THE CARING CONNECTIONS TEEN GRIEF SUPPORT PROGRAM

FACILITATOR MANUAL | AUGUST 2024

University of Utah College of Nursing & Utah State Board of Education

HEALTH
UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

Caring Connections
A HOPE AND COMFORT IN GRIEF PROGRAM

Utah State Board of Education

This manual was developed as part of the work of Caring Connections: A Hope and Comfort in Grief Program University of Utah College of Nursing on behalf of the Utah State Board of Education.

Caring Connections

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ABOUT THIS PROGRAM

By the end of high school, five percent of students in the US will have lost one of their parents to death, and 20% will have experienced the death of someone close by age 18. Grief is part of the human experience, but grief as a child, as a teen, or as a young adult, can be much more difficult than the same loss experienced as an adult.

The **Caring Connections Teen Grief Support Program** is an eight-session grief support group designed for you and other high school students, and will be led by a counselor, social worker, psychologist, teacher, or therapist. In your group with other teens, you will have the opportunity to share your experience of grief, as much as you feel comfortable with, in a confidential setting. Your grief will be honored as unique to you. You will learn about grief, ways of coping, ways of relating to others, and ways to remember the person who died to help you in this moment and in the future. In addition to learning about grief, you will be able to safely express your grief in conversation, in activities such as art, poetry, and writing.

In addition to evidence-informed session content that guides the grief process, this teen grief manual includes carefully selected poems generously shared by their authors. The pages are filled with artwork by commissioned high school students; poignant images and Grieffiti created by Caring Connections that invites doodling with colored pencils. Each session includes activities to support grief, a meditation to close each session, a "Thoughts and Jots" page for drawing and journaling, and suggested homework to encourage growth between sessions.

We cannot take away the pain of grief—and even if that were possible, that would be unfairly altering your relationship with the person who died. Even when grief "settles down," it will always be with you in more manageable ways. We are grateful that you have invited us into this unwelcome experience and are confident that you will find ways to grow through your grief.

We are grateful to the State of Utah Board of Education, and the many people who collaborated on this project.

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THE FACILITATOR'S MANUAL

The following manual is designed to be used by facilitators of the **Caring Connections Teen Grief Support Program**. In it you will find the complete version of the Caring Connections Grief Support Participant Manual as well as information and guidance unique to this manual.

INTRODUCTION TO FACILITATING GRIEF SUPPORT GROUPS

> ***"How extraordinary is the situation of us mortals! Each of us is here for a brief sojourn; for what purpose he knows not, though he sometimes thinks he senses it. But without going deeper than our daily life, it is plain that we exist for our fellow men-in the first place for those upon whose smiles and welfare all our happiness depends, and next for those unknown to us personally but to whose destinies we are bound by the tie of sympathy."***
>
> ***—Albert Einstein***

The grief support groups are intended to acknowledge the **universality** of grief and loss, while respecting the **unique** nature of each loss to the individual grieving person. Participating in a grief support group is an act of courage and can facilitate a healthy grief process. The goals of the program are to:

- Provide emotional support in the face of loss.
- Bring grieving persons together in a comfortable setting which reduces isolation, fosters relationships and creates common bonds.
- Provide a forum for sharing experiences, listening and learning, and the development of effective coping skills.
- Provide opportunity for suffering persons to gain help, but also provide help and support to others.

The grief support programs are just that: support. They are not therapy groups, though they are "therapeutic." The grief support group is not a sufficient avenue to address serious mental health issues. Persons experiencing severe depression, anxiety or complicated grief may participate in the groups, but often are required to have concurrent individual counseling. If you, as facilitator are concerned about the wellbeing of a participant, please bring it to our attention immediately. We must consider the welfare of each individual participant, as well as the needs of the group as a whole.

GROUP PROCESS BASICS

PRIOR TO THE GROUP

SCREENING

Prospective participants are screened prior to beginning the group. In our grief group process, the Caring Connections program requests information about the timing and nature of the death, and about each person's experience, past or current with depression, anxiety and suicidality. We also request information about other losses, and the presence of family support and/or family responsibilities. We suggest more in-depth telephone interview, if the initial screening left unaddressed concerns. In most cases, persons unprepared for a support group are referred to individual counseling, or are required to have concurrent counseling. We have provided a copy of our intake assessment form in this manual, but you may use your own.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Prospective participants are advised on the program confidentiality policy prior to beginning the group. It is essential that facilitators review this concept in the first session and model it in their own work.

