

Hi. I'm Kara Jones from the Creative Grief Studio. If you want to find out more about our program - just right off the bat - you can go to our website at CreativeGriefStudio.com. In today's video, I'm going to share a little bit with you about some different aspects of our program, and hopefully that gives you some more information to want to go to the website and see what's coming up for our next program and how to apply for it. So Cath Duncan and I started the Creative Grief Studio in 2012, and along with a collaborative teaching team, we've been offering this course twice a year ever since. What we found is that the practitioners who come to us for this training, and even folks from other kinds of helping professional fields, what they find is whatever their niche is for their practice, grief and loss skills are really valuable, because grief seems to come up almost everywhere.

I'll give you some examples. Sometimes our clients have had past grief experiences - it's not a fresh experience - but that past grief experience has created some fears that they've brought with them into the present. So even though they're trying to exercise their agency and making meaning and find a good sense of belonging, those fears are inhibiting what they're trying to do. Now, other clients find even just changes in the workplace cause grief. So you'll see a lot of things about grief being related to the death of a loved one, but a lot of times, grief comes from other sources and circumstances, for example, big changes in the workplace can sometimes bring up grief, and we don't even realize to name it grief, let alone how to approach it creatively and work with it. Then other clients, even though they're initiating the changes that are happening - these are things they want to have happen, changes they want to make - some sense of loss comes up with those changes, and rather than having that grief experience go unnamed or hijack those changes they're trying to make, practitioners in whatever niche they're in and whatever changes the person's trying to make, right, how do we help them creatively approach that sense of loss and grief? In a lot of different ways, our participants find us they're doing lots of different kinds of work and finding that whether or not they want to be a certified Creative Grief Support Practitioner or not, whether that's the single they're going to hang out or not, the skill sets we're exercising, the creativity we're working, the heARTmaking that we're doing in this course is really something they can take back to whatever niche they come from.

If you've looked into coaching programs at all, and especially if you look specifically for grief coaching kinds of programs, you may notice a lot of those programs focus on the death of a loved one as a source of grief. One of the things we're trying very hard in this program to do is include, definitely the death of a loved one is a part of the grief experience, but there are lots of different kinds of grief experiences. So when we have clients who are experiencing grief from divorce or separation, from change of job, from immigrating to a new country, entirely new environment, entirely new community, people who are enduring everyday kinds of loss experiences due to racism or sexism or discrimination against their sexual orientation, all of these kinds of social injustice experiences bring along with them grief experiences. What we're trying to do in this program is get you comfortable as a practitioner with all kinds of different loss experiences, all kinds of different grief that comes up, whatever the circumstances. How do you really integrate the understanding of loss and grief and sit with the person in front of you

whatever they're bringing to the table in a really deeply integrated way to help them start tapping into what they know? How do you allow the client to be the expert, to tap into the agency they have, to tap into the access they have, to really creatively approach and understand the loss they might be feeling about the access they don't have, etc. All of these things are part of the grief experience. It's not just the death of a loved one and the funeral and then trying to get through some checklist of process, right? It's a very organic and unique experience for every person and so being with people as a practitioner is a very organic and unique experience, too.

One of the things about this course, in terms of creativity, that we feel is pretty special about it, is that we're really keeping that creativity front and center. So as I mentioned earlier, rather than giving you a set of procedures or a checklist for how things have to happen, we're really trying to give you a set of skills that allow you to be as creative in the moment as the grief experience is calling for. We do a combination - creativity has a combined meaning for us - and this combination of creative conversation, which includes listening very deeply to the person in front of you to understand what kinds of values they hold, what kinds of skills are bringing to the table, how you can help them tap into the agency they have, and then also the art-making piece of it. The creativity is this combination of these creative approaches in terms of conversation and art making, and those things together are what we call heARTmaking, as I mentioned earlier. Through the heARTmaking, we're trying to encourage you, rather than give you prescriptions for here's how this goes. We're trying to encourage our practitioners to really look at what you have in front of you in the moment and what's available, what's available for this client, what's available for you to bring to the table, and how do you use creativity as an approach to grief experience? This can be a visual art making, it can be writing or art journaling, but it also can be as creative, and in as myriad of ways, as we grieve, right? The creative approach is as unique and the possibilities for how it happens are in as many ways as grief is for everybody. We've had people who - what they bring to the table is they are a florist - doing flower arranging classes. And because they're florists, they're working with local funeral homes, and there are a lot of people that come to them and have had these grief experiences because the flowers came from this florist, right? We've had folks who are bakers and their bakery is a community space, right? People bring grief with them when they come to get their coffee, when they're doing baking lessons, and so how do you get creative about food and the memories that food holds and baking holds, and nourishing a community as being part of a creative approach. We give you the tools that we really hope you're going to take back to whatever your niche is as a practitioner and use them in adaptive ways for whoever shows up in front of you, for whatever kind of workshop or space you're trying to create for people to explore creatively. Again, this allows you to learn how to create space and allow people to tap into what they're bringing. You don't have to be the expert. You don't have to know all the answers. You don't go to that burnout place of always trying to be the go-to person, but rather, you're trying to make creative spaces where people can foster their own skills and really hear their own inner answers about what's happening for them in lots of different ways, through that combination, that expanded definition of creativity. That's a core value of the course that we hold throughout the course - whatever topic we're talking about - we're always bringing creativity to the fore of that topic.

