I talk about it a lot as permission. Yeah, I have this whole process of writing permission slips for myself, and a whole a book of 1000 permissions i co created with people I had been working with over the years. It's like, nobody gave us these spaces. Nobody just held space for you to say, like what happened and what happens beyond the initial events of loss, like there's the initial event of loss, but there's the cascade of. And so it's like, sometimes, maybe you find this, this is the first time people have had that kind of permission. Yeah. And they just,

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Kara Jones 17:28

it's shocking to me, though I have and I know, we've got to go to a break in just a minute. But, you know, I'm working with a student right now. And I don't want to say too much, but she has lost a parent in the last month. And the other parent, she has siblings, and nobody's talking about it. And I asked her, How is your other parent, the living parent? You know, are you able to

talk to that person? It's like, it just baffles her when I asked her that, because it's just not a part of what you're talking about. Yeah. Of her family system. Yeah. And it's sad, because she has nobody to talk to really about her other parents.

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Kara Jones 18:10

Yeah, so it's not it's her individual grief experience, but it's this system of a grief experience. It's perpetuating, so you're having to chip into the grave. Yeah.

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Kara Jones 18:22

Hey, let's stop right there and take a quick break. And when we come back, let's say Would you mind taking an email question, sir. Okay, we'll be right back. You're listening. The brain matters on 90.7 The capstone.

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Kara Jones 18:44

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18:46

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Kara Jones 19:13

room. You're back listening to brain matters on 90.7 The capstone I am Dr. BJ Gunther, we're talking tonight about grief and creativity. You may not think they go together. But there are many many articles that I've read a few articles but a lot of research a lot of books written about this. That creativity helps with the grieving process and my guest tonight is Kara Jones. Kara is out in Washington. And she has done so much. I mean, to help I mean how many years has it been now, since you started all half decades. Yeah,

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Kara Jones 20:01

it's amazing. Actually, Katherine found you. We were researching the topic. And I think Katherine, because she leads a group here at the University of Alabama, a grief group. And that's one of her interest. She found you. And we did some research and made happen.

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Kara Jones 20:20

Yeah. Thank you for having me here today.

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Kara Jones 20:23

Let me let me look, we've got several. And I hope we haven't already answered these how this is just kind of like a basic question. Hold on, let me How does creativity affect our ability to cope with the way of and process grief?

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Kara Jones 20:41

You know, from I've found that because creativity is the kind of approach I'm taking to creativity is expanding it beyond artmaking. In the same ways that I'm trying to help people expand the definition of grief to right, we're taking both words and expanding them. I've tried, um, I think it's it kind of it has a feel to me, like my early years in college, where I first encountered critical theory and Cultural Studies, and you were kind of learning how to ask questions. Right? The early grief process was had a lot of that to it for me, and I named it as creativity just personally, that's what it felt like to me.

K

Kara Jones 21:22

You've always been a creative person, though. Oh, yeah.

K

Kara Jones 21:24

Yeah, it's true. But I also feel like it's a skill. You know, I feel like it's a skill we can build on. There's so much child development, material and research about how children having grief experiences at every new stage of development, every new brain connection you made, you know, they it's possible, they will revisit the grief experience, they will make new meaning of it, they will, it's a pretty accepted thing in child development. I just don't think it ends just because we're 18 or 21. I think it's like a human thing. We have time experience, new brain connections, new resource inputs, I think we all revisit these grief experiences and make new meaning as new things happen to us. And I think that process is just humanly creative. I think that helps us deal with things because we're human. And it's messy. And it's real. And

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Kara Jones 22:21

that's right. I don't know, do you think it would? And Catherine, you can speak to this? Do you think it has enticed more students to become part of the group when you've added like creativity to it? Or do you think it has scared more students away? Because what we talked about, you know, I can't remember if we talked before the show or not. But I had mentioned to Kara, that sometimes people I think a lot of people don't think they're creative, and we're all creative. You just don't know how to tap into it sometimes. And if you put it in the sense of like, what you defined it as artistic that scares people to death sometimes. I mean, I love working

out my yard. That is not necessarily artistic, like you would think. Because I'm not gluing things together. You know what I mean? But Katherine, do you know what I'm saying? Do you think it scares some people away? Because you use the term creative?



23:14

I think people did think that it was like an art group. And so they had to be talented at like drawing or something specific. So when I would talk to them, I would explain, like, you don't have to be talented. It's more just different types of creative ways to explore stress relief for that group.



