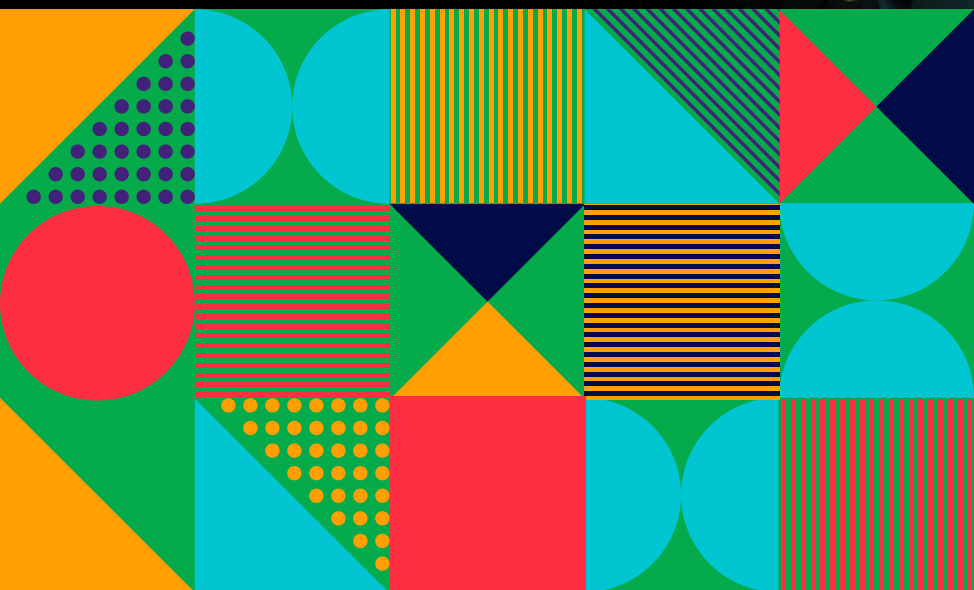




Edgbaston Neighbourhood Network Scheme Newsletter

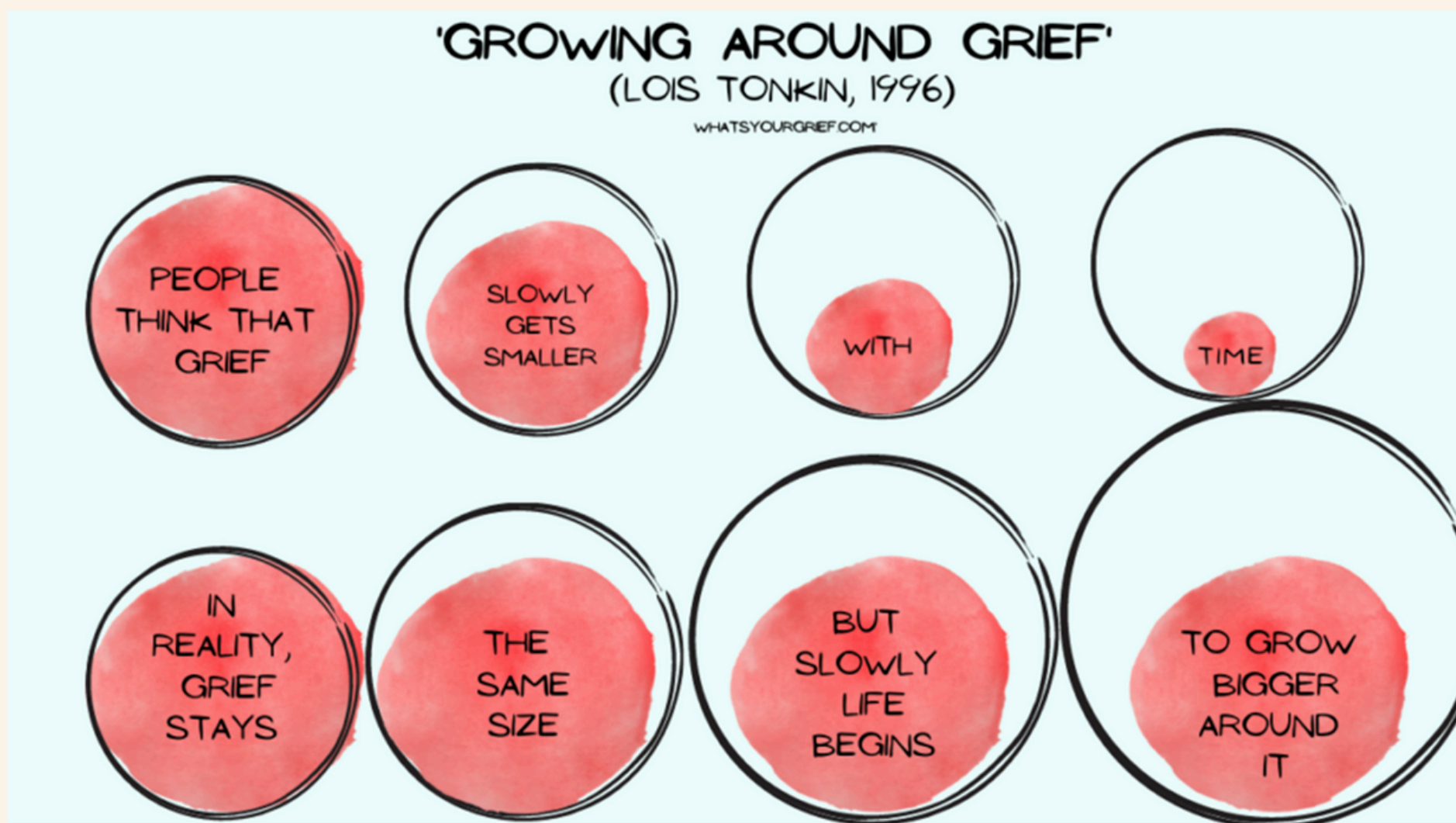
September 2025



Feature Story:

**Breaking the Silence:
Why We Struggle to Talk About
Grief**

Loss is one of the few universal experiences we all face, yet when it happens, many of us find ourselves navigating it in silence. Whether it's the death of a loved one, the end of a relationship, or the loss of a job or home, grief touches us all. However, despite its inevitability, grief remains a difficult topic. To shed light on this complex journey, we spoke to Suzanne McArthur from Thriving Communities CIC. With a background in Occupational therapy and over 25 years of experience in end-of-life care, Suzanne has worked across diverse communities, helping people navigate loss and grief in culturally sensitive and compassionate ways.



>>> THE UNSPOKEN WEIGHT OF GRIEF

“Grief is an intense emotional response to any kind of loss, not just death,” Suzanne clarifies. “This loss can be a person, a home, a job, a sense of identity – it can be anything that leaves us feeling like we’ve been torn apart.” For many, however, grief is accompanied by a sense of isolation. Suzanne explains, this societal reluctance to talk about grief stems from a range of factors, including cultural norms, fear of saying the wrong thing, and the pressure to “move on”. The irony is that we often acknowledge milestones like birthdays or anniversaries with public fanfare, but when it comes to loss, we expect people to “get over it” quickly and quietly. This contradiction creates an environment where grieving individuals can feel unsupported and isolated.

Suzanne explains, our social, cultural, and religious backgrounds, past experiences, and even our personalities influence how we grieve. That’s what makes grief such an individual experience – what’s helpful for one person might not resonate with someone else.

➤➤➤ THE MYTH OF 'HEALING' AND THE REALITY OF ADJUSTMENT

One of the most pervasive myths about grief is that it follows a linear path. We've all heard the phrase "time heals all wounds," but Suzanne is quick to point out that grief doesn't simply go away – it changes. The reality is that grief can come in waves. There are good days and bad days, moments of intense sadness and moments of acceptance. But our culture's insistence on "closure" and the notion that we should "get over it" creates a false expectation. "Grief is always with you; it doesn't just reduce over time," she reiterates, rather, "you learn to adjust to the loss, not 'get over it!'" This insight helps challenge the often unrealistic expectations society places on those who are grieving. Healing, as Suzanne clarifies, is not about forgetting the loss, but learning to live with it.

