

All Things Must Pass

AN
ACTIVITY ZINE
FOR
GRIEF

CRISTINA FERRIGNO

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I'm no stranger to grief; it's been with me since before I even knew its name. I've held it quietly and have come to feel from it a sort of comforting familiarity. Grieving can be an extremely personal process no matter how universal death and change are. It can make you feel othered, like when you're distraught and it's a beautiful day. However, at this particular moment in time, the whole world grieves simultaneously for a multitude of reasons: The human losses of COVID-19, for homes due to evictions, racial violence against Black Americans, family separations at the border, and because of social distancing. This collective mourning is remarkable, complex, and somewhat reassuring.

We experience grief and loss on a spectrum that contains a constellation of feelings. It can also be a lifelong process that ebbs and flows in intensity. It can move between missing the loss of tangible things like a person or a job to something more amorphous but still disruptive, like grieving for the person you were, or a sense of community.

This pandemic has laid bare the systemic inequality inherent in our society. When resting and taking care of mental health can be at odds with capitalism and the productivity-obsessed culture we live in, being open, soft, and vulnerable can be a subversive act. I'm taking this as an opportunity to process my own grief in the hopes that others will gain empathy and perspective for those who are grieving differently. Please use this zine to heal, practice compassion, and stay present and engaged while in relative isolation.

Suggested Materials

- A timer, watch or alarm clock
- Crayons, colored pens or pencils
- A notebook, sketchbook or pad of paper
- A camera (or smartphone) or binoculars
- A deck of tarot cards, playing cards, index cards or paint sample cards
- Dice

LOSS OF A LOVED ONE

My experience with personal grief has not been limited to this past year, but in October of 2020, I suffered the deepest and most devastating loss in my life so far. I lost my father to cancer, and in trying to wrap my head around this I found comfort in the collective grieving of others. We've all experienced different types of loss, whether it's the grieving of a specific loved one, the death of a public figure, or the separation of a relationship that has fallen away.

Activity:

Paste a photo, watch a home video, or simply remember someone you've loved and lost. Ground yourself by breathing deeply with your eyes closed, concentrating on the person. You don't need Tarot cards, you can use playing cards, pictures, or even paint sample cards.

Paste a photo
of someone
you've loved
and lost

Tarot Spread for Grief

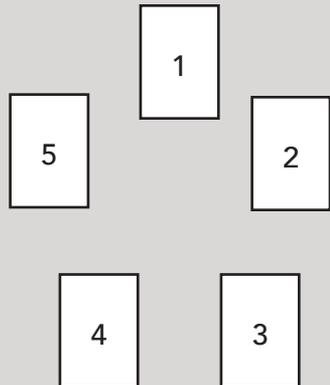
Card 1: Where can I show myself more grace?

Card 2: Where can I show grace to others?

Card 3: How can I get through the week, month, year etc. in the best way possible?

Card 4: How can I strengthen my faith, resolve, spirit etc.

Card 5: How can I best survive, or even thrive, during this phase?



*Spread design by
Sterling Moon, slightly altered*

LOSS OF WORK

I used to do freelance work for a youth organization that had a lot of in-person educational events. I miss working, educating, and interacting with kids and my fellow facilitators, and of course, getting a semi-regular paycheck.

During this pandemic and time of social distancing, whole industries have struggled or collapsed, leaving many unemployed, financially destitute, and possibly looking at entire career changes. In addition to monetary and professional instability, we are also missing our coworkers, the human interaction of having a workplace, and even the physicality of commuting.

Activity: Take a few minutes to make a list

If you are unemployed, list:

- A career goal or volunteer opportunity.
- Something you can do right now to make that happen.
- One “hustle” idea or back up plan.

If you're an essential worker, list:

- Something that you miss about your workplace, occupation or industry pre-pandemic.
- Something that's changed with your job, industry or workplace.
- Another industry or business that you miss being able to support.

If you're employed but working from home, list:

- Something thing you miss about your workplace.
- One thing that you enjoy about working from home.
- One new “coworker” or staple of your current working environment.