Kara Jones 23:30

And that one of the articles I read, and I don't have this pulled up, so I'm just going by memory, which is horrible, because I still, you know, when I'm getting over the flu, and I'm 50 something years old. But anyway, is there is there is a real connection between your brain and creativity, the prefer, you know, the right prefrontal cortex and the left prefrontal cord, you know, I've can't remember which side of your brain is the most creative. I think it's the left side is it? I can't remember. So there's really a biological basis to being creative and stimulating. You know, aid with regards to like, mood and stuff. Yeah, it's real.



Kara Jones 24:16

Yeah, you know, what part of the reason I started using the word heart making was because it took it out of art making it was you know, if I used art making you got that immediate knee jerk rejection of like, I'm not an artist, you got it, where I use heart making, it was enough of a weird term for people to pause and I love that term.



Kara Jones 24:35

I wouldn't have that copy written.



Kara Jones 24:38

I know I don't. There's lots of other people doing things using it now. It's fine. You know, part of what we decided 1999 When we started doing the kotapress stuff, and and we kind of did a literary journal with other brief parents was internet like we have to be willing to like, stand out. Like we don't have you There's no trust fund for us to have lawyers. I'm not policing it. I have an abolitionist background like,



Kara Jones 25:06

I mean, you know, it that the term the heart making, I think people are more accepting to like the feeling part of it like, yeah, art.

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Kara Jones 25:19

I mean, because I think your heart shatters, when big loss comes, like so many things shatter it, it makes it, it has some common common sense. It just has some resonance with people of like, oh, yeah, there's pieces here and I am wanting to put something back together. In You know, I'm not really working in a way that like, there's, I'm not doing court ordered stuff like people aren't compelled. So people are self selecting to come and do this work with me or to do the continuing education at the studio. And so they're interested, like they have some, even if they doubt their creative abilities, they have some interest in you know, a kind of goes back to

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Kara Jones 26:05

some interest in having expressing themselves somehow stressing

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Kara Jones 26:08

themselves and like something is it kind of goes back to when I was working with the facilitator training programs, the facilitators would come to me and say, like, my group feels stuck, really, you know, or people feel stuck. And I'm trying to find ways and so I would bring creative prompts to these different V boards that we had online. And people would say, oh, it made the story. Like it's shifted the story for this person when I asked this in a different way. Yeah. And so I think it's yeah, it's there's something about what is allowed to happen differently than it has, you know, at least they're allowed to tell the story in a different way. There's a really big difference between asking somebody what happened versus Would you introduce me to your loved one who you lost?

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Kara Jones 26:59

I don't know my about them. Tell them? Yeah.

K

Kara Jones 27:01

Like, what what is, what do you still hear in your head every day from them? Like that's a different story.

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Kara Jones 27:08

And people are afraid to ask that sometimes

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Kara Jones 27:10

they are afraid to ask that. I'm Dr. Head key. Lorraine had key has a whole thing about

remembering conversations and her book. The crafting of grief is really good. If you've never come across it yet.

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Kara Jones 27:23

I have. Oh, it's so good. What's your last name? Head T?

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Kara Jones 27:28

H e di? T Ke,

K

Kara Jones 27:31

I think? Okay. Thank you

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Kara Jones 27:33

for Yeah, um, and even if you don't ever as a person offering support spaces, even if you never like 100% Did one of her remembering conversations like kind of start to finish the way she presents it? Just the framework of the remembering conversation? Like I think about crafting questions in a different way, because of the this framework that she's put out there. And it comes out in narrative therapy background too. So it has those pieces to it.

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Kara Jones 28:02

And, you know, some of the what I encounter here with some college students is their readiness for a group setting. You know, Katherine can understand that. I don't think the student I've referenced just a moment ago, I don't think she's ready for for a group. But there might come a day where she is because I do think there is such a benefit to being with other people who can relate to you.

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Kara Jones 28:27

Yeah, yeah. And I think there's the there's multiple levels of the grief experience, like we said, there's so many parts of grief, the individual and the communal, you know, the individual in the collective and try and it takes time to get there, you know, yeah.

K

Kara Jones 28:41

Okay, we've got another there's another question that was attached to that. And it was to a two parter. Can grief have a positive and or negative impact on creativity? Yes, both. I could see that I could see the positive Most definitely, that's what the goal is, right? What would be the negative?

