



# COPING WITH GRIEF & LOSS: THE ROLE OF EXPRESSIVE ARTS

PRESENTED BY:

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in community with the  
2023 Los Angeles Suicide Prevention Summit



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# Welcome & Intentions

Today we hold space for the old and the new,  
for the once was, what might yet become, and what  
may never be.

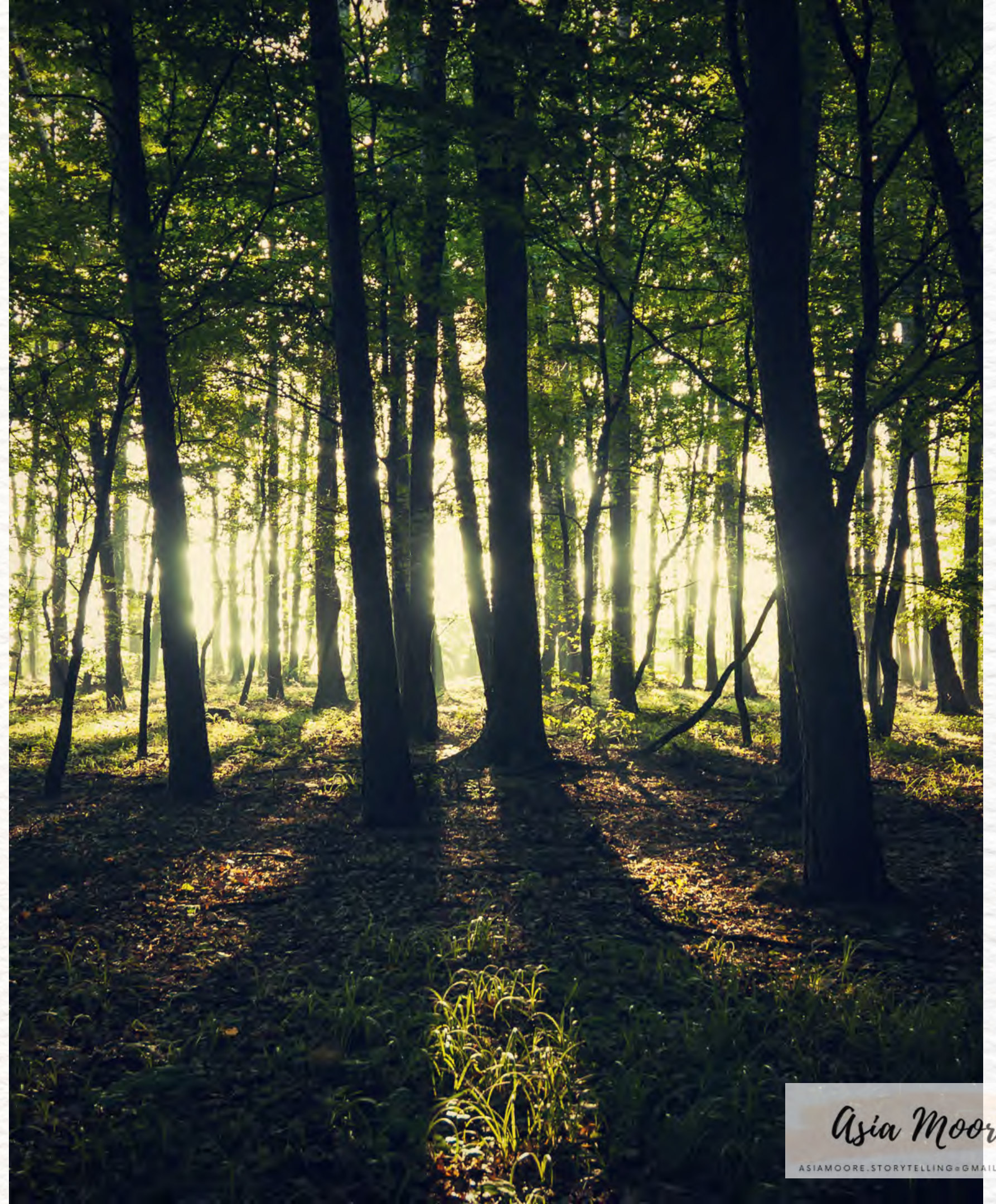
In this moment, we bear witness to nature's most  
sacred gift of plurality-- light amongst shadow, loss  
amongst love, certainty amongst doubt, life alongside  
death.