If you are a student of any age, list:

- Something that's different about your current learning environment.
- One thing that you enjoy about your current learning environment or study method
- Something you miss within your student body, peer group or friend circle.

LOSS OF PLACE

Almost exactly this time last year (mid-March), I made the decision to relocate from my apartment in Queens to my parents' house in Brooklyn in order to aid in the home health and hospice care for my father. Losing access to the safe space of my home was an extremely personal kind of loss.

There is also a wider structural loss of place that affected our family: We waited for days for hospital beds to open up, doctors were unavailable or simply not very engaged, and we were severely curtailed with our visiting. This would have been immensely more difficult if the hospital wasn't within walking distance from our house. It simply would not have been possible to travel with my ailing father on the subway to his daily radiation appointments for months. My heart breaks for all the families who were and are currently struggling to receive on-going health care in this time when hospitals, doctors, and clinics are restricted, stressed to capacity and largely inaccessible.

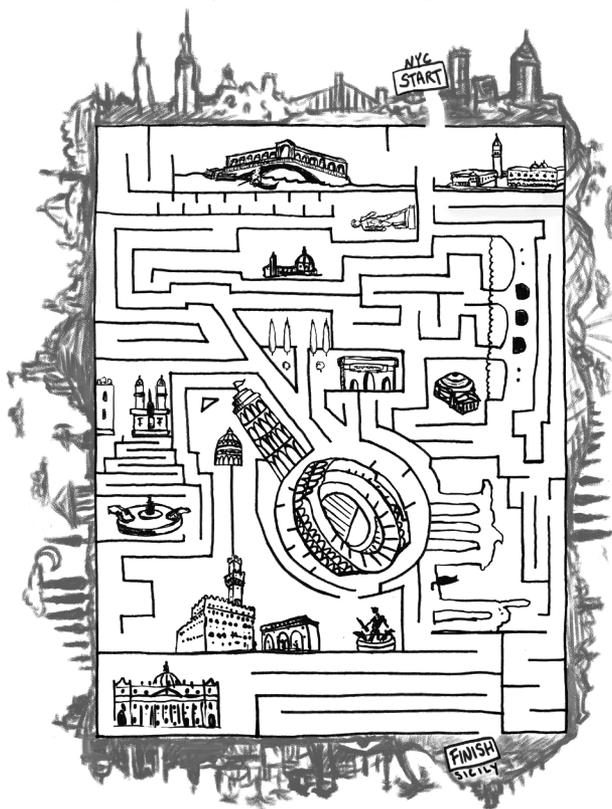
Activity: *Think about a favorite place you miss and draw or write about it.* Describe or think about when you were there. What were you doing? Who were you with? Is your place inaccessible due to COVID or inaccessible in other ways, for other reasons?

LOSS OF MOBILITY

I've been having these vivid recurring dreams of a mysterious city with lots of dark, winding streets and old buildings, towers, statues, and ruins. Plazas with fountains open up from a warren of tiny streets, all intersecting with that particular lack of navigation felt in dreamscapes. I think of these as wanderlust fantasies because I ache to know the city. While I can't begin to map my dream city, I have drawn a maze of what it feels like to traverse it, using familiar historical landmarks from my father's ancestral homeland of Italy.

While we were taking care of my father and were at our capacity of stress, grief, and desperate sadness, we couldn't even escape out to a café or a bar with friends, go for walks, or even go out to get the home healthcare supplies needed. It was incredibly oppressive. This pandemic has stressed our urban infrastructure, showing it incapable of meeting the demands of this crisis. It's

exacerbated the lack of access to folks with preexisting mobility impairments, differing access needs, and financial limitation on their transportation budgets.



Activity:
Think about what kinds of mobility have you lost? What's changed about the way you move, commute or interact with your environment?

LOSS OF SENSES

Sameness can cause you to lose your recognition of certain senses, because of the lack of a reference point. Your perception becomes flattened and you are unable to differentiate nuances in the texture of your everyday life. COVID-19 has also led infected individuals to temporarily, and in some cases permanently, lose their senses of taste and smell.