 Kara Jones 29:03

Um, I've come across some folks who they had one kind of particular creative practice before this big loss happened. They were a writer. Oh, okay. I'll give an example. Yep. Words just go out the window. words mean nothing. They can't make words make sense anymore. It just doesn't. So wow, into movement, you know, sort of like Latin notations. If grief is light as a feather. What's it feel like if grief is heavy as a rock? What does it feel like? You know, we move into some other kind of sensibility, some other kind of creative approach, because what they were doing before the last experience isn't resonating anymore at

 Kara Jones 29:39

work. And how about you, Catherine, you were shaking your hand. What have you seen?

 29:46

Similar is just if you're experiencing that grief, you may not have the energy or want to go through those experiences of those things that you enjoy the creativity, you might not have the inspiration. And so you might have to look to other things.

 Kara Jones 29:59

Yeah, the first thing I thought when I saw the question was, you know, kind of reigniting the the fresh grief. Yeah, you know what I mean by that?

 Kara Jones 30:12

Yeah, I do. And I think so people sometimes are afraid because they don't want to go back there or they'll be overwhelmed by it or, or won't be able to stop. It won't be able to stop. Yeah, absolutely.

 Kara Jones 30:24

I've definitely heard that. All right, we're gonna take another break. When we come back. I want to talk about everyone's capacity to be creative. And some more about some of your projects that you're doing because it's just fascinating. So hang tight, you're listening to Brian matters on 9.7 The capstone WVU AFM Tuscaloosa

 30:53

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Kara Jones 31:30

Your boss was doing to Brian matter so 90.7 The capstone, I'm BJ Gunther, and we're talking tonight about grief and creativity, you might think it wouldn't go together, it goes very well together. As far as helping you get move forward. I'm not going to say get past because that kind of makes me mad when people talk like that. So I'm gonna say move forward. My guess is Kara Jones. Kara has is the book that I mentioned. Creating from grief. When was that published? How recent is that book

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Kara Jones 32:03

he the creating through grief book is an ebook that we did as a team. Its alumni and team members at the creative brief studio we kind of all 11 of us pitched in ideas. And the that's that ebook is there prompts you can use personally of course, but they also have instructions in them for if you're also like a facilitator of a group and you want to use this kind of prompt with other people. So there's some instructions in there for using those prompts to, on my own site, grief and creativity.com I have several ebooks that are more geared directly to the person who's grieving. They're not education books are more, you know, direct prompts for you to process. Yeah.

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Kara Jones 32:47

I love that. And um, are you working on anymore?

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Kara Jones 32:52

Yeah, you know, I

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Kara Jones 32:53

haven't you constantly are working on stuff

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Kara Jones 32:56

constantly. We I have this little stash of stack of creative prompts. And we had this idea to do a volume, like nine new prompts every year, I got sort of sidetracked in the pandemic years and my creativity kind of tanked a little.

K

Kara Jones 33:11

You know, a creative person's mind never sleeps. Yeah. It's the truth.

K

Kara Jones 33:17

Yeah. It's, there's always something like there's, I think part of it is because of the communication and being in touch with other death and grief workers and being in touch with people who are having grief experiences wherever they are, you know, in their process, some newer some not like this. new connections are being made for me, like we were talking about the child

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Kara Jones 33:38

that never stops and never stops him. And I mean, my husband, he tells he's gonna hate me for saying, he tells me too much. And I've got this in air quotes for those who are just listening. Um, too much. I can't help it. Because I just never stopped is my brain just never stops. And I know, I know Catherine's doesn't either yours doesn't either. It's wonderful to be around other creatives. Yes. So you can't get enough. Okay, I'm going to ask you another email question because we have samples. So I'm going to try to get all right, go for it. I've read articles to indicate that during grieving, so Oh, okay, this talks about the brain. Maybe this is where I saw it. But I haven't read this question. First. The left hemisphere hemisphere of the brain that specializes in more pleasant or positive emotions is less active than the right hemisphere resulting in more pronounced feelings of sadness and anxiety. If this is the case, could you expand on this a bit? Wow. My head hurts now.

