

Leigheas na Coille

Forest Therapy for Grief

with Liz Gleeson, Grief Specialist

MA Dramatherapy · MSc Loss and Bereavement · MA Counselling and Psychotherapy

Liz is a trained Forest Bathing Guide and Forest Therapy Practitioner

---

A TWELVE-WEEK FOREST THERAPY GROUP
WEDNESDAY MORNINGS
WOODLAND LOCATIONS IN COUNTY WICKLOW

Copyright Liz Gleeson 2026



A warm welcome

If you are reading this, you have likely experienced a significant loss. I am glad that you have found your way to this group. Leigheas na Coille, this 12-week Forest Therapy programme for grief, is the result of over a decade of supporting people experiencing loss, and the fruits of my PhD research.

So much research has been done about grief and grieving, but few people have explored the importance of ***where*** we grieve. The forest offers a calm, neutral and nurturing environment where we can connect with nature, ourselves and our grief.

For each person, the experience will be different. While talking is welcome and there will be some group sharing, talking is not prioritised in this group. Your own process is at the heart of the experience from the moment you arrive to the moment you leave. Every week, your body will be gently guided into a slow, sensory state of being. The carefully crafted invitations will facilitate your grieving process, for whatever is needed on that day at that time. Your experience will be at your own pace, in your own time, and in your own way. We hope you will find the consolation of the forest eases your grieving experience.

You don't need any experience; come as you are. An ability to walk for at least 45 minutes in forested terrain is necessary.

Copyright Liz Gleeson 2026

Why the forest?

Grief is a normal response to loss of any kind. When someone important to us dies, it is normal to experience a range of different emotions and physical symptoms. Sometimes the stress of significant loss can cause a profound grieving response that can have a negative impact on our health. Forest Therapy, a relatively new concept in Europe, is supported by a growing body of research suggesting benefits for both body and mind.

Grief can feel as though the world we knew has fallen away. My doctoral research explored what it is like to grieve in the forest, alongside bereaved adults who took part in a twelve-week forest therapy programme in Co. Wicklow. What I learned from them is that grieving people can really benefit from more than simple accompaniment; given the right place, the right time and the right people, it is possible to begin, slowly, to find a way back into the world with a renewed sense of hope.

Over twelve weeks, the group meets in a variety of woodland locations in County Wicklow as winter gives way to spring. Returning week after week, with the same people, allows trust to grow: with the forest, with one another, and with your own grief.





Copyright Liz Gleeson 2026





The programme at a glance

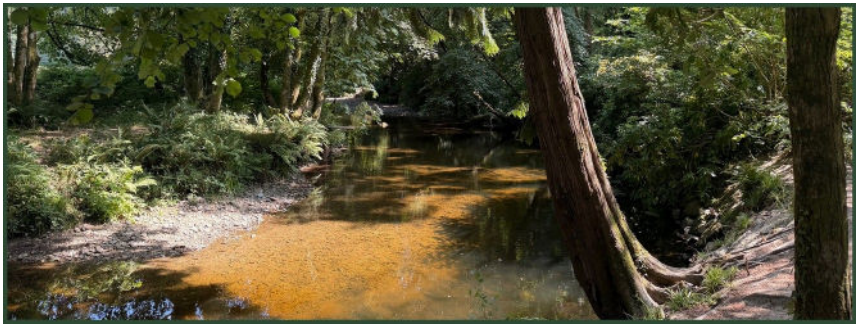
Dates	Every Wednesday morning for twelve weeks, from 17 February to 5 May 2027. All twelve dates are listed overleaf.
Time	10am to 1pm (approximately 3 hours)
Where	A variety of woodland locations in County Wicklow. Locations will be confirmed closer to the time, and may include Enniskerry, Ashford, Greystones, Bray, Newtownmountkennedy, Laragh, Kilcoole and Roundwood.
Group size	No greater than 12 participants
Cost	**Sliding scale from €800 (not earning) to €1,200 (earning).** The sliding scale is there so that cost need not stand between you and this support. Please pay at the point on the scale that honestly reflects your circumstances.
Deposit	A 25% non-refundable deposit is required to secure your place
Accessibility	Participants must be able to walk for at least 45 minutes in uneven, forest terrain.
Book	Booking form for Forest Therapy Group Spring 2027 – Fill in form

Copyright Liz Gleeson 2026

Your twelve Wednesdays

Each session runs from 10am to 1pm. Please keep these dates free in your diary.