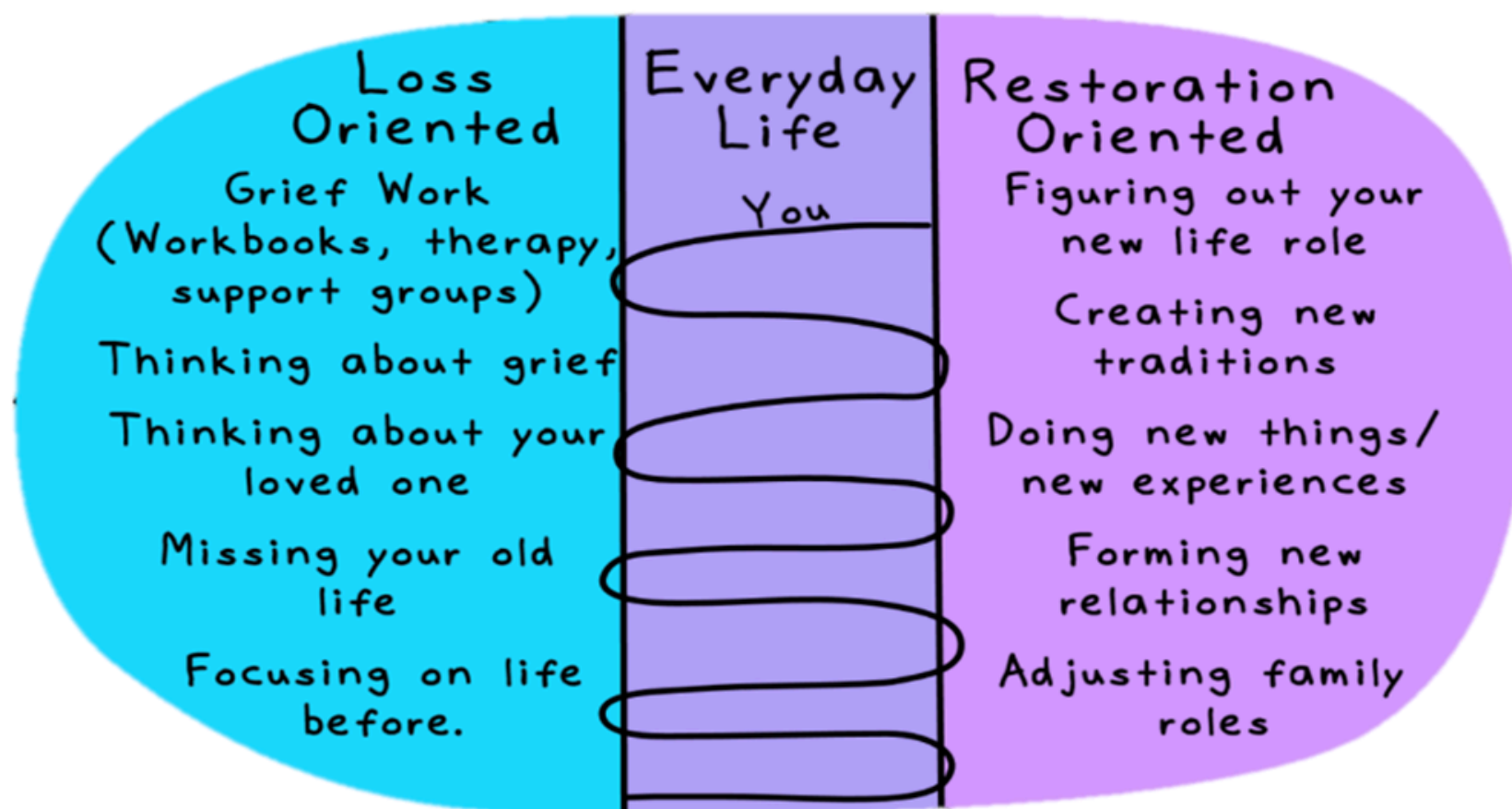
When it comes to supporting others who are grieving, Suzanne advocates for offering genuine compassion and specific support. "It's about asking how they are today, knowing that they've had a tough yesterday and will likely have another tough day ahead," she explains. Above all, Suzanne encourages people to listen without assuming they know how someone feels. "You might have gone through a similar experience, but you don't know what it's like for them. Every grief journey is individual."

