

APPENDIX B | VISUAL TOOLS AND FRAMEWORKS

B.4 Understanding Non-Linear Grief: The Emotional States Map

Supplemental resource from Beyond Wellness: The Adaptive Capacity Coaching Framework for Chronic Illness

Reference: Chapter 9 (The Emotional Landscape)

Traditional grief models suggest that mourning progresses through stages in sequence, culminating in acceptance and resolution. Chronic illness grief doesn't work this way. When the loss is ongoing and there is no clear ending to mourn, grief becomes cyclical rather than linear.

The Six Segments

Shock / Numbness: The fog that descends when reality is too much to absorb. Numbness is your nervous system protecting you from overwhelming pain. You may return here after each new loss or decline. *You might notice:* "I can't believe this is happening." Going through the motions without being present.

Anger: Rage at the unfairness: at your body, at doctors, at healthy people, at yourself. Anger that turns inward becomes harsh self-criticism. *You might notice:* "This is so unfair." Resentment toward healthy people. Frustration with your own limitations.

Sadness: Pure sorrow for what has been lost. You mourn the person you were, the future you planned, the ease you once took for granted. *You might notice:* Crying, sometimes unexpectedly. Heaviness. Longing for your former life.

Fear: Anxiety about what comes next: further decline, dependence, uncertainty. Chronic illness removes the illusion of control. *You might notice:* Worry that won't stop. Catastrophic thinking. Hypervigilance about symptoms.

Bargaining: The attempt to regain control through deals and conditions. Also includes "if only" thinking: replaying the past, imagining different choices. *You might notice:* "If I just try this new treatment..." Researching obsessively. Making deals with yourself.

Moments of Acceptance: Note the plural and the qualifier. Acceptance is not a destination. It is a place you visit, sometimes briefly, where you stop fighting against reality and find peace with what is, while still hoping for what might be. *You might notice:* "This is my life now, and there is still good in it." Feeling present. Sincere okayness.

How to Use This Map

For self-awareness: Notice where you are right now. Name it without judgment. There is no wrong place to be.

For tracking: Mark where you find yourself daily or weekly. Over time, patterns emerge: triggers, times of day, circumstances that open moments of acceptance.

For self-compassion: When you judge yourself for "still" being angry, or for returning to sadness you thought you had resolved, look at the map. Movement between segments is normal. Returning to previously visited segments is normal.

For communication: "I'm in the fear segment today" gives supporters, providers, and coaches something specific to work with.

What the Map Doesn't Mean

It doesn't mean you should move toward acceptance. All segments are valid. Acceptance can't be forced or rushed.

It doesn't mean these are the only emotions you will feel. The map shows common grief states, not the full range of human experience.

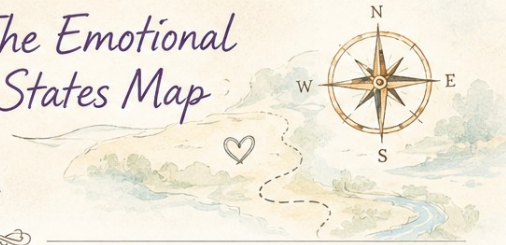
It doesn't mean grief is the only thing happening. You can grieve and also experience joy, love, humor, and meaning.

It doesn't mean you are broken. It describes a normal response to abnormal circumstances. Your grief makes sense.

BEYOND WELLNESS

The Emotional States Map

Emotional States Map recognizes that you will move through various emotional states repeatedly, sometimes within a single day. This is not an inability to process grief. It is the nature of grieving a loss that keeps happening. Chapter 9 describes the full map of emotional states; this tracking wheel uses six broad segments simple enough to mark on a hard day.



THE SIX SEGMENTS

	SHOCK / NUMBNESS	The fog that descends when reality is too much to absorb. Numbness is your nervous system protecting you from overwhelming pain. You may return here after each new loss or decline.	YOU MIGHT NOTICE: • "I can't believe this is happening." • Going through the motions without being present.
	ANGER	Rage at the unfairness: at your body, at doctors, at healthy people, at yourself. Anger that turns inward becomes harsh self-criticism.	YOU MIGHT NOTICE: • "This is so unfair." • Resentment toward healthy people. • Frustration with your own limitations.
	SADNESS	Pure sorrow for what has been lost. You mourn the person you were, the future you planned, the ease you once took for granted.	YOU MIGHT NOTICE: • Crying, sometimes unexpectedly. • Heaviness. • Longing for your former life.
	FEAR	Anxiety about what comes next: further decline, dependence, uncertainty. Chronic illness removes the illusion of control.	YOU MIGHT NOTICE: • Worry that won't stop. • Catastrophic thinking. • Hypervigilance about symptoms.
	BARGAINING	The attempt to regain control through deals and conditions. Also includes "if only" thinking: replaying the past, imagining different choices.	YOU MIGHT NOTICE: • "If I just try this new treatment..." • Researching obsessively. • Making deals with yourself.
	MOMENTS OF ACCEPTANCE	Note the plural and the qualifier. Acceptance is not a destination. It is a place you visit, sometimes briefly, where you stop fighting against reality and find peace with what is, while still hoping for what might be.	YOU MIGHT NOTICE: • "This is my life now, and there is still good in it." • Feeling present. • Sincere okayness.

♡ You will move through these states repeatedly. Be gentle with yourself.

Emotional States Map Tracking Template

Instructions: Mark the segment(s) where you find yourself today. You may mark more than one. Date each entry. Over time, review for patterns. Use the form on the next page for an additional tool to track.

GRIEF WAVE TRACKING LOG

Beyond Wellness · Adaptive Capacity Coaching Framework · Appendix B.4

Track grief waves as they come. Note time of day, intensity (1-10), what preceded it, and what helped.

Client: _____

Week of: _____

Date	Morning	Afternoon	Notes / Triggers/What Helped