Activity: Describe a sensation you miss

Activity:

Let's Go On A Scavenger Hunt!

Please find at least one item that fits into each category:

- Scent: Something that *smells* good... It could be a spray of perfume, a drop of essential oil, a spice or dried herb, a coffee bean.
- Touch: Something that *feels* nice... It could be a scrap of fabric like felt, corduroy, or lace, a smooth stone, or pretty feather. Maybe something squishy like rubber or rough like sandpaper.
- Taste: A food item that's individually wrapped and shelf stable, a good choice would be breath mints, a lollipop or other hard candy, or a tea bag.
- Hearing: The lyrics to a favorite beautiful or calming song, a music box, a written affirmation to repeat out loud.
- Sight: A tea light, a photograph, or small piece of artwork, a crayon and paper.
- A special box, jar, container or pouch that's large enough hold all of your items.

LOSS OF TOUCH

While the loss of touch can feel extremely personal like with physical contact, lust, platonic hugs, comforting cuddles, or familial and generational contact, it can also look like an aversion to touching objects in the public sphere. Pressing that elevator button or holding the subway pole has induced a sort of repulsion and fear that was not always present pre-COVID.

Activity:

Make a list of the people who you'd like to hug, kiss, or that you wish were here with you. What kind of touch do you need? What kind of touch would you wish you could offer others?

Activity:

Now that you have your scavenger hunt items assembled, spend some time with them-- hold them and feel their weight in your hands. Make notes about their color, texture, and temperature in your hand. Take some deep breaths, close your eyes, and smell your scented items.

1. Small wooden craft box
2. Purple velvet pouch from a previous sewing project
3. Coffee bean hard candy
4. Rose quartz
5. Wedding portrait of my parents, September 1972
6. Found shell
7. Tea light candle
8. Livesaver candy
9. Mini colored pencil
10. Small pinecone
11. Bundled, dried kitchen sage
12. Paper with lyrics from a calming song, "All Things Must Pass" by George Harrison
13. A vial of pine needles
14. Herbal tea bag

Here's my sensory box:



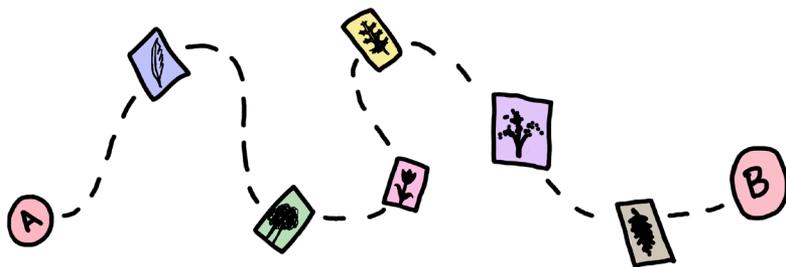
LOSS OF PRIVACY

In this unusual period many have been feeling a loss of privacy... maybe that looks like sharing a living situation in close quarters, being a work-from-home parent while assisting with distance-learning for a child, maybe it's moving back in with your parents, or maybe it's the constant invasive Zoom calling, video conferencing, and reliance on data gathering, big-tech companies to stay connected.

When losing your privacy you can feel powerless, trapped, or paralyzed. One thing that helps me is getting away from screen time and other people by walking with intention in a green space or outdoor area that I can explore safely by myself. Greenwood Cemetery, Prospect Park, Calvary Cemetery, and my parent's backyard are some of the places I've enjoyed exploring on my own or with a friend or family member.

Activity: Walk with intention

Try to bring a camera/smartphone, binoculars or notebook.



Safely walk or explore an outdoor area and choose two or three things to pay attention to. An example could be looking for birds, flowers, leaves of a specific color, words or signage, architectural details, or the way the light hits something. Take pictures or make notes describing the things that you notice, as well as the similarities and differences in the things that you find.

LOSS OF STRUCTURE

With the loss of one's job or the requirements that you need to physically be in an office environment, there is a significant loss of structure. Family structures, school structure, sleep, days of the week...the lack of that familiar schedule and routine is something that we've needed to readjust to.