In community, we hold all that is felt, all that is spoken  
and unspoken, and all that we might discover together.



# Honoring Collective Wisdom

- in your presenters
- in one another
- in this intentional space





# Our Journey Together



## Making Sense of Grief

- Interpersonal Theory of Suicidality
- Risks & Protective Factors
- Integration with Experience



## Conversations with Grief

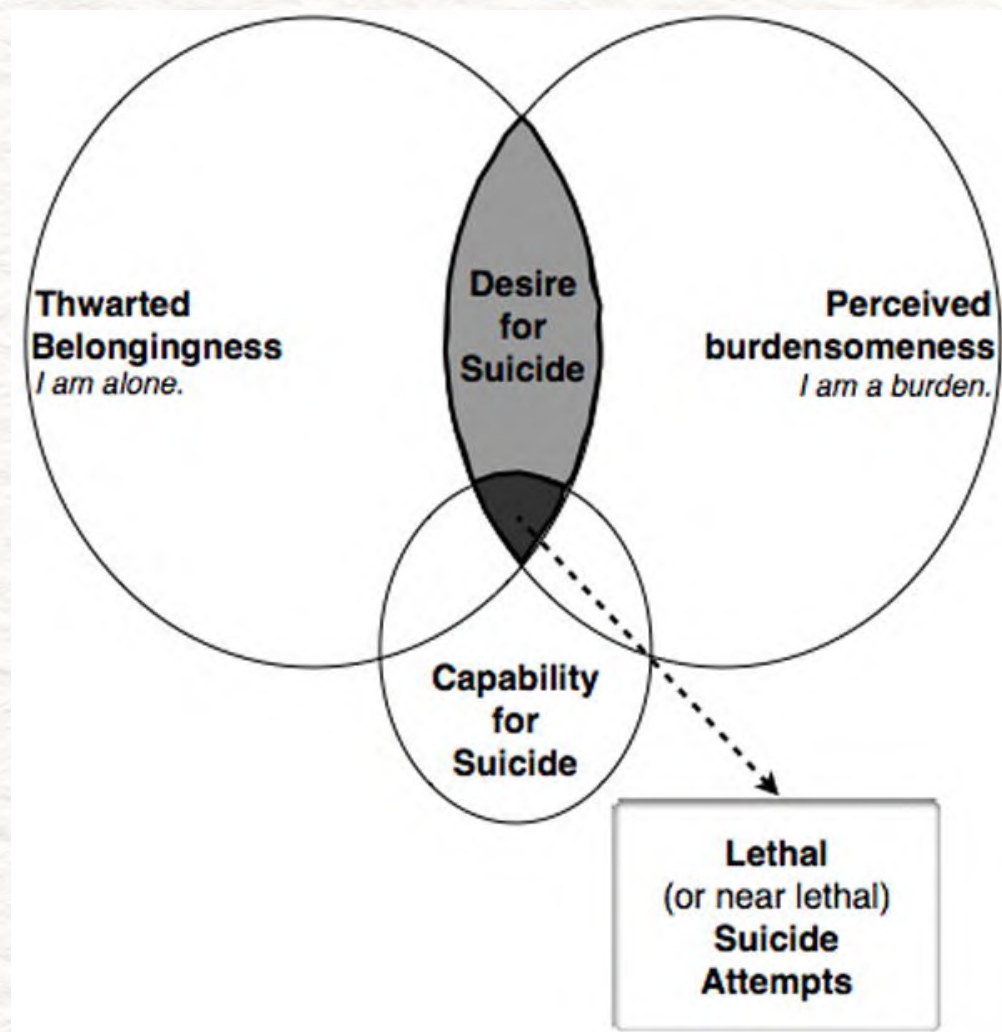
- Guided Visualization
- Creative Writing Activity
- Debrief & Discussion



