



Montreal, November 18, 2023 – Story 2

KATHRYN: I saw the total fear that gripped people.

I think that during COVID, when I saw the total fear that gripped people, you know, what people were really afraid of was dying. And it's kind of, you know, death is kind of verboten in this society, we're never supposed to die. We're supposed to be eternally youthful, and so on. And I'd hoped that COVID and the pandemic would raise those questions more than has been the case.

And it's it sort of feels like were lurching from one crisis to another. And here in Quebec, anyways, the COVID restrictions kind of fell away in March of 2022, and then the next day the war in Ukraine was declared, and then that became the focus. And now there's another war to contend with. We've just entered into different times, and I don't know how much willingness there is to go back and talk about what happened during the pandemic.

I worked until last June for a project that was funded by the United Church, and it was providing grief support to people who had been grieving during COVID. And people are so grateful for any space to talk about grief because so often there's a general sense that you need to get over it. And it was really sad because so many of the people on this call that I had, felt guilty about feeling their grief.

Where it's human, grief is like a profoundly human experience. It's a cocktail of emotions. It's different emotions, not just sadness. Some people express their grief with anger, ~~so you know~~, some with sadness, some with shutting down, you know, it really depends at different times, and these people felt badly.

But for me grief is the other side of love.

Because if you haven't, if you've never loved anyone, you're never going to grieve them, right. And so, the depth of their love measured the depth of their grief. And so, I felt very much like an advocate for grief. And I think we have a lot to grieve. I mean, we have our own personal losses, whether it's our own physical abilities or losing a dear one. Grieving the planet and grieving all the changes that are happening around the climate crisis. And that all, all of that feeds into it, I think.

And I think after this summer, when, with all the smoke and people had difficulty breathing, I know at one point Montreal was, what, one of the most unhealthiest cities in the world, because of the smoke. You know, I think people are really worried about that cause when you can't breathe, right, you can't live.

And so, all of those things have come. You know there was COVID, you know that there's these wars that have broken out. There's the climate crisis. I think people are feeling very, very worried, you know, and people need a place to share that. And you know there used to be a, you know, a kind of religious structure, not that I'm suggesting to go back to that. But you know, in terms of mental health, I mean, I know that it's just very difficult to get resources for support for people who need it. I know where I live, I live in the country, I knew of a few people, one person-personally, who committed suicide during COVID. Young people, people in their late teens and, like, into their late twenties, who just felt completely hopeless about the world. So yeah, that's another part of that reality.