Since my father died and I moved back into my own apartment in Queens, this is something that I've been struggling with and being more or less on my own. Here are some techniques that I found helpful to break up my day into tasks and time blocks. These techniques can be used individually or combined together.

The Pomodoro Technique:

- Set your task, have a list of backup tasks so you can continue working if you finish early.
- Set the Pomodoro (timer) for 25 minutes.
- Work on the task, uninterrupted until the timer rings.
- When the pomodoro rings, put a checkmark on a piece of paper.
- Take a short break (~ 5 minutes) Every 4 Pomodoros, take a longer break (20-30 minutes.)
- *Repeat as needed!*

Roll of the Dice:

(as found on TikTok by @danidonovan)
Use a six-sided die (or larger). Write a couple of number ranges down and assign tasks to them, the more important the task, the wider the range. Assign a fun or easy activity to the last number. Roll the dice and circle the outcome associated with that number and immediately start, *no do overs!*

Color-Coding:

Make a color-coded to-do list, separate the tasks on the list by motivation level or how much available mental/emotional capacity it takes to tackle the task. You can also do this with fun activities and not just chores. I also use color-coding to separate the types of tasks, events, or appointments on my calendar. For example, art is blue, health is yellow, friends & family is pink, job stuff is green. I keep these colors consistent across all my physical, visual & digital calendars, reminders, lists, and notes.

LOSS OF PURPOSE

Langston Hughes wrote, “What happens to a dream deferred?” and it’s a question that I’ve revisited many times over the past year. Others may feel at least some sense of purposelessness or loss of opportunities from isolation due to COVID-19 restrictions. But for me, it’s particularly painful grieving for who I was before all this--my life before my father’s cancer diagnosis and rapid decline apace with the escalating global pandemic.

I am still going through a period like this, especially in regards to my art. One thing that seemed to help was learning a new process or medium. Developing a new skill helped alleviate some of the internal guilt I usually feel when I tell myself I’m not being productive enough. For example, I taught myself how to knit. I’ve also gotten into reading Tarot, with the aim of keeping my cognitive mind in a similar space to looking at and analyzing art.

These things actively help keep my hands and mind busy while I process my grief, adjust to pandemic life, and take time off to get to an emotional place where I feel like I can produce work for showing, sharing, and critique. This zine is the first work made for public viewing in almost a year, and I’m glad you can share this part of my healing journey with me.

Activity:

Write down 3 long-term and 3 short-term goals

List 2 hobbies, 2 activities, and 2 things you’ve always wanted to learn about or how to do.

LOSS OF COMMUNITY

2020 has been a difficult year, at the very least social distancing has led to the cancellation of important identity-focused events like the Puerto Rican Day Parade, Chinese New Year, and Pride. Those events are especially important to marginalized people and immigrants coming together to preserve heritage and culture. In losing these celebrations, it has in some ways felt like a denial of self. For me, losing contact with other artists and being unable to see art in person has been a real blow. Others with interests like music festivals, Broadway, and sports have also been affected similarly.

While we may feel the loss of those communities, there have been other, more unexpected communities that have come together by necessity, proximity, and social action. Some of the spaces I've found the most welcoming and helpful include my neighborhood's Buy Nothing Group and other neighborhood focused Facebook groups that interact both online and in our shared city spaces, similar to mutual aid organizations. Also, online activism and social organizing has been really impactful, helping me feel a part of something larger than myself, even through my lowest periods.

Activity: Think about the communities that you've lost. Write down things you miss about them.

Think about new communities that you've found solace in. Write down ways in which you are grateful for them and what you were able to learn from or achieve through those spaces.