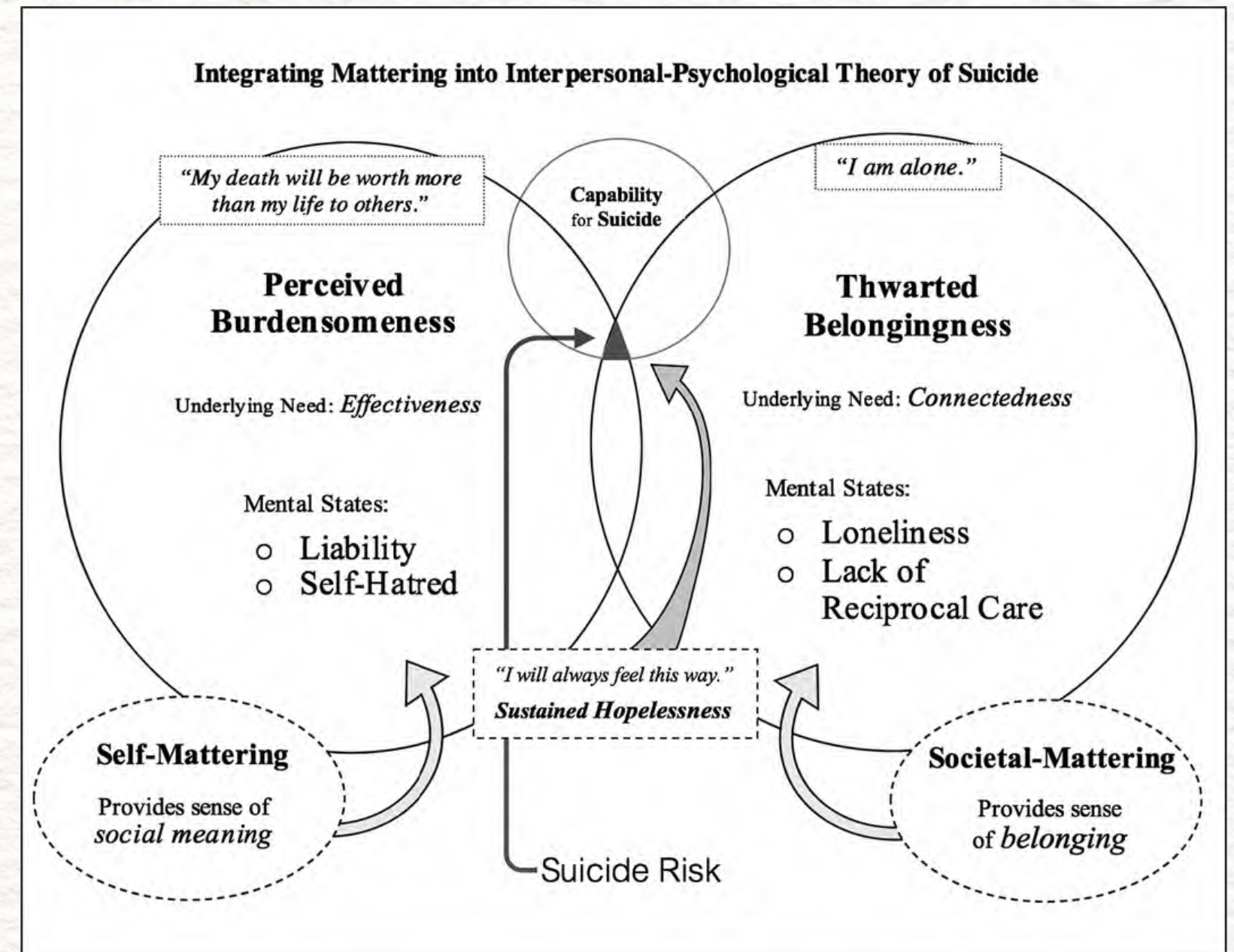
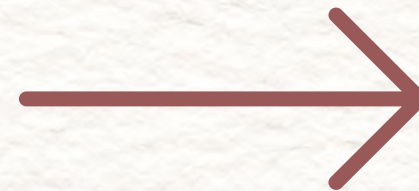
## Holding & Witnessing Grief

