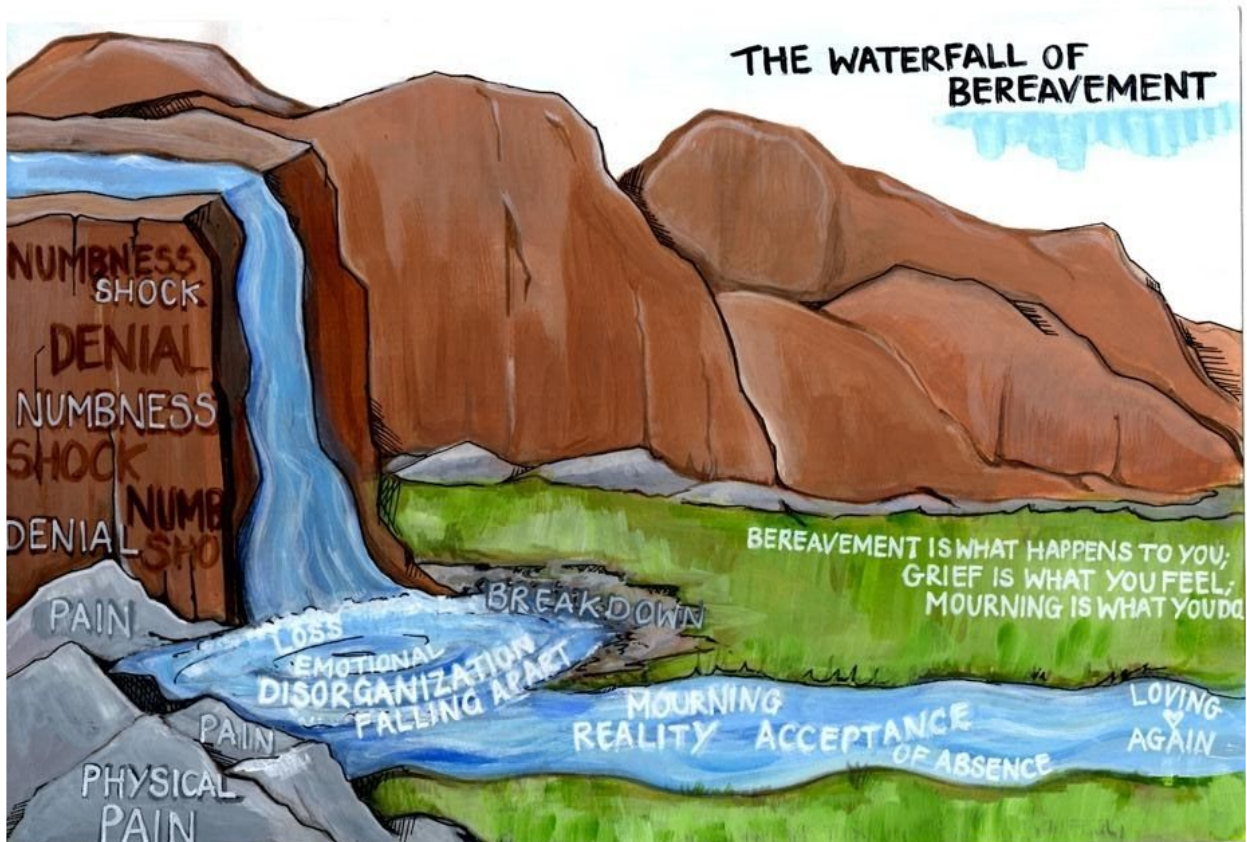


Living with Loss

Life was continuing as normal and suddenly everything has changed. It feels like things will never be the same again, like falling off the edge of a cliff. There is shock and denial: “This isn’t real, it can’t be happening to me!”, and there is bargaining: “If this works out I’ll live life differently!”.



And then there is the bottom and it feels real. There is anger, pain, physical as well as emotional, there is often guilt and shame. And there is sadness. It can feel like being in a whirlpool, life is falling apart. There is a struggle to concentrate, to organise thoughts or even to manage a normal day. Reality is overwhelming and we shift back into shock and denial – it feels safer there! The whirlpool can’t be avoided, it is a stage of grief that cannot be jumped. This is a place where feelings need to be expressed, thoughts need to be processed, acknowledged and accepted.

What if I’m stuck in the whirlpool?

Many things can keep us stuck in the whirlpool. Shame can keep us stuck. Being unable to think about ourselves with kindness. Fear that moving forward means that our loss is no longer important. But moving forward means living life accepting the absence we will always feel. There is a key in acceptance. Life will never be the same again, the loss is real. This can feel overwhelming. We need compassion for ourselves at this time, and a willingness to acknowledge what we are feeling. There is fear of the unknown and a feeling of anxiousness. It is helpful to try to stay in the present, managing each day, half a day at a time. And courageously live life with loss.