

# **Secondary Trauma through supporting others who experience trauma.**

## **A reflective approach**

**Clare Barnett**

mum, wife, counsellor,  
nurse/midwife, educator

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**\*a little life, not a little loss\***



# Selah- pause- breathe

- Mindful of where we are/ have come from
- Who we bring with us?
- Weaving different perspectives
- Breathe <https://www.calm.com/breathe>

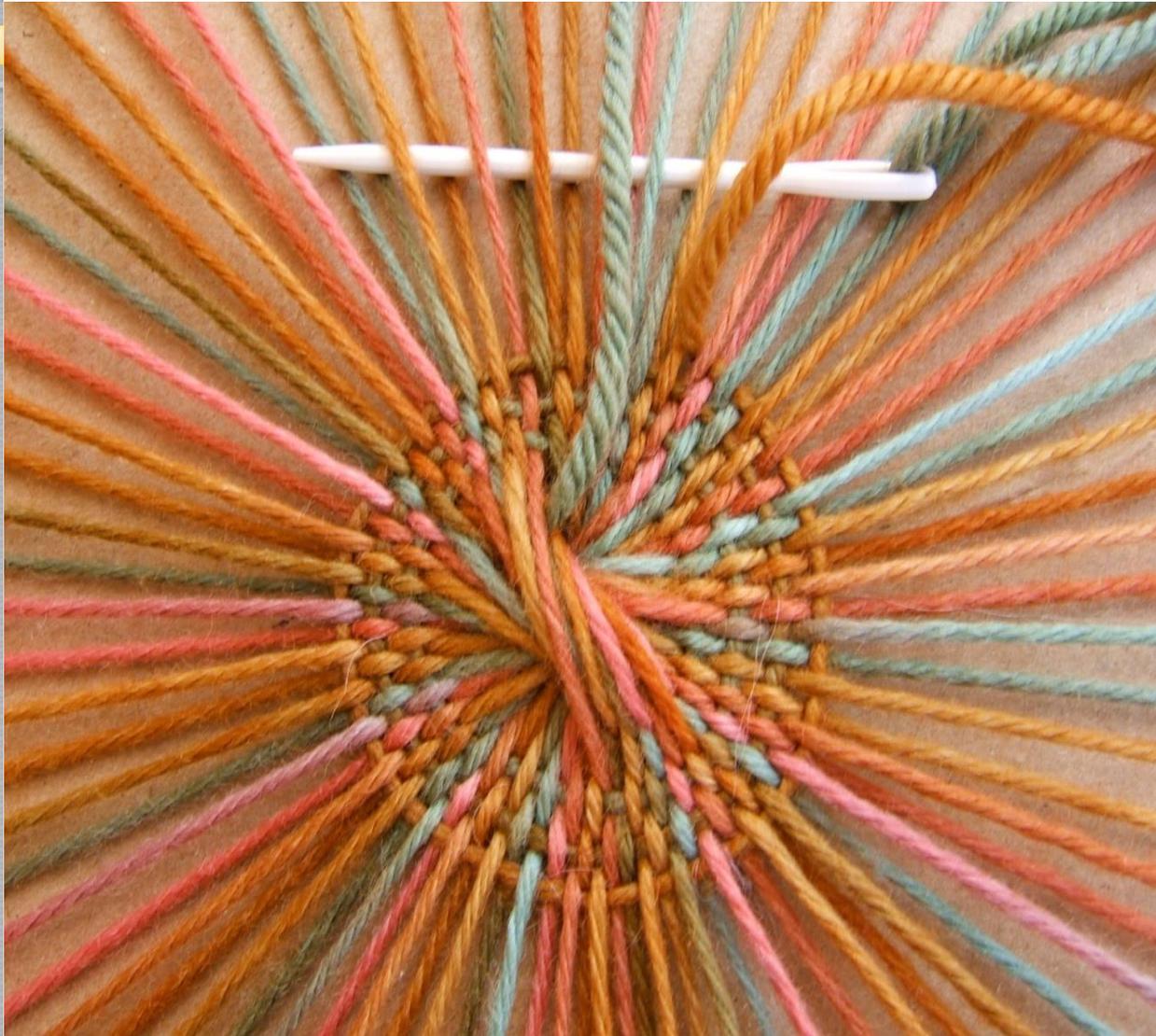


deep breath in



long breath out

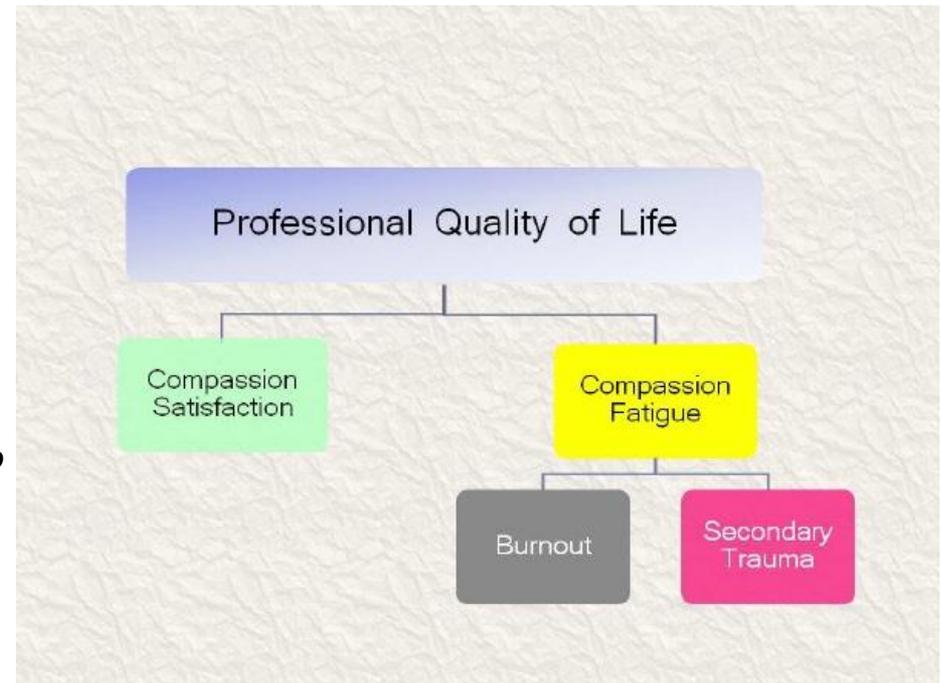
# Weaving: some threads



- Definitions
- Trauma
- Witnessing
- My story
- What makes it worse?
- PTS/D v depression
- Awareness
- What helps?

# Secondary Trauma

- emotional duress
- hear/**witness** firsthand **trauma** experiences of **another**
- compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, burnout?
- If unchecked:
  - Traumatic Stress
  - Post Traumatic Stress/Disorder PTS/D



<http://proqol.org/>

<http://www.nctsn.org/resources/topics/secondary-traumatic-stress>

# Trauma

- Human response
  - no blame, no shame
- Core brain
  - Flight fight freeze ‘alarm’
  - Experienced in the body
- Outer thinking brain
  - Calm regulators ‘offline’
- Traumatic Grief
  - Prolonged Disconnect
  - Post traumatic stress/disorder PTS/D

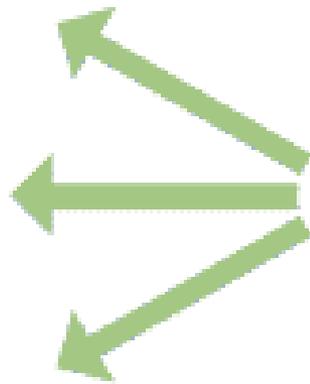


Davis, 2016.