- Expressive Arts Activity
- Debrief & Discussion
- Integration & Mindful Closure

# Interpersonal Theory of Suicidality



(Joiner, 2010)



(Drabenstott, 2018)



# Expression: A Pathway to Processing



# Risk & Protective Factors

Risk Factors	Protective Factors
Previous suicide attempts (very high immediately after hospitalization)	Mental health and medical care
Family history of suicidal behavior	Skills for problem solving
Medical conditions and chronic pain	<b>Social support and connectedness</b> (positive connection to community, family, friends, etc.)
Contagion (local epidemics of suicide)	Access (easy access)
Access to lethal methods	Culture and religion
Unwilling to ask for help due to stigma	Restricted access to lethal means
Loss	Reasons for living (LRFL)
Isolation	

What might you add to these lists?

Where do you see yourself? Your family and community?  
Those you serve and support?

Where don't you? What's missing?

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# Conversing with Grief



Notice the feelings that have been coming up for you in this session-- what first emerges to the surface?

What might happen if you had a conversation with this emotion?

Let's see what emerges when we give ourselves permission to engage



# “I Just Thought You Should Know” Poetry Activity

- Pongo Poetry approach as a tool for scaffolded expression, reflection, and integration
- Let’s practice noticing what comes up for us with as much non-judgment as we can
- Remember process > product



## I JUST THOUGHT YOU SHOULD KNOW, *continued.*

Fill in the blanks in the poem below. Use the words suggested or choose your own words to communicate your thoughts as clearly and powerfully as you can. Feel free to add lines of your own, to remove lines, or to change words to fit your purpose.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ (Mom, Dad, Sister, Grandma, old friend, ???),

I just thought you should know what I’m doing now.

I am a \_\_\_\_\_ person  
(strong, angry, happy, lonely, ???)

who spends a lot of time \_\_\_\_\_  
(dancing, watching movies, hanging out with my friends, ???).

I just thought you should know how I’m feeling.

I am \_\_\_\_\_  
(happy, nervous, depressed, ???)

because \_\_\_\_\_

I just thought you should know what I’ve been through.

Since the last time I saw you, I have \_\_\_\_\_ so much  
(grown, suffered, changed, ???)

The time that I \_\_\_\_\_ was especially important.

I just thought you should know what I wish for the future.

I hope that \_\_\_\_\_

I just thought you should know what I don’t miss about you.

I am glad I don’t have to worry about \_\_\_\_\_ anymore.

I just thought you should know what I miss a lot.

