

KEY THEMES

The key themes are thematic focal points that anchor the conversations around care for each dispatch. They can be used by educators and facilitators to prepare for learning, drive and structure conversations, and plan for connections to media/art/current events/ personal contexts.

EVERYBODY'S GRIEF IS DIFFERENT

Disappearance places many families in a place of unknowing, a sort of limbo that toggles between hope, despair, sadness, fear and more. This ambiguous loss creates challenges for grieving. In addition to the ambiguity of the loss experiences in disappearance, is the truth that people grieve differently. Some families don't want to discuss their situations at all, others approach it with joy and celebration, while others look to share "all the faces" of a person so as to remember them in their most complex, human way.

MIXED METHODS HEALING

The multiple opportunities housed within the Family Network run parallel to Colibrí's main body of work which involves the identification of people who died while crossing the border. Done primarily via DNA samples, the Family Network provides a relational support structure to the scientific identification process. Working together, the two programs (or methods of attending to grief) attend to the many challenges of disappearance. This multi-method approach—a balance of the scientific and relational—holds potential for multiple crises of grief and healing that we confront today.

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WE NEED (EACH OTHER'S) STORIES

One of the key relational elements of the Family Network is storytelling. While Perla emphasized the ways that everyone's grief is different, she also shared how stories expanded the members' sense of the possible and collective connection to each other. The idea that stories expand our sense of possibility and can bridge across experience is, of course, not new. Stories are a key technology for making sense of the world and developing one's understanding of self. But the work of the Family Network reminds us that storytelling is part of a process, not just an outcome—in this case often of healing and grieving.

Sections

Discussion Questions

Supplemental Resources

WE NEED EACH OTHER'S STORIES

0:54 - 3:27

Perla starts the conversation sharing the story of one mother in Colibrí's Family Network. What was the effect that story had on some families? What does this say about the power and practice of storytelling?

NETWORKS FOR COLLECTIVE HEALING

3:28 - 5:15

How is Colibrí's Family Network work complementary to (not separate from) their work that uses DNA samples to identify those who have died while crossing the border?



Sections

Discussion Questions

AMBIGUOUS LOSS

5:17 - 6:51

Perla names “Ambiguous loss is unresolved grief—it’s like frozen grief.” This kind of loss—and the grieving process associated with it—is unique to disappearance. The ambiguous loss experienced by families of disappeared peoples prompts the question, “What does it mean to grieve when you don’t know exactly what you are processing?”

While there is no one approach or method to grieving or healing, using what is shared in the interview and what you know from your own experiences, what are some existing and possible practices of care for people dealing with ambiguous loss? What does support for people experiencing this kind of grief look like?

HONORING THROUGH STORY

6:53 - 9:58

Perla names that protecting stories and honoring stories is a form of care. How does the practice of storytelling care for families in Colibrí’s Family Network?

Have you felt cared for through storytelling? Consider both times where you had space to share your stories and/or instances where you listened to another’s story. How did this make you feel?



CREATING SPACE FOR STORIES

Think about an experience in your life where you felt safe telling a story about something hard or challenging in your life.

Drop into this moment. What made you feel safe? What did the space feel like? Was there sound? What was happening? Who was there?

Choose one or all of the following to drop into that moment even more:

- Draw a picture of this moment.
- List 5-10 words describing this moment.
- Write a letter to the person or thing that made you feel safe enough to tell your story.
- Create a playlist of songs that signify the feelings you had that day.

What did you learn from your own experience that could create the conditions for storytelling for other people?