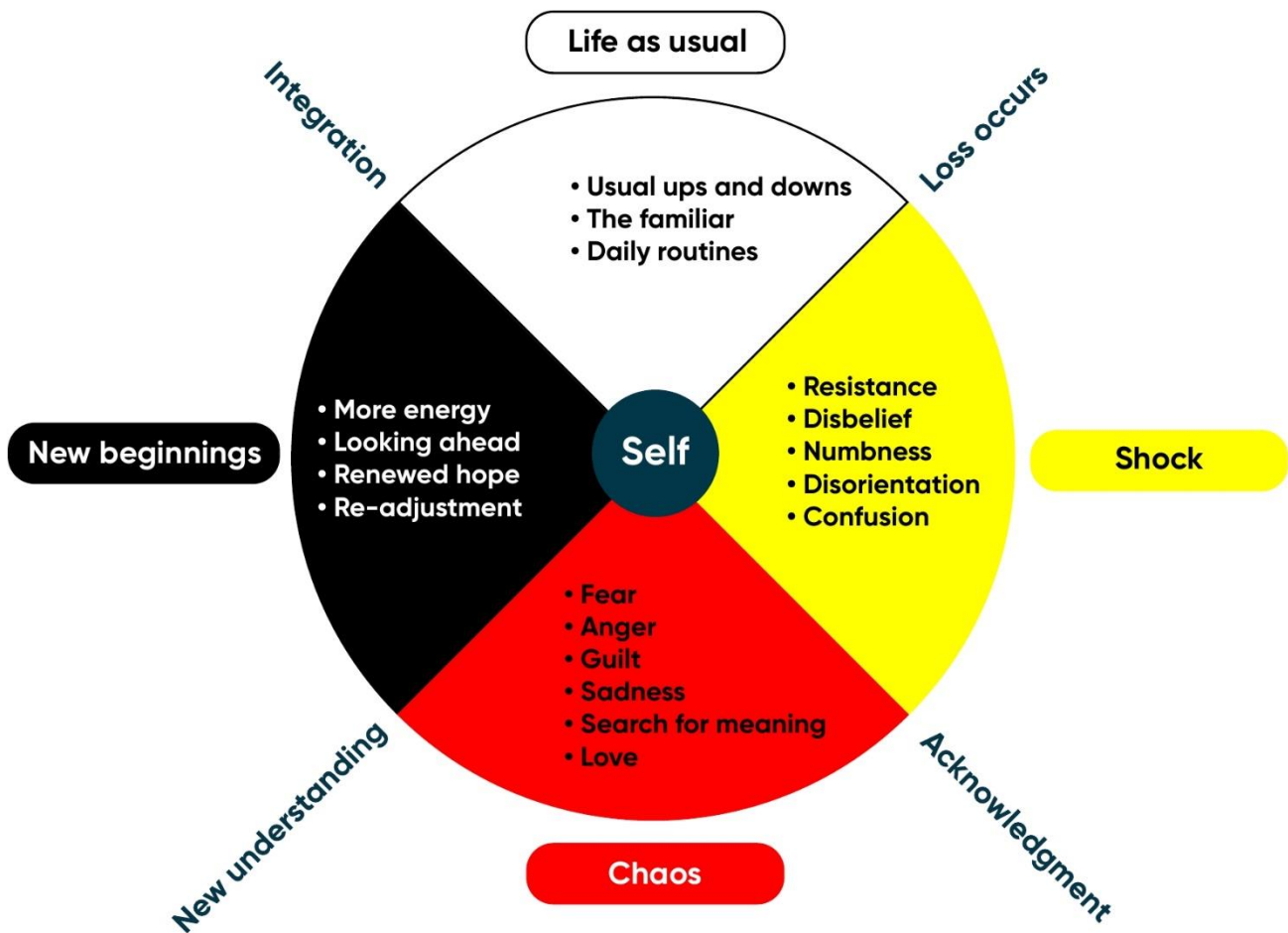


The Grieving Wheel



For more information and resources, please visit www.hospiceyukon.net



The Grieving Wheel



Hospice Yukon has developed a visual model of the grieving process based on a four-directional wheel. Each grieving experience is completely unique and yet it can be helpful to use a model to reflect on normal responses to loss as recurring cycles in our lives.

Beginning at the top with **LIFE AS USUAL**, we move around the wheel, often swinging back and forth between different areas.

Life as usual is a time when daily routines are familiar, with the usual ups and downs of life. This is our everyday reality. Then **loss occurs** and a new journey begins.

At first, we find ourselves in a state of **SHOCK**, sometimes unable to believe what has happened. We hold everything at arm's length for a while, denying that it could be true. We feel numb and disoriented. Shock can last a short time or much longer if we are resisting our painful emotions. Despite our numbness and distractions, we eventually come to **acknowledge** our loss.

As we let go of our resistance, we experience the very intense and painful emotions that we associate with grief: sadness, love, fear, anger, guilt, despair, loneliness, depression and hopelessness. When the emotions are overwhelming it feels like **CHAOS**. Our old, familiar world has collapsed.

This is a difficult but very important part of our journey around the wheel. Understanding the grieving process can help us here. Knowing that this intense suffering will end and will lead us towards our healing, we can find the courage to stay present and open to all the feelings that arise.

Through the experience of the pain and suffering we begin to see the world differently. Everything has changed since the loss. We are not the same person we used to be. Our perspective has changed, and we find ourselves searching for the meaning in it all. As we begin adjusting to life without our loved one, we come to a new way of thinking about life; a new understanding.

The focus of our journey now turns to **NEW BEGINNINGS**. Slowly, we are finding more and more energy available to us. With this energy we begin the job of putting our life back together. We practice being “the new me” and start the process of re-entering society, of finding our place in the world again.

The process of *integration* can be gradual as we slowly come back into a state of balance within ourselves. Slowly, there is a growing sense of comfort and familiarity with our new circumstances and who we are.

We have now come full circle and we are back in **Life as Usual**, although when we look around we realize that this is a very different place from where we began our journey. We have undergone a personal transformation and this is now our new “normal.”

Our journey around the wheel has not just been circular; it has actually been a spiral of growth bringing us to a new place in our life.