



Certification in Creative Grief Support:

One Year Online Program With Certification

Co-created by Rev. Kara LC Jones of [Grief + Creativity](#) and Cath Duncan of [Cath Duncan Art](#), this 15 module, one year Creative Grief Support Certification Program is steeped in Cath and Kara's personal experiences of learning to live wholeheartedly after loss, as well as over 25 years of practice as helping professionals. Kara, along with our full teaching team of 6 certified alumni, guide participants through the 15 modules of perspective-shifting ideas and creative tools. In addition, several guest creatives such as Dr. Darcy Harris, Dr. Kimberly Manning, Dr. Harriet Lerner, Dr. Lorraine Hedtke, Ade Adeniji and Heather Plett teach their groundbreaking research and creative practice models.

What's in the Program?

Our course is based on narrative theory (Madigan, 2011), including Re-membering Conversations (Hedtke, 2016) and shame resilience theory (Brown, 2006). The 1-year program draws on a range of theories and practices including:

- narrative therapy,
- appreciative enquiry,
- shame resilience theory,
- resilience theory,
- social justice theories,
- and more.

We've also included experientials like:

- multiple coaching demos provide examples of how the tools might be used
- video and photo-illustrated art-making demonstrations to use with clients
- creative prompts we explore during live calls and others to explore with coaching buddies for practice

These are the topics covered in the course:

- **Preparing for the course:** introductions and understanding the private classroom operation
- **Introduction to grief:** grief as a creative and social meaning-making process, plus the roles of shame resilience, agency, belonging, and hope
- **The support relationship:** the role of the support relationship and what it means to nurture a non-pathologizing "two-way account" of Creative Grief Support
- **Meaning making after loss:** core philosophical assumptions that underpin our approach, including the roles of language and social discourse in meaning making, and a critique of popular grief theories



- **Shame in meaning making after loss:** potential effects of shame on meaning making after loss, supports for shame, and the intersections of social injustice with grief and shame.
- **Shame resilience and generative meaning making:** defining what shame resilience is, and what kinds of themes, factors, and creative conversations can support shame resilience
- **Emotions in grieving:** critical review of various popular social discourses on grieving emotions, creative ways to support flexibility and motion in grieving emotions
- **Embodying agency:** explore the multiple and multi-directional relationships between grief and the body, as well as various creative ways to support grieving clients to embody agency during and after loss
- **Re-membering Conversations as a Framework:** the philosophy and method of facilitating re-membering conversations with clients grieving the death of a loved one
- **Grieving in community:** explore how grief may affect social circles, and creative ideas for supporting clients to transform relational conflict that may compound stress after loss
- **Traumatic grief:** understand the nature of trauma, its potential effects, how to know when a client needs specialist trauma support, and an approach to facilitating safe and helpful conversations about trauma
- **Support when death is near:** the ethics, values, choices, and aesthetics involved in supporting clients and their families to create meaning when death is near
- **Becoming: values, ethics, limits, and ongoing growth:** covers the difference between therapy and coaching, how to discern whether a client needs more specialist support, and the values, ethics, and practices that are sustaining for helping professionals
- **Endings and possibilities:** themes of what clients might need and how to support those needs individual and group helping relationships come to an end
- **Certification completion:** via monthly Praxis sessions, with peers and CGS team members, participants are given the option to complete various pieces of creative and skill building demonstrations so that they complete both the course and their certification at the same time.

How the Program Is Structured

- A comprehensive 15 module manual and workbook that provides the full theoretical base for the course, as well as links for additional recommended resources.
- 24 live Zoom sessions (1.5 hours each) to experience creative coaching tools, observe coaching demos, have questions answered and to discuss more deeply how to apply the ideas and tools. These are recorded so that participants can listen again at any time.
- Recorded guest creator lectures by those listed on the Creative Team tab of our [website](#).
- A system of Praxis, so participants can complete coaching practice and certification together.
- Guided experiential training in the use of over 25 different creative grief support tools.
- Ongoing access to a private online forum where participants post practice artwork and discuss experiences doing the exercises, as well as any other questions not covered on the Zooms.
- Ongoing access to our Creative Grief Support Tools Library.



- Prescribed reading of Dr. Lorraine Hedtke's book, *The Crafting Of Grief*, as well as academic journal articles and research provided throughout the course.
- Ongoing access to free monthly live Zoom sessions with Creative Grief Studio alumni.

The Course Creators

Why Is Social Identity Important?

We really care about social justice, so we teach a grief support approach that takes account of the ways that our social identities and social power might influence our loss, death, grief, and general life experiences and our meaning making after loss. We do this work because we have a vision for agency, belonging, and hope, for everyone in our living and in our grieving and dying. We don't agree with colorblind and politically neutral stances that encourage grief support practitioners to look past differences in social identities. Instead, we believe that claiming our preferred social identities, as well as recognizing the social identities that get put onto us, and naming the visible and invisible effects of those social identities, is a much more effective way to facilitate agency, belonging, and hope for all. In this spirit, here's a bit about us, Cath and Kara, the Co-Founders of The Creative Grief Studio, including our social identities.

About Cath Duncan (MSW)

I was born and raised in Cape Town, South Africa. As a white South African, owing to the ongoing effects of colonialism, apartheid, and global systemic white supremacy, I experience the many benefits of significantly greater education, wealth, privilege, and power than most South Africans have. I have also lived in and traveled around the UK, Canada, and the USA, where my foreign status afforded me less privilege, power, and access.