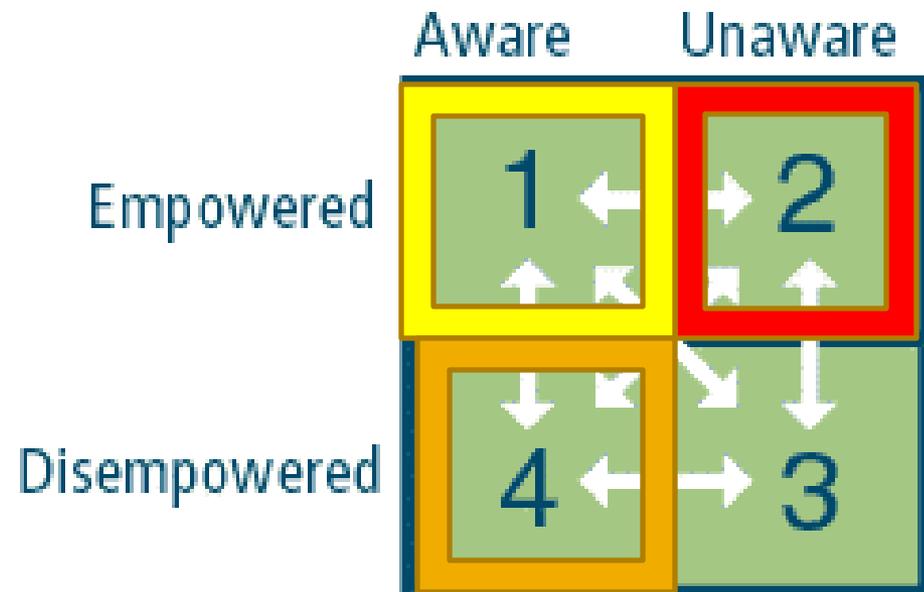
# Witnessing: Kaethe Weingarten

Each Witness positions affects:

- Family
- Community
- Society



Witness positions can change:



<http://www.witnessingproject.org/archives/the-four-witness-positions>

Weingarten, K. (2003). Common Shock. Witnessing violence every day. How we can be harmed and how we can heal. New York: Dutton

# Witnessing baby loss trauma affects us all... yet we can feel silenced



- Silenced witness to ourselves and others
- *“If I admit that I’m sick of hearing about it, I’ll be seen as uncaring and crap”.*
- *“It was their loss so there is no reason for me to not be Ok”*