I miss the way (you, we) used to \_\_\_\_\_

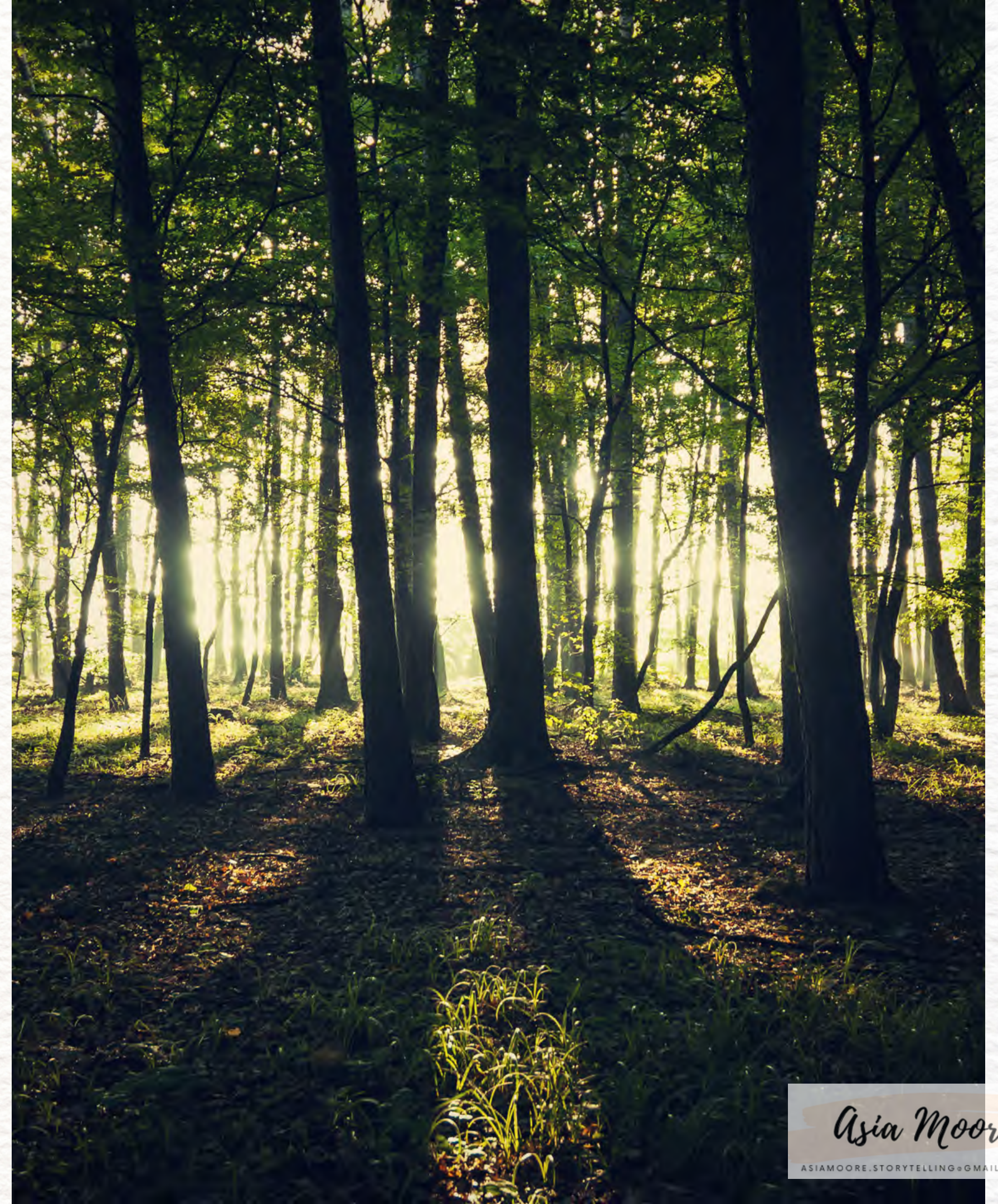
I just thought you should know \_\_\_\_\_

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# Debrief & Discuss

How was that for you?

Set aside any “seeds” you may want to plant or water in the future





# Holding & Witnessing Grief



Now that you've had a conversation with your feelings around grief and loss, what do they expect you to hold?

What have you been carrying?

In this next activity, let's focus on how we can use art to come back into our bodies to hold, contain, and perhaps even release some of these feelings

