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## Grief, Crisis & Trauma Counseling Track



### Companioning: *A rediscovered helping paradigm for grief and trauma*

**Presenters:**  
Kevin Ellers, D.Min.  
Jennifer Cisney Ellers, M.A.

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- Can transform your ministry style
- Must be intentionally practiced
- Biblical model
  - Biblical theme "I will be with you"
  - Jesus modeled in ministry
  - Holy spirit - comforter - come along side

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# Companioning

*Sikh Temple Shooting  
Oak Creek Wisconsin  
August 2012*

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## Tenant One



Companioning is about being present with another person's pain; it is not about taking away the pain.

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- Grief happens
- People need permission to grieve
- Making it real and facing reality
- Don't try to take away their pain
- Grievors often feel rushed
- Soul work - downward movement into the psyche
- Spirit work - upward movement
- Soul work impacts us

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## Tenant Two



Companioning is about going into the wilderness of the soul with another human being; it is not about thinking you are responsible for finding the way out.

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## Societal Shift In Our Grief Perception

- We have moved from Addison's words

**"I will indulge my sorrows, and give way to all the pangs and fury of despair"**

- To Bobby McFerrin's song

**"Don't worry be happy!"**

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- Being in Limbo
- Feeling lost
- Better to be lost with someone else
- Everything is subject to question
- Under construction means "torn apart"
- Putting ones worldview back together does not require a formula from caregivers

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## Tenant Three

Companioning is about honoring the spirit; it is not about focusing on the intellect.



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- Spirit can be broadly defined as our nonphysical essences, which include dimensions of intellect, emotion, personality and spirituality
- People are unique and want to be uniquely known
- Spirit work involves "going with" vs "going against" what is presented

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- Soul work requires being present to the matters of spirit and soul
- "Soul is not a thing but a quality or dimension of experiencing life"
- Thomas Moore says that soul "has to do with depth, value, relatedness, heart, and personal substance"
- Tendency to "think around losses vs feeling through losses"

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- Listening with the "spirit ear"
- Witnessing and affirming the reality of what the griever is experiencing
- Encouraging people to be who they are without pretense
- Being authentic and who you are can model and encourage grievers to do the same

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- John Donne, the poet of relationship and soul once observed,

**“He who has no time to mourn, has no time to mend.”**

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**Tenant Four**

Companioning is about listening with the heart; it is not about analyzing with the head.



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- “So what’s your story?”
- Sacred art of listening
- Robert Kall states,

**“The heart holds answers the brain refuses to see”**

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**“Listening with the heart is anchored in the capacity to express compassion and understanding and to possess a deep desire to show solidarity with people” Wolfelt**

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**4 Ingredients of Open-heartedness**

1. Humility
2. Unknowing
3. Unconditional love and acceptance
4. Readiness to receive

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**Wolfelt’s Three Phrase Mantra**

1. No rewards for speed
2. Divine Momentum
3. Not attached to outcome

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### Tenant Five

Companioning is about bearing witness to the struggles of others; it is not about judging or directing these struggles.



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- Tendency to say things that feel judging to others
- Others stories can help or bring guilt
- Grievers tend to compare themselves with others
- Grievers need others to bear witness to their story and pain

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- Do your own work
- Compassion meaning  
*Cum pation* - to suffer with,  
to undergo with,  
to share solidarity with

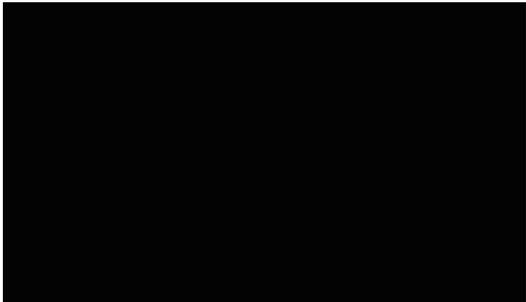
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### Tenant Six

**Companioning is about walking alongside; it is not about leading or being led.**



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- Dean Koontz

“Some people think only intellect counts: knowing how to solve problems, knowing how to get by, knowing how to identify an advantage and seize it. But the functions of intellect are insufficient without courage, love, friendship, compassion, and empathy.”

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### Tenant Seven



**Companioning the bereaved means discovering the gifts of sacred silence; it does not mean filling up every moment with words.**

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### Tenant Seven

- Grief requires periods of solitude and silence
- Be sure what you do say is not about your discomfort with silence
- The urge to speak may be about thinking we must “fix” the griever
- Grievors need silence when there is nothing to say

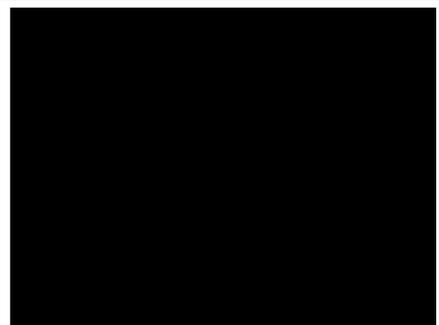
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### Tenant Seven

- Quote from Alan Wolfelt
 

“You stand at the graveside with parents who have just experienced the death of their precious child and words are inadequate. You bend down to touch the child whose mother has just died in a tragic auto accident and words are inadequate. The sadness of loss hands in a wistful silence. Once again you are humbled by an awareness that deep understanding of the ways of life and death cannot be expressed in words.”

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### Tenant Eight



**Companioning the bereaved is about being still; it is not about frantic movement forward**

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### Tenant Eight

- Many phrases we offer the grieving seem to be pushing them forward rather than about stillness:
  - “carry on”, “life must go on”, “you must try to move on....” you must try to get over it”.
  - Without stillness, people cannot encounter the full force of the powerful nature of grief.

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### Tenant Eight

- We think being busy or activity is a friend to the grieving when it can be an enemy and an impediment to grief.
- Our need for movement may stem from our fear of pain and suffering and the thought that we can out run the truth of suffering.

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### Tenant Nine



**Companioning is about respecting disorder and confusion; it is not about imposing order and logic.**

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- When a person is in chaos don't try to join them at the head level
- Stabilize them through your calm presence
- Help them relax into the chaos and disorder

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**“The truth is that our finest moments are most likely to occur when we are feeling deeply uncomfortable, unhappy, or unfulfilled. For it is only in such moments, propelled by our discomfort, that we are likely to step out of our ruts and start searching for different ways or truer answers” M. Scott Peck**

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### Tenant Ten



**Companioning is about learning from others; it is not about teaching them**

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- Grievors do not need “experts”
- We can only be experts in our own grief
- Thomas Moore challenges us to,

**“Allow stories to be told without slipping into interpretations, analysis, and conclusions.”**

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- Stories are important
- Grievers listen to other's stories
- Grievers learn as they tell their stories

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**Tenant Eleven**



**Companionship is about curiosity: it is not about expertise**

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**Tenant Eleven**

- Curiosity is not about voyeurism but about honoring and feeling humbled in the face of another's experience and pain.
- May be hard to admit we are not an expert.
- If you do not feel inadequate in the face of great loss and grief, you may not be ready for companionship.
- You must have the courage to feel helpless.

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**Closing Scripture**

- Jesus said in Matthew 5:4

**“Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted”**

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**In Summary: What God says**

- Life really hurts sometimes
- I have been wounded too so I understand
- Your questions, confusion, fears and doubts are okay
- You are not alone - I will be with you
- Allow others to support you
- Healing takes time
- I will give you strength
- I will transform you through this
- I will love you through this