# My story- a 'normal' shift



# I thought we had a heartbeat



# A daze...my trauma, their trauma

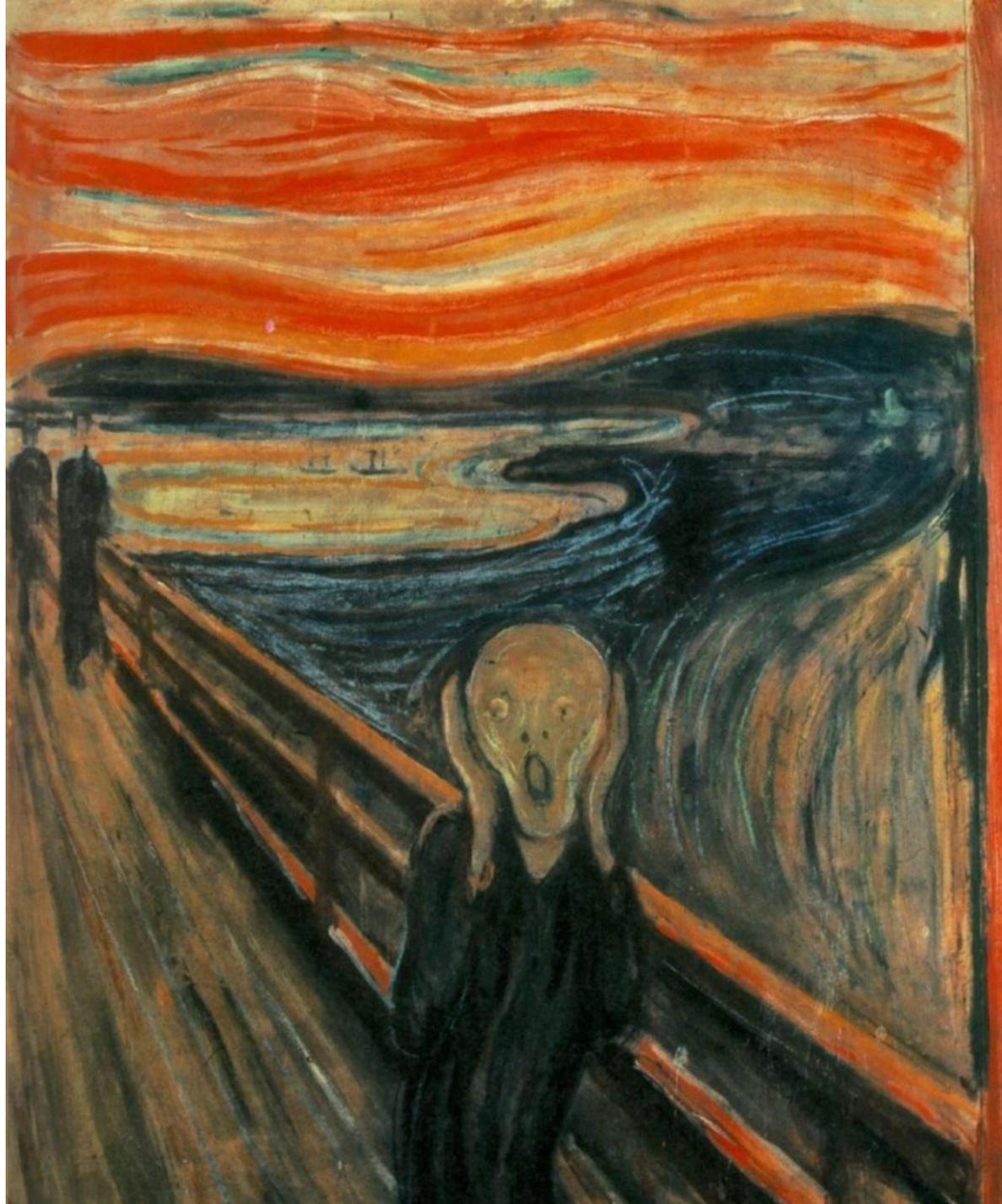


