

Writing Practice Instructions for Grief Tending

This practice has been adapted by **Holly Truhlar** from the work of **Natalie Goldberg**. The practice is a form of micro-ritual that we use extensively in grief ritual gatherings. We highly recommend that you adhere to the structure.

1. Write for an agreed amount of time. We usually set a 10-minute timer for our work. If you are working alone, use a timer to start and stop. If you are working in a group, have someone oversee beginning and ending the writing session.
2. Keep your hand moving. This is a critical element in the process. Doing so, allows for a free and undiluted expression of material. That is what we are after. When you keep your hand moving, you are open to revelation, to surprise, rather than well-rehearsed and tired stories. Keep your hand moving, even when you don't know what to say.
3. We will be using "shuttles," brief, partial sentences that give you a way to begin the session. An example would be "I remember..." You would begin your first sentence with "I remember..." and then write as long as the thought that arises has energy. When it fades, go back to "I remember... I remember..." and see what next thread comes to you. We will be offering a writing shuttle (or two) each week.
4. When the timer says "Stop," come to an end and then read your piece aloud.
5. If you are working alone, read it to the trees, the night sky, an ancestor. If you are working in a partner or a group, share your reading with them. You can also choose to share with me in a future session. This can produce some anxiety, or self-consciousness, making us want to write more carefully, sensing we can't say what we are really feeling. And yet, the purpose of the writing practice is to free up what wants to be said. What makes this part of the ritual safe enough, is that the only thing that anyone in your group is allowed to say in response to your reading is, "Thank you." This is an essential agreement within the group. Everyone needs to agree to this to protect the vulnerability of the reader and also the listener. If you, as a writer/reader, want more than the thank you, you can ask for more once the writing practice is done, and you enter the remainder of your time together. There is no need for a preamble, an explanation for your piece. Just begin to read. Also, when someone has completed their reading, and after the "Thank You," allow for a moment of silence. Let what was shared linger in the space.

Some shuttles for your writing:

- I remember...
- I miss...
- I'm grieving...
- My body...
- I hurt...
- Don't ask...
- I'm sorry...
- I will not pretend...
- I say it matters...
- I accept...
- My real grief...
- I never said...
- It is true...
- Finally...