K

Kara Jones 34:42

You know, it's interesting. So part of what we're trying to do at the creative grief studio is bringing tools to the fore that don't don't question the buying theory of positive emotion negative emotion so that, like Harriet Lerner's work she talks about in the dance of anger book she talks about what's the usefulness of anger? What's what is his showed up to do? What does it think his job is? Yeah. So it's almost like an externalizing of those darker, you know, those, you know, heavier moods heavier, heavier, it's almost, you know, an externalizing of it to as if it were a character in your play, you know, write some dialogue for it, what is it think it's doing on stage?

K

Kara Jones 35:41

It's kind of, but that's so true. It's like, what is the purpose? What is the purpose of grief? Yeah,

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Kara Jones 35:47

I've never heard sometimes doing that kind of thing alone, just like offering that kind of space alone. Like, releases some sort of endorphin UI, I don't know liberated, because?

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Kara Jones 36:03

Because you might can answer that with? Well, I don't know. And then you start really thinking about it a little deeper. And you kind of get tired of thinking like that. I don't know how I didn't articulate that.

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Kara Jones 36:17

We kind of we, we have a tool at the studio we talk about as The Big Book of grief rules. So people don't realize sometimes like they'll say to me, like I Why am I not over it? Why yes, my not productive again, yet what? And so we'll, I'll ask people to sort of hover there and say, like, where did you first hear that you have? Right? Like? Where did that rule come from? Like, who recruited you into it? Have you ever seen anyone take a stand against it? Like? Have you ever had an experience yourself? Where you're like, No, that's not happening. It's just because I don't think we have a very conscious, we, our grief literacy is just not very high in this culture. And we don't have a very conscious conversation about the things that underpin our grief experiences. And there's a lot of stuff that even in pop culture about closure and timelines, the first year being the worst, you know, for me, personally, the second year is Mother's Day. Yet, when I realized every mother's day after this is gonna be that was gonna be less than the first one. So a broken,

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Kara Jones 37:31

where are the rules? Because it is different for every single person. And it makes me so loud. When I have somebody come in who hosts they've gone through a funeral. And somebody's come up to them. And they say things like, oh, no, I'm sorry. Um, it can be any little thing that triggers you, right? Yes. At that moment. Yeah. Yeah. Um, but especially for loved ones, you know, who will say things like, I thought you would be better by now? Or I mean, like you said, What does that mean? I don't know what that means. You know, it's not fair. It's, um, it's fascinating that you mentioned different cultures. Because I don't know if you've seen the movie, Coco. I love it. Yes, of course. And it's basically if you haven't seen Coco, it's a Disney movie about, say, the dad and I took six years of Spanish and I still don't speak it well, so I'm not even gonna attempt. But it's about a little boy who basically is taught to value his loved ones in death. That's what day of the day it is. It's the best way I can explain it in Mexican Hispanic culture. And it is the it's the cutest movie, but it talks about the heaviest, darkest things like I was a little bit shocked. I don't know if you were I was a little bit shocked. But it was refreshing the bit. It was addressed. Yeah, to be honest. And it was so colorful and happy. And you wouldn't think it but it was.

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Kara Jones 39:07

Yeah. It's beautiful. And it's fascinating. Sookie Miller did a book it's a really slim volume called Finding Hope after a child dies. And that was kind of my my introduction to Oh, wait. There are other people approaching grief in a different way in different cultures. And that kind of set me on the path of exploring things like Day of the Dead. The kind of interesting like creative space for that is a then was working with Carla Hoffman. She's down in Mexico City. And one of the

things she brought up to me which I thought was very interesting, because she had grown up with Day of the Dead. This was part of their culture. She was expressing to me a frustration that these were the only three days of the year she was allowed to express grief for her child who doubt Wow, so she was frustrated. So she was frustrated too. And so I think it's fascinating like when we learn to, like craft these more bigger nuanced questions about things like tradition and culture and and grief experiences, we get this bigger picture. And so there's amazing things that come as we're learning things. But then there's also, you know, there's their own their own nuances that we don't know where it's right guys. Yeah,

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Kara Jones 40:30

let's take our last break. And then I want to come back and put you on the spot a little bit. I'll give you a I'll give you a hint so you can be thinking about it in the break. That one of the questions, the second partner for that email question, what are some simple creative activities to do when someone is feeling too sad or too grieved to be creative? So hang on to that thought we'll come back in just a minute. You're listening to Brian matters on 19.7 The capstone WVU AFM Tuscaloosa

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Kara Jones 41:46

Hey, you're back listening to Brian matters on 90.7 a capstone we're talking tonight about grief and creativity. I'm Dr. BJ Gunther, and my guest is Kara Jones. Kara has been in this business for over 20 years, I think you said grief and creativity. And it's really your niche. If you haven't gone to her website, it's grief and creativity.com. I think so I just said it. And she's gonna give us some more research resources in a minute. But before the break, I asked, this was an email question that someone's sitting in what are some creative simple activities to do when someone is feeling too sad or too grieved to be creative?