workplace  
trauma...

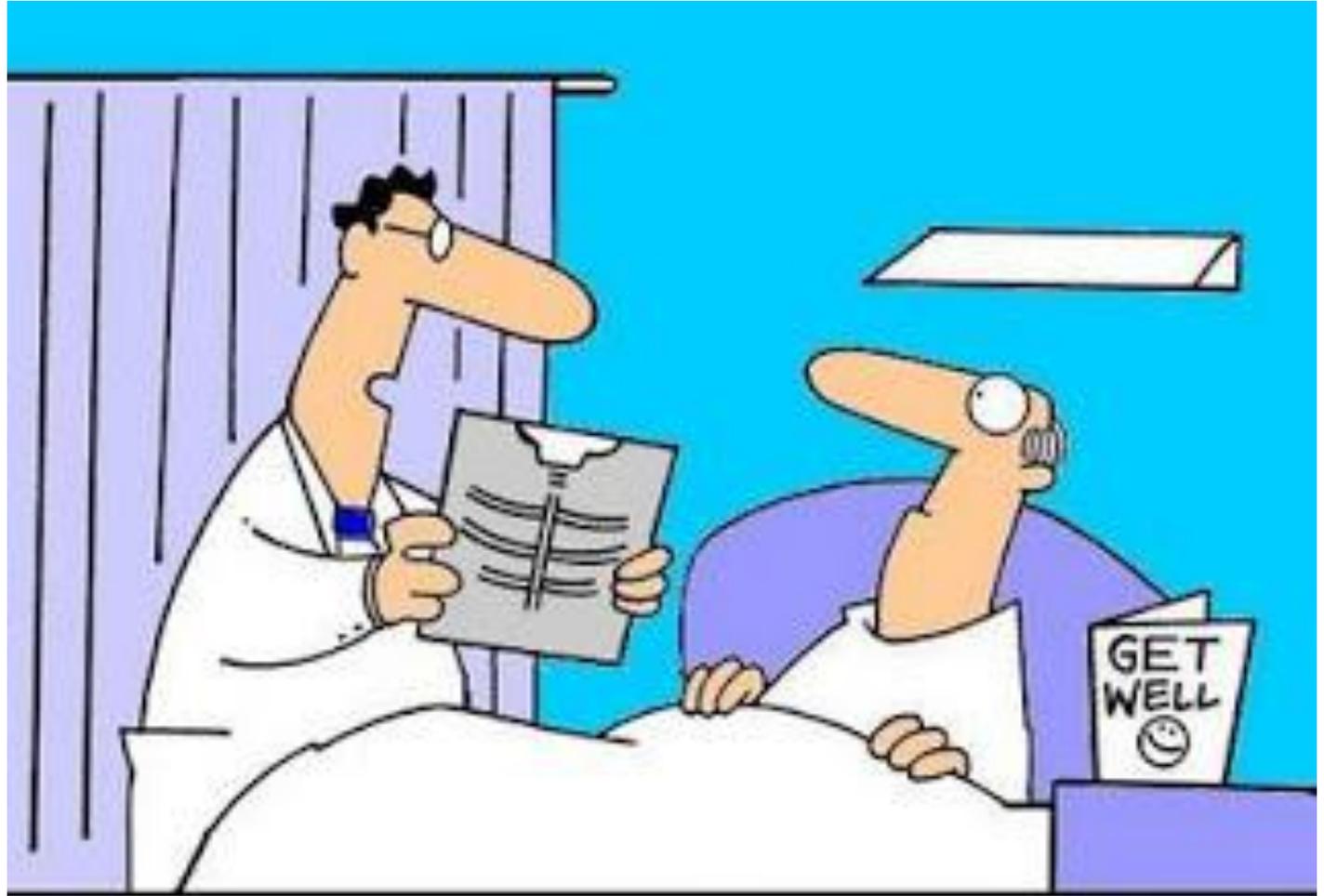
cold  
uncaring  
I'm alone  
guilt  
shame  
my fault  
exposed