WEEK 1 Wednesday **17 February**	WEEK 2 Wednesday **24 February**	WEEK 3 Wednesday **3 March**
WEEK 4 Wednesday **10 March**	WEEK 5 Wednesday **17 March**	WEEK 6 Wednesday **24 March**
WEEK 7 Wednesday **31 March**	WEEK 8 Wednesday **7 April**	WEEK 9 Wednesday **14 April**
WEEK 10 Wednesday **21 April**	WEEK 11 Wednesday **28 April**	WEEK 12 Wednesday **5 May**



Copyright Liz Gleeson 2026 ·

The shape of the twelve weeks

Participants will be invited to attend a weekly 3-hour Forest Therapy Session for twelve consecutive Wednesday mornings from February 17th to May 5th 2027.

Each week	We meet at the same time, with the same small group, and follow the same gentle structure. This steady rhythm offers a sense of safety and containment at a time when grief can make the world feel unpredictable.
Themes	Each session has its own theme, with invitations and a short piece of poetry that reflect it, touching on loss, change, remembrance and the consolation of the natural world.
Seasons	Beginning in the stillness of late winter and ending in the fullness of spring, the group is invited to notice how the woodland changes alongside us, week by week.





What is Forest Therapy?

Forest Therapy does not involve walking long distances, it is a mindful experience of the forest environment, experienced through the senses with the guidance of your Forest Therapy Practitioner. Participants are invited to deepen their connection with nature and notice what they are drawn to in the forest. Connection with nature and with each other will be encouraged, and there will be several opportunities to share your experience with the greater group, if you wish. There is no right or wrong way to do any of this.

A typical Forest Therapy session

Each forest session follows a gentle, familiar rhythm. Grief can shake our sense that the world is safe and predictable. Moving through a shared, unhurried structure, with the same small group, offers a quiet sense of safety and containment, so that you can let go a little and simply be in the forest.

GATHERING AND WELCOME

Meeting at an agreed spot. We begin by arriving, settling in and greeting one another. There is time to leave the rush of the morning behind and let the group gather before we step slowly into the woods together.







AWAKENING THE SENSES GUIDED MEDITATION

The first invitation is usually a guided meditation focusing on grounding, coming into the body and awakening the senses. Through sound, scent, touch and the feel of the ground beneath your feet, the busy mind is invited to soften, and the body to arrive fully in the forest.

GUIDED INVITATIONS

The main body of the sessions involves a series of structured invitations, gentle prompts to assist the participants to find ways to slow down and connect with nature and grief in a meaningful way. The invitations are optional, they are non-directive and open to individual interpretation, so that participants can engage with the invitations in their own meaningful way.

Some invitations are introduced with a short poem or reading that touches on loss, change or the consolation of the natural world. You might be invited to notice what is moving around you, to find a place that quietly draws you, or to spend time with a tree, the water or the light. You are always free to follow your own way, to rest where you are, or simply to sit and listen.

As the process evolves, the invitations will become more grief-focused, allowing you to explore different aspects of how grief might be showing up in your life and what parts of your grief may need to be tended to.

SHARING CIRCLES

After some of the invitations, participants are invited to gather together and share a word or two about their experience of the previous invitation and how they experienced it. Sharing is always optional. Listening is a gift to the

group too, and silence is always welcome. Being heard by others who are also grieving can ease the loneliness that so often comes with loss.

NATURE-BASED ART

Some invitations may involve creating artwork on the forest floor, or embodying some of the grief-related invitations. Participation is always optional. No artistic experience is needed.

CLOSING RITUAL

A closing ritual ends the session. A simple tea ceremony using foraged plants brought by the Forest Therapy Guide will take place, honouring the end of the session and allowing participants to make the transition back to everyday life. It is a moment to pause and warm your hands around a cup.





Some key points about Leigheas na Coille

- This is not about exercise, walking or hiking – it is about slowing down and becoming more present to the natural setting.
- The sessions are designed to assist in slowing-down and settling the nervous system.
- The focus of sessions is on supporting the body to feel safe in the world again so that grieving becomes more easeful.
- Many of the invitations are designed to help participants to come into a more comfortable and knowledgeable relationship with their grief.
- The Forest is not just a venue for the sessions, but very much an entity to relate to and connect with, in reciprocal relationship.