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Kara Jones 42:27

Yeah. So there's, there's a couple of things that couple things I want to say in response. And one of them is, you know, sometimes I'll get people who will say, like, you know, I have to do all the things I have to do during the week, and then I was gonna get to Saturday, and I was gonna, I was gonna do something, whatever, creatives, you know, I was gonna do my it was gonna be my planner. Yes. And I got to the day, and all I could do was be on the couch and binge watch some old television series. Yeah. And so part of what we'll talk about is like, well, is that creative? What what needs did that serve? Did you need rest? Was that you know, did you

need the escape, escape the ability to laugh at something binge watching a sitcom? And like it. So reframing that if you're too tired or too sad, or too grieved, to do something, you know, that that productivity impulse in our culture really comes out of capitalism, and, you know, comes out of this grinding, sort of, you know, even if we haven't thought about that explicitly, three days paid bereavement leave, there is a foundation in our culture around that. Yeah, who gets that? Yeah, if you're a gig worker, you don't get it. If you even if you are a full time employee, and you get it. What does that say about grief? It's only worth three days. over And after three? Yes, you know, I'm not saying it's something people even question consciously. But it's an underpinning of the culture of grief, the culture that surrounds our grief experience.

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Kara Jones 44:09

So to name to just get over it? Yeah. You know, that's the message that sent.

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Kara Jones 44:15

Yeah, yeah. Or that you have to do something creative. But I'm so sad. I can't I don't have the energy to do that. Maybe there's something there to hover around that, that impulse of doing that, like there's some moral implication that doing is better than not doing. Right. Right. No Till teaches like, what's the space and grace that your heart needs?

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Kara Jones 44:43

What was it was it is it fair to ask you, you were creative person before you lost your son? Probably your whole life, right? You strike me as that time, right? So I don't want to say how long did it take you because that's not fair. But Did it come back quickly? Or were you afraid that it wasn't going to come back? I know you noticed it. So what was the first step that you knew it was coming back, I still got it, you know, I still got the interest.

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Kara Jones 45:12

Um, so there was a couple of things that sort of like saved my bacon. In those moments, I was in a group poetry process, when I was pregnant with a group of other women and men who were exploring the poetry process, not from a critique point of view, but from a more of a therapeutic point of view. And so I was in this group when I was pregnant. So when our baby died, that whole group showed up for us. Wow. And in the moments where I could not find words, some of the elders from that group really, those women had words from Yes. And so that was kind of an early inclination for me that, okay, this is an individual experience. But grief is an individual, there was a, there was a community affected here, and a community speaking to what was happening. They gave me hope,

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Kara Jones 46:16

yes, that I could

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Kara Jones 46:20

find something again, that maybe was words, maybe it wasn't words, but that there was be something again, yes. And then part of what I had to do, which was not something I had done before, because my background had been like, I'm a poet, and I'm an educator, like this was very, you know, linear by, like, this is yeah. So part of what I had to do was get used to giving myself permission to experiment. And so if I was called to scribble on the page, and then sit with that scribble, see if it had anything to say, write some words in between the lines or something, to allow that to be my creativity for the day. Or my body? Just, you know, what's the unmet need in my body? I was really hungry. And the energy I had for that day was spent cooking. Yeah, to allow that to be the creativity for the day, it was a very different, expansive, very different than the binary like,

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Kara Jones 47:27

Well, I was gonna say it taught, it sounds like it taught you to define creativity a different way. Yeah. Yeah. We're used to doing

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Kara Jones 47:35

Yes. And that is the beginning of the expanding those definitions of responsibility.

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Kara Jones 47:39

Yeah. With the creativity part. Okay, last question. It's an email question, because I didn't realize we were gonna get so many. How does a person determine the best creative outlet for themselves? When attempting to cope with grief? And Catherine, you might can answer that too.

