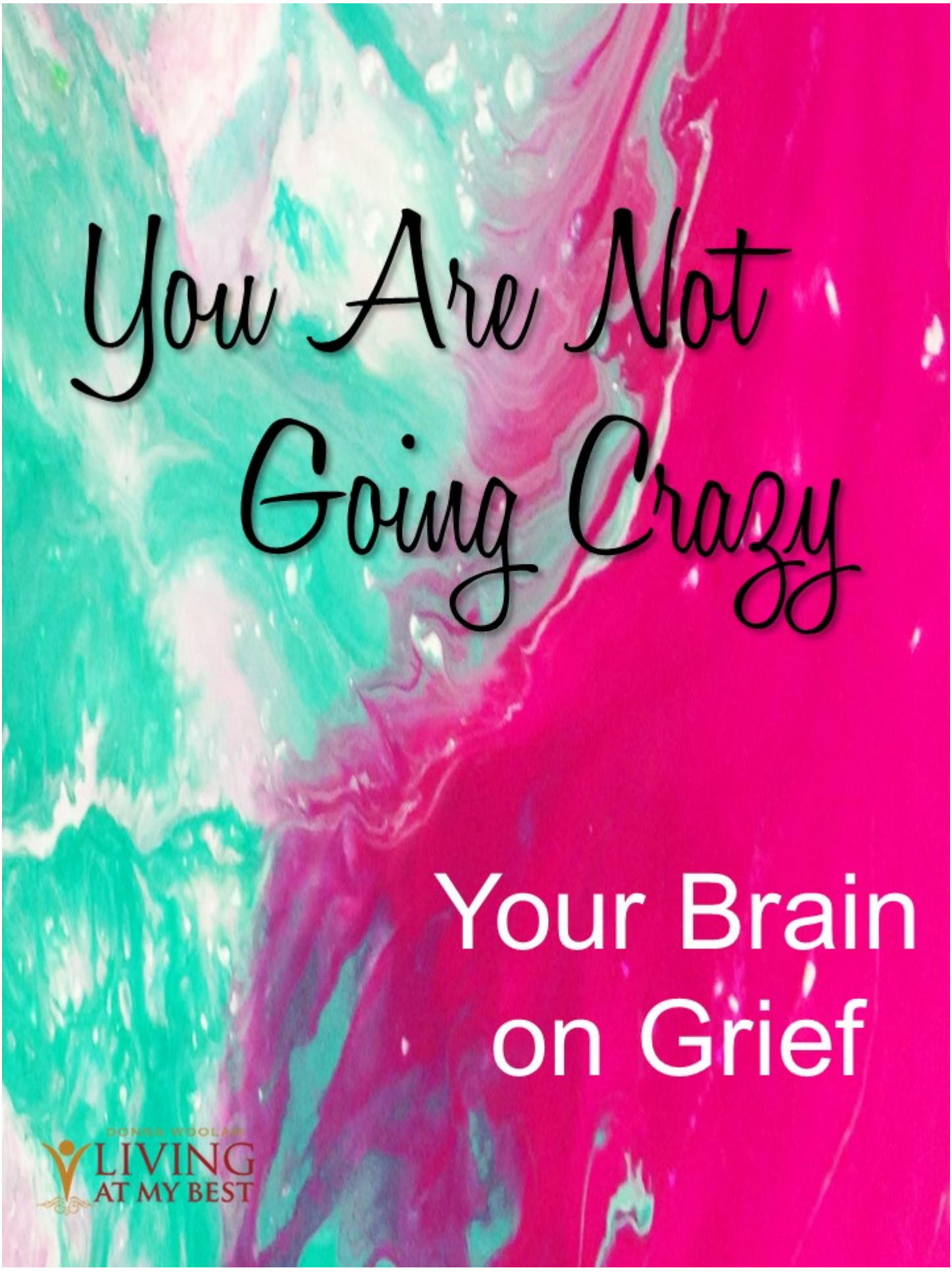
You Are Not Going Crazy
Your Brain on Grief
DONNA WOOLAR
LIVING AT MY BEST

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You Are Not Crazy: The Brain on Grief

Roadmap and Resources to Help Navigate Grief and Your Brain

Grief Brain is a real thing. And though studies on the community of the grieving tracking increased incidences of physical maladies such as stroke, heart attack and even cancer are plentiful, only recently have the specifics of brain function received the same consideration.

Many researchers now assert that traumatic loss of a loved one triggers the same issues as traumatic brain injury. (1)

Grieving is a protective process. Your brain is literally changing; you are not losing your mind.

Another important thing to note is this- your brain and your mind are separate, yet intricately linked. Think of it like this… your brain is the science, your mind is the art.

REWIRED

After the death of someone close to you, the brain rewires itself, because the pathways you have relied on to function in day-to-day life have taken a hit. The prefrontal cortex (the decision-making area of the brain) gives way to the limbic region. This is the place which controls primary functions, like breathing. (2)

Day-by-day reminders of the loss trigger the stress response of the body and remodel the brain's circuitry. The brain acts as a super-filter to keep memories and emotions either in the tolerable zone or obliterate them altogether. Our brains have trouble processing the reasons for the death and can even make up explanations for it. (3)

RESTRICTED ACCESS

The left hemisphere of your brain is the reasoning side of your brain. It's where the logic happens; sequencing of events; thinking in words and facts. (4)

The right hemisphere of your brain is the feelings and visualization side of the brain. It's where creativity and imagination, rhythm and arts are born.

A neural net of fibers connects the two sides of your brain. It helps them "talk" to each other. Extreme stress or physical trauma can damage this neural net and, with grief, cause a slowdown in the flow of information.

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RECONNECTED

There are many ways to help the right and left hemispheres reintegrate. Some require medication. But the majority can practice mindfulness-based cognitive therapy. One way is to reflect on your relationship with your loved one and work to hold both the love and the pain.

Be encouraged! Over time, and with deliberate practice, your brain can return to a state of interconnected reasoning and remembering.

For now, the important thing is to be compassionate with yourself. And, on the very practical side of things, keep a notepad close by, to write things down. And ask for help when you need it.

RESOURCES

Here are four books I think you might find helpful in learning more about your brain and grief.

Before and After Loss: A Neurologist's Perspective on Loss, Grief, and Our Brain (A Johns Hopkins Press Health Book) by Lisa Shulman

The Other Side of Sadness: What the New Science of Bereavement Tells Us About Life After Loss by George A. Bonanno Ph.D.

A Grief Observed by C.S. Lewis

It's Okay that You're Not Okay by Megan Devine

ABOUT DONNA WOOLAM: I am a personal development life coach and I work with widows who want to reconnect with life and are looking for a way to begin again, without ignoring their grief and abandoning the memories of their husband. During my journey after the death of my husband Richard, I learned and developed a pathway to help women walk the journey of reinventing your world after loss. If you are interested in learning more, visit my website at https://DonnaWoolam.com/Belief-Revolution and schedule a 20-minute Discovery Session.

1) Discovermagazine.com/mind/the-traumatic-loss-of-a-loved-one-is-like-experiencing-brain-injury
2) Lisa Shulman: Before and After Loss
3) Helen Marlo: Professor of Clinical Psychology, Notre Dame
4) Healthline.com/health/left-brain-vs-right-brain#boosting-creativity