YOUR GUIDE

Sessions will be led by a trained Forest Therapy Guide who is also a Psychotherapist specialising in loss and grief. That is me, Liz. I have over ten years of experience accompanying people through grief and loss.

Sessions will be held in a variety of woodland locations in County Wicklow, and will take place regardless of the weather, unless there is a weather warning by Met Éireann.



What to wear and bring

Participants are asked to dress appropriately for the weather, ensuring that they have sufficiently warm and weather-proof clothing at every session. We will be still a lot of the time, so make sure that you are wearing enough clothes to keep you warm, dry and comfortable throughout.

ESSENTIAL ITEMS

- Warm clothes
- Waterproof shoes or boots, waterproof trousers and jacket
- An extra warm or fleece top in your bag

PLEASE ALSO BRING

- A drink and a snack
- A sit mat or light yoga mat to sit on
- Tissues, and a zip-lock bag for rubbish
- Insect repellent
- Gloves, hat, scarf and warm socks, if the weather demands

YOU MAY ALSO LIKE TO BRING

- A notebook and pen
- Something like a dry robe, which can be very handy to stay warm and dry, and to have something to sit on



Looking after yourself

I want you to feel as safe and well supported as possible, so please read the following carefully.

Participating in the programme may result in improved physical and mental health, but that cannot be guaranteed. Taking part may also, occasionally, leave you feeling worse physically or emotionally, although this is unlikely. Please disclose in advance if you have any mental health difficulties that are not bereavement related. This is so that we can ensure that this is the right programme for you at the right time.

The programme takes place in a forest environment, so there is a certain element of unpredictable risks, such as trip hazards, insect bites, allergic reactions, sprains or other minor injuries. Please take good care of your physical health throughout.

Participating in the programme is likely to exacerbate difficult or uncomfortable feelings relating to your loss and grieving process. Expression of grief is to be expected, and you are welcome to express your grief during the sessions in whatever way it presents itself.





Support outside the sessions

Should you feel the need for support before, during or after participating in this programme, you may find it useful to speak with a Bereavement Line volunteer at the Irish Hospice Foundation or to contact the Samaritans support line if you feel that you are struggling to cope.

Irish Hospice Foundation Bereavement Support Line

1800 807 077 Monday to Friday, 10am to 1pm

Samaritans

116 123 Someone is available around the clock

If you feel that your grief is making you unwell, please contact your GP and arrange an appointment.

STILL HAVE QUESTIONS?

Please do contact the facilitator Liz Gleeson, liz@shapesofgrief.com





Group Guidelines

Commitment. Please come to all twelve walks, staying for the duration of each. You are an important part of the group and your absence will impact the wider group dynamic.

Punctuality. Please aim to arrive 10 minutes in advance of our start time of 10:00 to allow for a toilet stop and to gather your belongings. If you will be delayed for any reason please call Liz on 087 293 4699.

Presence. Each of you are experiencing loss, we invite you to show up for others in the group in a kind, supportive, courteous and compassionate way. You may at times feel that your loss or bereavement is worse than everyone else's or less than everyone else's. I really encourage you not to participate in your own Grief Olympics (we all do!) and allow the group to simply be as it is with whoever is there.

Witness. We learn to bear witness and listen to each other, without commenting, comforting or advising. Expressions of grief are natural and healthy and welcome.

Confidentiality. We invite you to share about your own experience in the group with your friends and loved ones, but not about anyone else in the group.

Expectation. Outside of these guidelines there is no expectation on you for the duration of this experience, there is no 'right' or 'wrong', no pressure to share and no desired outcome from the facilitators. Please come as you are.





I look forward to meeting you, and to sharing these twelve weeks in the forest with you.

Liz

BOOK YOUR PLACE

Booking form for Forest Therapy Group Spring 2027 – Fill in form

Leigheas na Coille · Liz Gleeson · liz@shapesofgrief.com

If you would like to learn more about Liz's grief training, podcast and other resources, see www.shapesofgrief.com.

For more information on Liz's Forest Therapy research, see www.foresttherapy.ie.



Leigheas na Coille

Forest Therapy for Grief

with Liz Gleeson, Grief Specialist

All photographs © Liz Gleeson

© The Irish Centre for Grief Training. All rights reserved.