I  
never  
thought  
I  
would  
have  
to  
face  
this...



# Mis-diagnosis added to the distress



**“Your x-ray showed a broken rib,  
but we fixed it with Photoshop.”**

# Time away- the first step



You didn't kill the baby



# Compassion to heal on all layers



**LOVE CARE BELONGING CONNECTION**

# Facing being a midwife and more

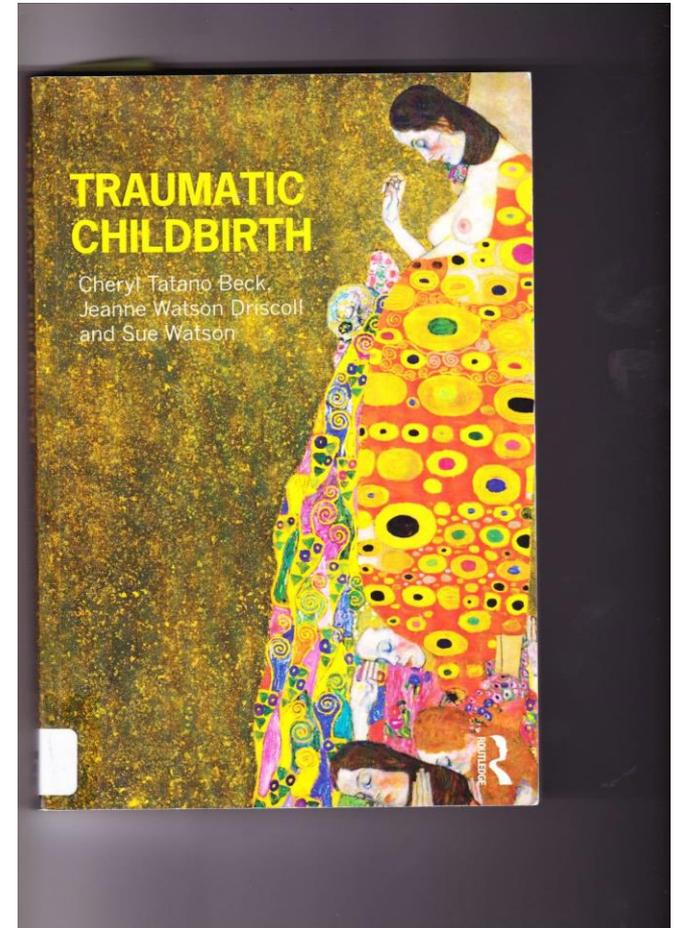


Selah- pause -breathe



# What makes any trauma worse?

- LOSS OF CONTROL
  - Powerlessness
  - Helplessness
  - Hopelessness
- Extreme pain
- Fear
- Interventions
- Previous trauma?
- Uncaring attitudes