GRATITUDE

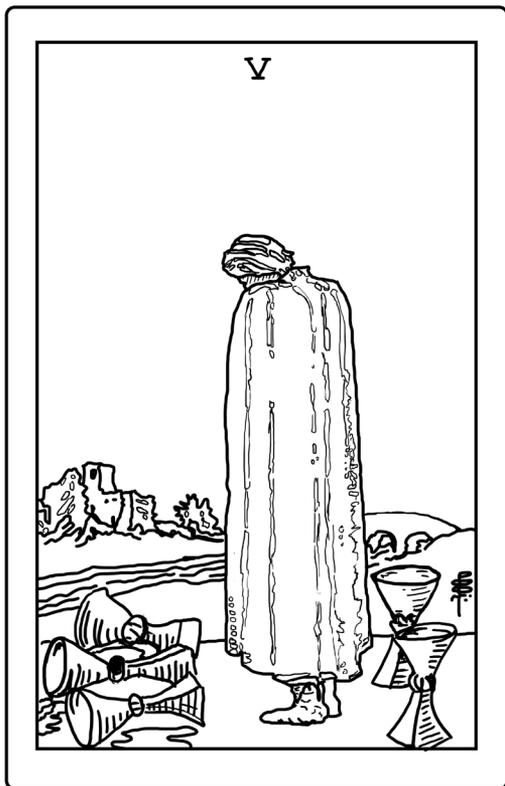
2020 was a kind of reckoning; it put our feet to the fire and let us know what our real priorities were. Whether you were dealing with the coronavirus, chaos, or death directly, or primarily with isolation and introspection, it was an awakening. This cataclysmic experience gave us the opportunity to see, when it really came down to it, what was the most important. While failures and cracks in the system became more evident, so did our resolve, clarifying what we need to strive toward individually and as a society.

Activity: Repeat this affirmation aloud
(You can also write your own for your sensory box)

"There is a lot to grieve for, but I will not let myself be consumed by my pain. I will practice empathy everyday because this is a time to be gentle with myself and with others. I am not the sum of what I produce and my worth is not based on my productivity. I will remember and honor the people, places, and things I have lost this past year and over my lifetime."

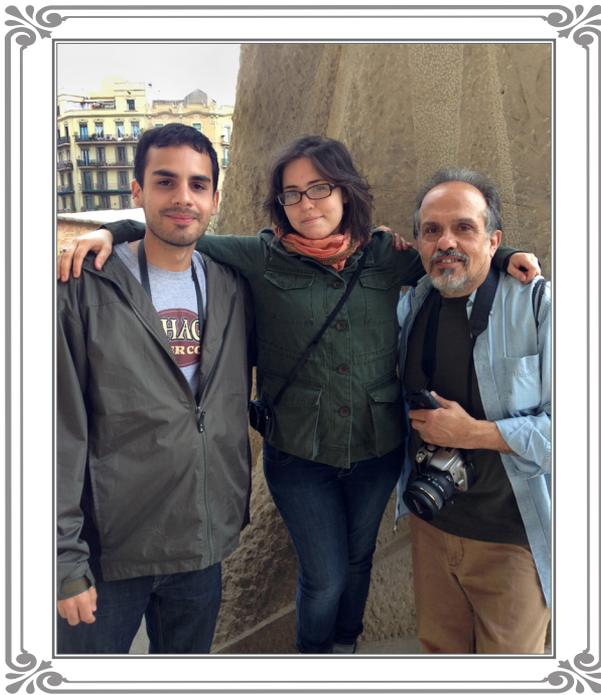
Activity:

Looking & Coloring
This is the 5 of Cups from the well known Rider Waite Smith tarot deck. What do you see?



How does this image make you feel? What do the cups represent? What other symbols do you see in the picture?

Dedicated To My Father
Ralph Ferrigno
October 21, 1946 - October 20, 2020
And To All Those We Have Lost



b. 1987 Bogota

Cristina Ferrigno is a Colombian born, Brooklyn raised artist currently based in Queens. With a BFA from MICA in 2009, she is now pursuing her MFA with a focus on Social Practice Art at Queens College. Her work tackles her personal and philosophical questions of identity, exploring the feeling of cultural "inbetweenness" and loss as a transnational adoptee. She uses photographic processes, archive building and community engagement to create combined media works and long term interdisciplinary projects.

*All things must pass away
All things must pass
None of life's strings can last
So, I must be on my way
And face another day*

- George Harrison

2021

*All Things Must Pass
An Activity Zine for Grief*

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