# “(un)Boxing Grief”

## Arts Activity

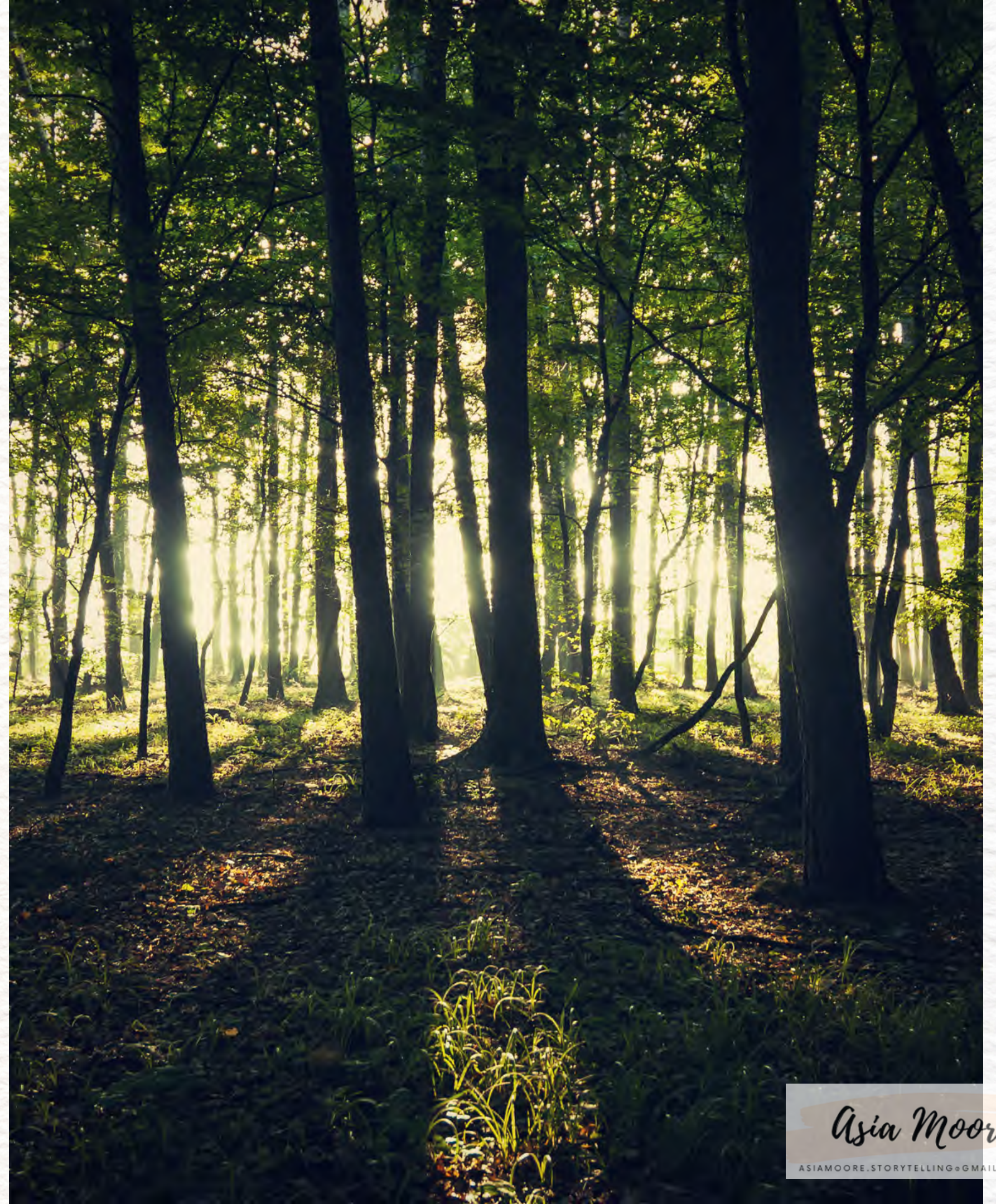
- Notice how your body is holding these emotions, perhaps imagining what the weight would feel like if held in your hands
- Using creative materials, how might you craft a container to help you hold these feelings and experiences?
- If the feelings feel like they cannot be contained, what might you create to reflect or embody this weight?



# Debrief & Discuss

How was that for you?

Set aside any “seeds” you may want to plant or water in the future



# A Mindful Closure & Return Home

As we have traveled deep into our pasts and within ourselves, we conclude our time today with a mindfulness exercise to reground us in the present moment and to bring us back home in our bodies



# Gratitude & Looking Beyond

Thank you for sharing space, vulnerability, courage, creativity, and so much beautiful complexity with us, with one another, and with yourselves.

We hope the places we've journeyed today will remain open to you and those around you whether they be places to listen, to rest, to grow, to question, to break, to rebuild, and most of all... to witness.

In grace and gratitude,

Asia and Julyssa



# Grow in Community

Have additional questions? Interested in engaging in thought partnership and/or collaboration? Want to know more about the seeds we're sowing in our respective work?

Contact us!

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