One of the things that we hear from practitioners who have come through the program, including

some folks who have been very experienced in their field already - therapists and social workers - is that they find a real sense of freedom and openness and delight in this approach precisely because we take a counterculture stance to these approaches to grief. It's a real counterculture stance in terms of how creativity can be used. By that, I mean we stand very strongly against anything that pathologizes a grief experience for a person. Any kind of social discourse or psychological theory that says there's one way, or here's the tasks, or here's the stages, anything that adds a disenfranchisement to the grief a person is already experiencing, we want to very clearly be able to see that. We want our practitioners to be able to see it, to understand it, to listen for it, to help their clients name it. That means also being versed in taking a stand and really supporting creative grief practitioners who themselves find their practice outside of the dominant norms, right? From their life experiences and the values they hold and who they are and the clients that they're working with, there are things happening for folks that don't fall into these dominant paradigms of how grief works and how we address grief experiences for people. There's a lot of research about different aspects of grief, and we share a lot of this with you in the course, so you get a lot of different insights, a lot of different points of view about grief experiences. Ultimately, we're really trying to help you build a skill set and an ability to sit with ambiguity, to allow anything that has a discomfort to it, to allow complexity, to allow a mystery even, as you're working with people. There's not always an answer, and so sometimes mystery is a part of this experience for people. How do we really utilize our own creativity and our own skills to allow our clients to utilize their own creativity and skills to name what's happening for them even if it falls outside of what we typically see, or what is the dominant paradigm of how grief happens, or how grief is named, or how it's addressed for people. We really want you to have a space where you can sit with that kind of ambiguity and then allow creativity to come into the conversation and into the activities that allow people to explore what's happening for them, right? Again, it's going to be as individual as they are.

One of the things that we sometimes hear from folks who are seeking about what program to work with, is that they have some fears about grief as a niche or naming it into their practice. It's too dark or too intense, or it's something that only licensed mental health providers can provide and offer space for. One of the things that we're very careful to do in our course is to train our practitioners to understand when clients need that alternative or concurrent support from other professionals. You can learn with us how to tell when someone's grief experience is more than what you do in your practice. Where are the edges of your boundaries and your practice? A lot of times, this goes back to the creative listening: people have had experiences in their life before grief came or before a loss experience, so let's say they were wrestling with some sort of past trauma, and then this grief comes so that trauma comes into this new grief experience. Or if they were struggling with substance abuse before, then that comes with them into this grief experience. We're training you by giving you some practical module and practice looking at case studies on how to really see what's happening in front of you, and to really know, for example, that this is someone that you might want to work with but that work needs to happen concurrent with other helping professionals or, alternatively, you need to refer out. We're helping people really understand that through this course. At the same time, we really want to emphasize that grief is not a mental illness, right? Grief is not a mental illness. There are very few people,

statistically, who have really complicated situations. When you see those complications come up, yes, make referrals or work in a team approach with other licensed mental health professionals to do whatever else is needed concurrently. In many cases, the clients that you're working with are not having that kind of complicated experience. We work with you to make sure you know how to assess those situations and you know the edges of your own practice, so that you know what kind of grief experiences and what kinds of client situations you want to work with. What you're comfortable with, how to build that community into your practice and so on, so that when you do need to refer out, or you do want this client to engage in a team approach - if you're going to be part of that team - how do you connect with other professionals? How do you make those referrals happen? We are really wanting our practitioners to understand that this isn't a solo thing. You might be working self-employed in a solo practitioner way, but you're not alone. We're training you within the program on how to make these connections with your peers. What does it mean to access supervision? How do you build up your Rolodex of other professionals who are doing things that are beyond the scope of your practice, so that you're really building not just your practice, but you're building community for you and helping your clients know how to access that same community too. All of that is part of the program as well.

To wrap up with some of the last practical details about the Certification and Creative Grief Support: we offer the class twice a year in the spring and in the fall, the course happens entirely online. You can join us from anywhere in the world. You just need to have phone and internet access. We only work with groups of 20 people or smaller but our sessions are usually less than 10. The maximum is 20 people but it's usually an intimate group. Our teaching team is working throughout the course with this small group. As you are processing the materials personally and then also thinking about how the materials apply to your practice, we're building community in these conversations through the course. The classroom is open 24/7. You're going to get some really deeply experiential processes happening in the class. We have art demos, but we don't want you to just watch the demo, we actually want you to work with the art-making idea, work with the creative prompts, and see how that's playing out for you personally. Have an in-the-bones experience of these ideas, and then to start thinking about how this translates into your practice. We've heard from folks who come through, from our alumni, is that they've had both a deeply personal experience and a professional experience. One of the perks of the course is at the end of your individual session we also then segue you into an alumni community. That skill building that you've gotten as a smaller group, you can then bring to a larger group of the alumni community, and continue making those connections with people.

All the details for this course are at CreativeGriefStudio.com. We do have spots open in the next session. If you have other questions or if there's more that comes up for you as you read through the website materials, or just after watching this video, please be in touch with us. Our program manager is Tamara Beachum, and she is available to chat by phone, Zoom or whatever works for you. We're happy to answer questions and to talk through how to take the course, how much time you can expect to invest in it, the money investment, what it's like to work with your peers in the class - we call them coaching buddies where we pair you up so you get an even more intimate connection working with your peers - and more. We'd love to see an

application from you. We'd love to talk with you and answer more questions if you have them. Thank you so much for being here today, and hopefully we'll see you over at CreativeGriefStudio.com.