

# MOURNING IS THE WORK

Art and Ritual-Based Practices for Educators to  
Metabolize Grief

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## — GATE OF GRIEF: WHAT WE EXPECTED BUT DID RECEIVE —

- Unconscious disappointment
- Feelings of loneliness and aloneness
- Diminished experience of who we truly are
- Longing to belong
- Longing to be longed for



“How do we even know that we miss these experiences?”

I don't know how to answer that question. What I do know is that when these things are finally granted to us, a wave of recognition rises that we have lived without this love, this acknowledgment, and the support of this village all our lives. This realization calls forth grief. I have seen this time and again.”

— Francis Weller, *The Wild Edge of Sorrow: Rituals of Renewal and the Sacred Work of Grief* (2015)

## Heart-Opening Practice: Tending the Ache of What Was Missing

(5–7 minutes)

**Begin by finding a comfortable seated position. Let your eyes close or soften your gaze. Allow your hands to rest wherever they feel most supported—perhaps over your heart or gently in your lap.**

Take a slow, deep breath in through your nose... and out through your mouth.

Again, breathing in... and letting go.

Begin to notice your heartbeat. No need to change anything. Just feel into the rhythm of your body, the center of your chest—your heart space.

Let your attention settle here.

Now, gently invite into your awareness something you longed for but didn't receive—maybe as a child, as a younger adult, or even now.

It may be love, safety, affirmation, belonging, protection, or tenderness.

There's no need to solve it or explain it—just notice what comes.



## Heart-Opening Practice: Tending the Ache of What Was Missing

(5–7 minutes)

Take a moment to acknowledge the ache, the longing, the emptiness left behind.

Now imagine offering that unmet need some warmth, some kindness.

Not to fix, but simply to witness—with tenderness.

If it feels right, say silently to yourself:

**“It mattered that I didn’t receive it.”**

**“I see you now.”**

**“You deserved more.”**

Pause and breathe. Let these words land softly.

Allow your heart to open just a little more—to yourself, to the truth of what was missing, and to the possibility of giving yourself now what you once needed.

Breathe gently into this space for a few more moments.

When you feel ready, begin to bring your awareness back to the room—notice your seat, your breath, any sounds around you.

And when you’re ready, slowly open your eyes.



Art by Lexx Valdez

“Grief dares  
us to love  
once more.”

– Francis Weller, *The Wild Edge of Sorrow: Rituals  
of Renewal and the Sacred Work of Grief* (2015)



Art by Lexx Valdez

“What felt different this time was the interior experience of the grief and despair. It was not centered on personal losses—my history, wounds, losses, failures, and disappointments.

It was arising from the greater pulse of the earth itself, winding its way through sidewalks and grocery lists, traffic snarls and utility bills. Somewhere in all the demands of modern life, the intimate link between earth and psyche was being re-established or, more accurately, remembered.

The conditioned fantasy of the segregated self was being dismantled, and I was being reunited, through the unexpected grace of fear, despair, and grief, with the body of the earth.”

— Francis Weller, *The Wild Edge of Sorrow: Rituals of Renewal and the Sacred Work of Grief* (2015)