➤➤➤ CULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF GRIEF

The ways in which we grieve are often influenced by our cultural and spiritual backgrounds. Suzanne recalls working with a Muslim woman who had experienced immense support from her community during the first year of widowhood. "That support really helped her through the initial period of mourning. But once that year was over, the expectation was that she should be 'moving on,' and the support network disappeared. She found herself isolated and grieving that loss on top of the death of her husband."

This highlights the dual nature of grief in some cultural contexts. Whilst rituals and communal practices can provide comfort and guidance during the most vulnerable moments, when those rituals end, the individual can be left to navigate grief alone.

THE DUAL PROCESS MODEL OF COPING WITH BEREAVEMENT



>>> SHIFTING THE NARRATIVE

In Edgbaston, we are working towards breaking down the stigma surrounding loss and grief. Working with Suzanne and other partners in the sector, we are enabling conversations around the topic through capacity building of community groups and creative workshops that provide spaces for people to share their experiences, connect with others, and find support. By normalising the conversations around grief, we can create communities that are more open, compassionate, and understanding. It's time to break the silence and give grief the space it deserves.





➤➤➤ ASC VISIT TO HBC

Adult Social Care Partnership Manager Shaju Bibi took part in one of the Move It or Lose It sessions at Harborne Baptist Church funded by ENNS. The exercise sessions support the elderly to keep mobile and lead independent lives.



➤➤➤ CARER'S WEEK

Carers' Week (9th-13th June) at B:Music afforded us many opportunities for citizen engagement as well network with organisations that offer a range of activities and support for Dementia carers as well as carers of young adults with disabilities.



➤➤➤ CBUK GRIEF EVENT

At Child Bereavement UK's Family Fun Day, families painted memory stones — from a child's pet turtle to a mother's lost son — creating a space to share grief and remembrance.



➤➤➤ COMMUNITY FUN DAY

On 12th July, we took part in St. Germain's Community Fun Day which saw well over a hundred people walk through the doors giving us the opportunity to engage with citizens and local groups.

UPDATES



»»» DEMENTIA AWARENESS TRAINING

We ran two Dementia Awareness training which was delivered by Dementia Carers Count. The simulation element of the training gave participants the opportunity to understand the impact Dementia has on their everyday lives and how best they can support.



»»» YA OPEN MORNING

Colleagues from NNS across the city at the Younger Adults Open Morning hosted in Edgbaston. We had two taster activities and discussions around how we could better support and engage to improve outcomes for adults with additional needs.



»»» NEIGHBOURHOOD FUTURES FESTIVAL

We hosted a Public Living Room for the first time at the Neighbourhood's Futures Festival in June encouraging citizen engagement and participation. If you have ideas to help us host a Public Living Room in a space outside, please get in touch with us.



»»» DEMENTIA BINGO

In partnership with Amba Care Solutions, we ran three Dementia Awareness Bingo sessions at sheltered housing schemes across the constituency which was well received.



SMALL GRANTS FUNDING UPDATE

The following organisations have been awarded Edgbaston NNS Small Grants:

➤➤➤ BEAT IT PERCUSSION

Rhythm for the Brain will deliver inclusive drumming-based workshops for adults aged 50+ in Edgbaston, using music and relaxation to improve cognitive function, confidence, and mental wellbeing, with plans to develop online resources to extend impact.

➤➤➤ HARBORNE BAPTIST CHURCH (HBC)

The charity will create and distribute support bags for carers and people living with dementia, offering practical resources and comfort ahead of local awareness events on 7th September 2025 and 24th March 2026.