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Kara Jones 47:58

I wouldn't say that, that sense of experimenting, that sense of having some space and grace in your body that you just, there's no prescription. Like, I can't give you a checklist of creative tools when

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Kara Jones 48:15

people want that. Why they they're really even brief. They crave that.

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Kara Jones 48:20

And even practitioners want it sometimes, like they want to know how can i What can I bring? And you know, sometimes you're gonna pull a creative idea out of your basket, and it's gonna fall flat and oh well, you know, I go back to my improv foundations. Yes. And and now what?

tail hat and on, well, you know, I go back to my improv foundations. Yes. And and now what? Yeah, um, so I yeah, like to allow your spill yourself the space to discover that there's no right answer. There's no right way.

K Kara Jones 48:48

And it doesn't have to be a you said prescribe. But like you gave the example of somebody who had a plan to do something on the weekend, and they ended up just laying on the sofa. And you know, watching TV all day, it doesn't have to be definitive. Like, just because you've got this plan to do tonight. You don't have to do it. You don't have to beat yourself up if you don't get around to

K Kara Jones 49:11

it. Yeah, that permission, permission to whatever the time line is, whatever the beat is that night, it's okay.

K Kara Jones 49:21

Because obviously, you needed it. Yeah, your body knows what you need. A lot of times, yes. Whether it's physical illness or mental, I think, Well, this has been a great show. I told you, we'd go by fast. And I would not get to all the questions I had. We've talked you've already mentioned many resources. But can you think of any more talk about your podcast for a little bit? You said it's not regular, regular podcast? People what's the name of the podcast? How would people listening find your podcast?

K Kara Jones 49:54


On over at griefandcreativity.com under the Resources section? and there's a link there that will take you to all the podcasts that are available up till this point. And a lot of them came out of that a lot of the early writings I did in the early 2000s. I kind of took them back from where they were published, and reworked some things and turned them into podcasts. That's good. Yeah. So they cover different topics of grief and creativity and, you know, different experiences I had along the way. And then the studio site is creativegriefstudio.com. And there's a lot of resources there, too. If you're looking for continuing education stuff, books.


K Kara Jones 50:35


Are there any good apps, phone apps?


K Kara Jones 50:39


You know, I the, wow, what is it called? grief? Grief, coach? Grief, it's a techspace. App. I can't think of the name of it now.

 Kara Jones 50:51
Grief coach, maybe? Yeah, I

 Kara Jones 50:53
think it's grief coach. And it's kind of a it's a text service. So like, even if you don't have a voice, and you just feel like, but you can still get support. It's really Yeah, I think that's a fascinating, the Crisis Text Line to I've had to be out have had good support from that.

 Kara Jones 51:13
That Fascinating. Well, thank you so much. I'm gonna check out the crafting the book, you mentioned, the crafting of grief. Yeah, it's a good one. So I think that would help me as a therapist with some of the students I see who are who are going through fresh grief.

 Kara Jones 51:27
Yeah, Dr. Harris's book and Dr. Bordere's book, that handbook of social justice for loss and grief, I think it is. That's a really interesting look into grief, having a social justice context to it, too.

 Kara Jones 51:43
Thank you. Yeah, absolutely. It's been great. It's just always goes by so fast. And sometimes I worry, we're not going to ever have enough to talk about but I don't think that's possible. And I can tell with you, that's never possible. With both of us. We could go on for hours, probably. I appreciate it. Because I know, at least it's earlier in Washington, because sometimes I'll have people alone that are in on the East Coast, and it's a little bit later. So I appreciate them being here. But thank you so much. And if you're listening, don't forget, our shows are recorded in podcast it on Apple podcasts, audio, boom.com and voices.ua.edu. You can just type in Brian matters. And you'll find some of our past shows. There's also a link to voices.ua.edu on our Counseling Center's website. It's counseling.ua.edu. So thanks again, I always like to thank the people who've made our show possible. Dr. Greg Vander Waal. He's our Executive Director here at the counseling center, Terry singers from the office of student media, my production assistant, Catherine Howell, my colleagues here at the counseling center, and the web UI step staff who edit our shows, and my guest tonight, Kara Jones. And don't forget, next week, we're going to have another interesting show. It'll be our last show, I think how parents can support their college students mental health, we need to talk more about that with and I feel like I'm doing that all the time. And I know Kevin probably does too. Thanks again for listening to brain matters. We'll see you here next week.

 53:25

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