“if they had been warm and caring... if I could have cried or been given a hug... if I could have been a mess and no one judge me...I wouldn't have needed time off, I wouldn't have had an identity crisis, the workplace wouldn't have felt so unsafe...”



# Trauma Symptoms- what overlaps with 'normal' grief/what doesn't?

- **Flashbacks**
- **Hyper-vigilance  
hyper-arousal  
stress reactions**
- **Avoidance**

<http://www.nctsn.org/resources/topics/secondary-traumatic-stress>

- Guilt / shame
- Minimizing
- Anger / Fear
- Sleeplessness
- Physical ailments
- < concentrate /listen
- < confidence/  
disorientation
- Avoidance
- Exhaustion
- Hopelessness

# PTSD or depression?

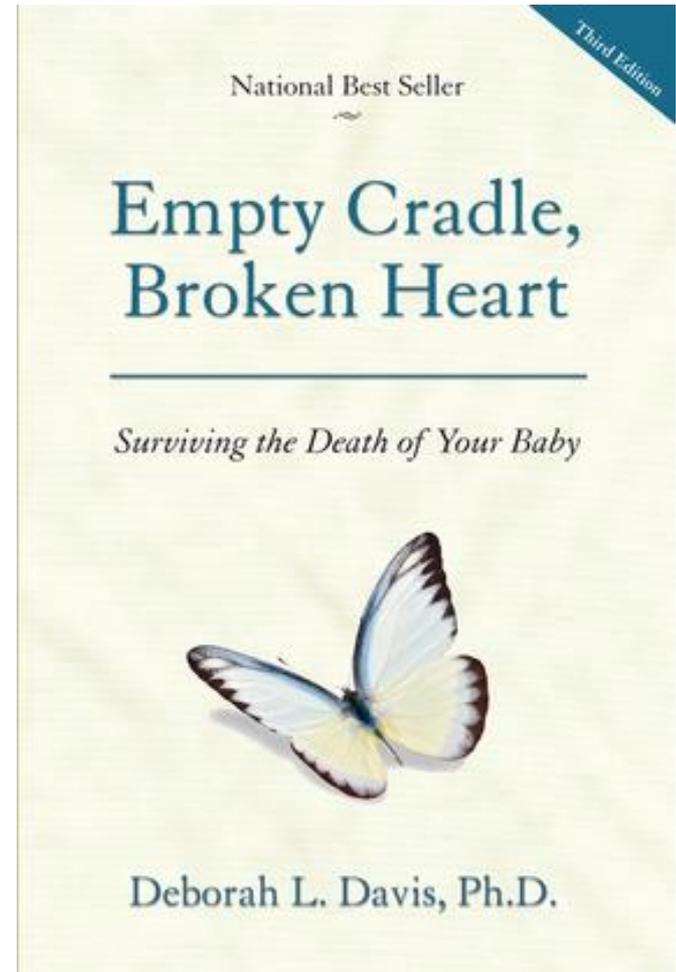
- EVENT not mood related
- If untreated, DOES NOT go away
- unresolved PTSD can lead to depression (20%)