➤➤➤ XPRESS YOURSELF DANCE CIC

This funding will offer six dementia-friendly tea dances and six outreach workshops in Quinton, offering music, movement, and social connection for people living with dementia and their carers in a safe, inclusive setting.

➤➤➤ WEST MIDLANDS CIRCUS CENTRE

The Centre received joint funding from Northfield and Edgbaston NNS to deliver aerial circus and dance sessions, practical rigging and teacher training sessions and accessible training in performance management to those in South Birmingham.



UPCOMING EVENTS AND TRAINING

**UPCOMING EVENTS**



DEMENTIA AWARENESS TRAINING

Wednesday 2nd July

Wednesday 16th July

Dementia Carers Count is collaborating with the Edgbaston Neighbourhood Scheme, funded by Birmingham City Council, to provide training for community leaders and members. The goal is to enhance understanding of dementia and support for unpaid carers. The training will cover:

- Recognizing signs and symptoms of dementia.
- Resources for carers needing support.
- Making communities more inclusive for carers.
- Communication techniques for interacting with those living with dementia.
- Strategies for living well with dementia.
- An interactive dementia experience.





 **Venue TBC**

<https://www.tickettailor.com/events/edgbastonneighbourhoodnetworkscheme/1700107>



**UPCOMING EVENTS**



SAFEGUARDING FOR VULNERABLE ADULTS TRAINING

Tuesday 30th September

This free 3.5-hour training course, organised by Edgbaston Neighbourhood Network Scheme and funded by Birmingham City Council, is available for community groups in the Edgbaston Constituency. It focuses on recognising signs of abuse and safeguarding vulnerable adults.



The training content will include:

- Defining abuse
- Patterns of abuse
- Those most at risk of abuse
- The 10 categories of abuse
- Signs and indications that abuse might be occurring
- Defining safeguarding and taking safeguarding action
- Client consent and safeguarding find not children's safeguarding.

 **10:00 - 13:30**

 **Venue TBC**



Reserve your space at
<https://tinyurl.run/PVMV6J>





Emergency First Aid at Work

Delivered by British Red Cross

THURSDAY

11TH SEPT 2025

09:00 AM -16:00PM VENUE TBC



WHAT YOU'LL LEARN:

A range of essential first aid skills to help you respond quickly and confidently to common emergencies, as well as recognise when professional medical help is necessary.

**WHY ATTEND?**

- Recognised as a Level 3 qualification
- Certificate of completion valid for 3 years

Limited spaces available! Don't miss out, secure your spot today!

Scan QR Code to book







Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Training Workshop

Wednesday 15th October

This free 3.5-hour training course, funded by Birmingham City Council and organised by Edgbaston Neighbourhood Network Scheme, aims to equip community groups in Edgbaston Constituency with skills to deliver services that celebrate diversity, promote inclusion, and ensure equal opportunities for all.



The training content will include:

- Understanding the Equality Act and protected characteristics
- Different forms of discrimination
- How 'membership' of a specific group can bring either advantage or disadvantage
- Understanding the 'multi layered' nature of discrimination
- How an understanding of diversity and inclusion, and their differences, can positively impact and change what we do.

 **10:00 - 13:30**

 **Venue TBC**



Reserve your space at
<https://tinyurl.run/paOu8L>



UPCOMING EVENTS AND TRAINING

Showing the impact of your NNS project



Join our free session to learn how to report your impact on public health measures with simple tools and step-by-step support.

Learn about: measuring the impact of your NNS funded project

 Wednesday 6 August from 10am to 1pm

 Zoom

 Reserve your free spot today!



How can I show the impact of my NNS project?



Join our free session to learn how to report your impact on public health measures with simple tools and step-by-step support.

Learn about: measuring the impact of your NNS funded project

 Wednesday 16 July from 10am to 1pm

 Edgbaston Community Centre, B15 2HU

 Reserve your free spot today!



EXTRA!

We are thrilled to introduce two inspiring individuals who have recently joined the ENNS team: Ivy who has moved to England from Hong Kong eager to connect and contribute to her new community, and Richard, retired, but bringing a wealth of experience and enthusiasm.

SEE YOU NEXT ISSUE!