My husband and I became adoptive parents in 2013. Our son is Black. Being a transracial family and learning what it means to parent, protect, and love our son in a racist world continues to open my eyes to white supremacy and my own socialisation in racism.

My home language is English, I can also speak Afrikaans (albeit rather poorly), and I'm learning isiXhosa, the language of most Black South Africans in the Western Cape. Learning a new language has shown me the important role of language in culture, identity, a sense of belonging, and social power and access.

I'm a cisgender heterosexual woman in a monogamous marriage since 1999, with a cisgender heterosexual man. Despite this, my husband and I both find heteronormativity problematic in many ways, and try to ally for non-binary definitions of sex, gender, and sexuality. I was raised in the Christian faith, but no longer identify as a Christian.





I'm a "healthy" chronically ill person, living with the life-long health challenges and triumphs of kidney failure, kidney transplant, Mast Cell Activation Syndrome, and the side effects of the medications I have to take every day. I am legally classified as blind, with currently only about 30% vision left in my right eye and about 10% vision left in my left eye, and the future of my eyesight uncertain. I also use a hearing aid for low-tone deafness. However, because I enjoy generally good health and fitness (aside from the genetic mutations that keep trying to disable or kill me!), and because my illness and disabilities are mostly invisible, I generally pass as healthy and abled. (This has both benefits and disadvantages!) My white privilege and access to good medical treatment and disability aids has also buffered me from many of the hardest effects of chronic illness and disability. However, living with chronic illness and disability is one of my "outside of the dominant norm" experiences that both instructs and motivates me to learn more about the roles of social identity, privilege, and power in how people make sense of and live with loss and trauma.

My experiences with ill health, disability, and adoption provide me with daily opportunities to expand my appreciation and understanding of the many different kinds of loss and grief. I am also a bereaved parent, a Registered Clinical Social Worker with a background in child protection, trauma debriefing, and counseling for grief, burnout, anxiety, and depression, and I'm the author of the Remembering For Good Grief Workbook. You can learn more about the workbook at [Cath Duncan Books](#) and find my original artwork pursuits at [CathDuncan.com](#).

About Rev. Kara Jones (CAIC, CRMT, BA)

I'm white, American born, cisgender woman with Italian heritage, and though I know all the curse words in Italian, truly, I only speak English. Since 1996, I've been in a monogamous, heterosexual commitment with a cisgender man who is Black and German. (Truth be told, I also know a few curse words in German, too.)

With the help of academic scholarships, grants, and way too many loans, I managed to get a solid college education, but like most of my generation, that means I have debts I will take to my grave. I have experienced homelessness, but for the past 20 years we have been steady renters living in a community we were lovingly introduced to by a friend on Vashon Island, Washington.

While I was initially raised Roman Catholic, that changed when my mother divorced my father and the church excommunicated us. I've never really trusted any religious organization since then. I do identify as a student of Buddhist philosophy and meditation practice though. My spiritual practices are otherwise non-denominational.





My biggest grief experiences came with the deaths of three babies at birth. I'm a mom who has living and dead children, mom in a blended family, and now a grandma, too.

My continued exploration of grief comes in around chronic illness. I have multiple chronic illness diagnoses (ME/CFS, PCOS, MCAS, and idiopathic angioedema etc), though some of what is happening with my health is still a mystery. Given our lousy healthcare system here in America, I'm not entirely sure the root cause will ever be found. Anxiety and depression are part of my experiences at times, too, as the mystery part of being chronically alive can get to me. For the most part, I pass as abled which, as Cath said above, has both advantages and disadvantages.

I'm a Certified Appreciative Inquiry and Whole Systems Coach, and a graduate of Carnegie Mellon University, holding double degrees in Literary and Cultural Theory and Creative Writing. I also hold a minor degree from Chatham College in Early Childhood Development. My ordination as Reverend is non-denominational. I interned for three years at Family Communications (FCI) on production of Mister Rogers Neighborhood back in the day. I have authored several books including *Mrs. Duck and the Woman*, *Flash Of Life*, and *1000 Permissions Granted*. I have contributed to publications such as *They Were Still Born*, *Journal of Family Social Work*, *Living With Grief*, *Elegy*, and more. For more about my heARTwork, see GriefAndCreativity.com.

Creative Team

Our [Team members](#) are all Certified Creative Grief Support Practitioners. They co-facilitate or lead the live Zoom sessions, and we all work together to moderate discussions in the online classroom.

Guest Creatives - Leaders in Their Fields

A variety of guest lecturers share their research and practice models. They include:

- Dr. Kimberly Manning, MD, author of [Reflections of a Grady Doctor](#) blog.
- Dr. Lorraine Hedtke, MSW, LCSW, Ph.D., author of *Remembering Lives* and [The Crafting of Grief](#).
- [Dr. Harriet Lerner](#), author of *Dance of Anger* and [Marriage Rules](#).
- [Dr. Darcy Harris](#), author of *Promoting Social Justice in Loss and Grief*.
- Vanessa Gorman, filmmaker and author of the documentary "[Losing Layla](#)"
- [Ade Adeniji](#), Coach, Interfaith Minister, Group Certified Daring Way™ Facilitator.
- Heather Plett, Founder at [HeatherPlett.com](#) and author of [The Art of Holding Space](#).