Weeks, 2013; Beck, Driscoll, & Watson, 2013

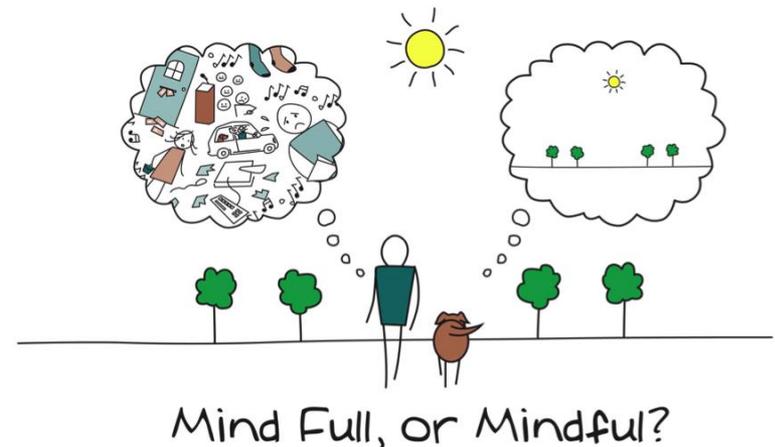
# Awareness Prevention?

- **Professional Quality of Life Scale (PROQOL)**
- **Empathy v Compassion**  
(VCA acknowledged)



# What helps: A B C D

- **Awareness and Acceptance-** no blame/shame
- **Breathe and Believe** the truth
- **Compassion and Connection +C**
  - Mind Body Spirit- with self
  - With others
  - Anything that fosters calm (Davis)
- **DO something positive, do get help**
  - EMDR?
  - Reframing thoughts
  - Mindfulness
  - RADICAL self care

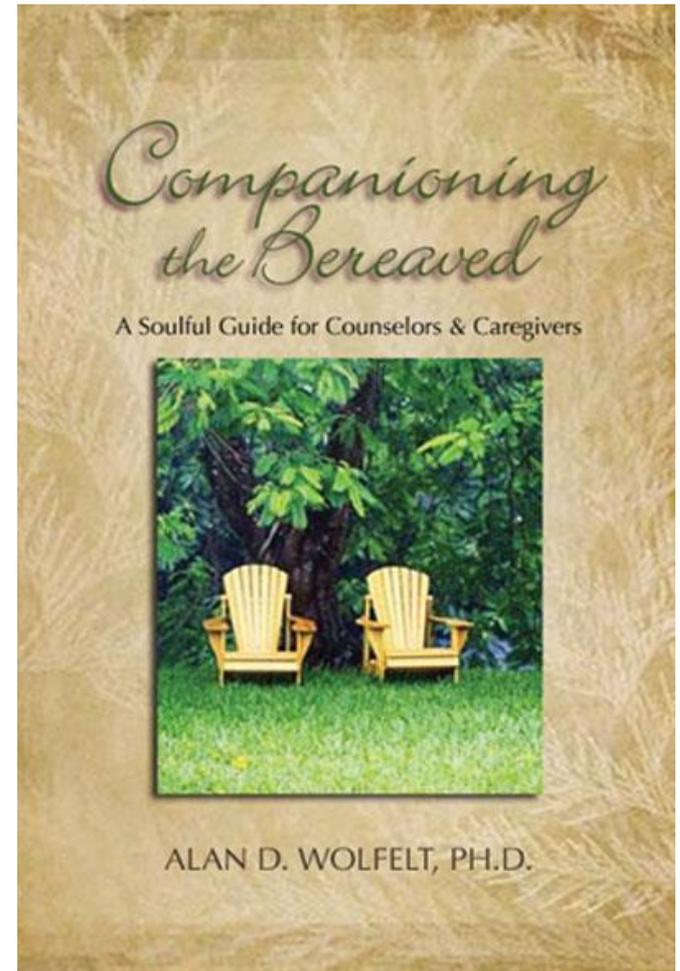


# Companioning

- Curiosity
- Learning
- Alongside
- Stillness
- Listening heart
- Spirit
- Bearing witness
- Present in pain
- Respecting disorder

Alan Wolfelt, 2005

<https://www.centerforloss.com/>



# Going forward

- Forgive
- Be grateful
- Learn from it
- Love and Appreciate
- Share
- No blame/ no shame “it just is/ was/ will be”
- Cat clips  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7JlyZubsuQY>



# Final thought

“...We are stewards not just of those who allow us into their lives but of our own capacity to be helpful.”  
- Trauma Stewardship

<http://www.nctsn.org/resources/topics/secondary-traumatic-stress>

**QUESTIONS?**

