

# ARTIST STATEMENT

The first time I experienced loss was when my grandfather passed away when I was in 6th grade. He battled lung cancer for three years so it was not an unexpected loss but that didn't stop me from crying. How was he alive one day and gone the next? At the end of 9th grade I had my heart broken for the first time after I found out that my boyfriend had cheated on me. It was the hardest few weeks I had ever experienced. I cried non stop for days and even when I stopped I still felt so incredibly empty. It was the most betrayed I had ever felt and it took months to fully recover and heal. However, in retrospect I can't believe that I got through that and I'm stronger because of it. The following year, I was cheated on again and was left heartbroken. This time I healed much quicker because I had been through it once already. Then at the beginning of my junior year I suffered from dissociative traumatic amnesia triggered from years of being bullied and harassed by a classmate of mine. I barely went to school that year and no one reached out or asked why. I felt so alone. In hindsight I spend the whole first semester grieving everything she made me loose. Going to Oxbow was when I finally started the healing process and I have such deep gratitude for that opportunity.

I used my painting to process the losses I've had in my life (most recently leaving Oxbow). I never base my art around what I want the final product to look like. Instead, I like to see where the art will take me. The first painting (the one of the face) symbolizes the grieving process and the pain it causes. It represents depression, numbness, anger, and confusion through realistic and abstract elements. The second painting (the yellow one) conveyys the happiness of acceptance and the freedom that comes with it. I used abstract elements in both paintings to convey emotions rather than moments.

HOW DO WE GRIEVE?

A scenic landscape featuring a calm river or lake in the foreground, reflecting the sky. The banks are lined with trees, including a prominent tree with a white 'X' marked on its trunk and a string of small, round, reddish-brown objects hanging from a branch. The background shows more trees and a clear sky.

HOW WE  
GRIEVE



“Only people who are capable of loving strongly can also suffer great sorrow, but this same necessity of loving serves to counteract their grief and heals them.”

*Leo Tolstoy*

# THE STAGES OF GRIEF AS I'VE EXPERIENCED THEM

We experience loss several times in our lives through heartbreak, death of a loved one, job loss, or the diagnosis of a terminal illness. Grief is the process of mourning a loss which is increasingly prominent in society today. Covid-19 forces us to remain strong as the world changes daily. High school seniors have realized they will not have the prom and graduation they have worked for years to have. Parents are being laid off of work and don't know how to support their families. Most of all, we must find ways to grieve the deaths of people all over the world in numbers that are growing exponentially.

# DENIAL

I remembered being curled up in a ball hyperventilating, fighting any aspect of change from entering my life.

I genuinely couldn't see a future of recovery.

My mind was going so fast and I was so overwhelmed.

I could not make sense of the world around me anymore.

Everything seemed out of place and I felt disconnected from reality.

The shock was so disorienting that I couldn't accept it as the truth.

# ANGER

How could the world do this to me?

Who can I blame for making me feel this way?

I could not understand the pain I was feeling.

I tried to make sense of the world through my anger.

I felt blinded by my because I couldn't feel love anymore.

It made it hurt less for a few days but as the hate lifted the pain

came back.

# BARGAINING

"If only I had done this..."

This stage poisons the mind by obsessing over what cannot be changed.

My mind was drowning in helplessness and self loathing.

I searched for something to believe in, something to give me hope.

Since religion never made sense to me, I fell in love with the idea of Karma in the most practical sense of the practice.

I cope by believing that all the bad luck I've received from the world will earn me good luck.

Ironically, I will be more grateful for those good moments having gone through the bad.

I'm able to mourn what I lost while knowing pain is not permanent.

# DEPRESSION

Running from emotions,

thoughts,

beliefs,

only to find a numbness so deep

I missed being able to feel pain.

I isolated myself and shut down.

I lost motivation to get out of bed, exercise, eat well, spend time with other people, shower, or do homework.

I felt so broken I couldn't picture myself ever being okay again.

I lost sight of my goals, dreams, or aspirations.

I lost the ability to laugh, feel joy, or bliss.

Sunny weather didn't make me happy, it just made me less sad.



# ACCEPTANCE

*"Nevertheless, she persisted."*

It was the light at the end of a seemingly never ending tunnel.

I was able to smile, laugh, live, enjoy, create, and relax.

It felt like the first glimpse of the sun after days of rain.

Just like a flower, the storm made my roots grow deeper and anchor me to the earth.

My light came back and it emanated like a halo.

Love for my friends and family came back and we could laugh together like the world stopped.

I felt so strong and resilient, as if I could do anything.

I no longer felt captive of my mind.

I took everything I felt in each stage and learned from them.

Learning how my brain works and how I can become stronger.

I found a greater appreciation for the happy moments in my life.

I felt so free.

I still have dark moments but I know they can't stop me.

After everything I've been through I know there is nothing I can't handle.