ESSENTIALS OF THE GROUP PROCESS

Begin and end on time. Facilitators take attendance each week so that program coordinators can follow up with missing participants.

Welcome each member and make an effort to remember names and details correctly. As you become acquainted with each member, it's helpful to try to capture this information as they tell their story:

- The circumstances of the death: Was the participant involved? In attendance? How did the participant learn of the death?
- The relationship with the deceased; anything suggesting guilt, anger or unfinished business.
- The extent of the participant's family and social supports in grief.
- Other stressors co-occurring with the death, or since the death.
- Other losses; past and current.
- The participant's primary emotion(s) as presented in the group.
- The participant's comfort in sharing in the group setting.

A primary responsibility of the group facilitator is to create a communication flow; each member should have sufficient time to respond to a topic, and to the comments of others. The facilitator keeps the flow going, draws in less talkative members without pressuring them to contribute, and encourages the highly talkative to share time and listen. Difficulties with the communication process of groups will be discussed below. Over the course of the group, the participants take increasing responsibility for the flow of the group, and the role of the facilitator diminishes, but is still vital in

attending to the needs of each member and the well-being of the group. As Marylou Hughes has observed in her book, *Bereavement and Support: Healing in a Group Environment,* "The leaders make the meeting or the event possible, but they do not make the support and the healing happen. The facilitators may direct the discussion or arrange the event, but they are only the facilitators." (1995, p 18). The facilitator is responsible for creating the atmosphere of safety and support that allows the group itself to be the mechanism of healing and growth.

DURING THE GROUP SESSIONS

The manual is available to you and to group participants to assure that either within the group, or in their own reading, the major themes of grief are addressed. Years of evaluating our group outcomes had affirmed the structure of the eight sessions, but the manual is primarily a guide, and it is more important that the facilitator follow the themes and content of the group than adhere to a set agenda.

As the group progresses through the eight weeks, you will be able to cover the thematic content in the manual, but need not do so in a rigid order. For example, it is not uncommon for suicide loss survivors or overdose loss survivors' groups to require many sessions on feelings of anger and guilt; in these cases, the facilitator can weave issues of communication, relationships and coping into the ongoing dialogue about feelings.

The Grief Practice or "homework" ideas in the manual are helpful, and encourage participants to accept personal responsibility for their own grief work process. Other thematic ideas are found in the "Focus on the Facilitator" section for each session in this manual. Remember, the group itself and the presence of the facilitator are much more effective tools than the manual alone.

AFTER THE GROUP

The final session includes a closure activity. This activity includes an act of personal assessment of the grief journey by participants and a remembrance of the deceased. Facilitators encourage participants to share observations on each other's growth. Facilitators know their group members well by the end of the group, and may elect to do a candle-lighting, a shared potluck meal or any activity that honors their efforts and growth in grief.

Reassure participants that the program will remain available to provide support after the group has formally ended.

GROUP FACILITATOR BASICS

ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR

As stated earlier, because these are not therapy groups, but rather support groups, the grief support group itself is "the agent of change" in grief healing. That said, the facilitator plays a critical role in creating a healthy and helpful group. To effectively facilitate in this setting, the facilitator must possess the following attributes:

KNOWLEDGE

- Grief and loss
- Group process
- Psychopathology

LEADERSHIP

- Willingness to yield authority
- Capability to transition from "facilitator as leader" to "facilitator as seasoned member"

MODELING

- Demonstrates warm, compassionate communication
- Attention (being with, rather than doing for or doing to)
- Acknowledgment (appreciation/respect)
- Affection (sharing warmth, comfort, and presence)
- Acceptance (of the person and the situation)

SKILLS

- Flexibility and patience
- Listening skills
- Creativity
- Prompt and effective responsive to conflicts
- Self-awareness and acceptance of personal limitations
- Group process skills; the facilitator fosters:
  - Group acceptance and interaction
  - Honest verbal and non-verbal communication

VALUES

- Empathy
- Respect
- Warmth
- Genuineness

STYLE

- Uses personal communication style and personal experiences with genuineness, yet does not impose these as "the only way" to feel, think or behave

OTHER ISSUES FOR FACILITATORS

- Be aware of your own scope of practice.
- Be aware of the scope of care, consider your role in advising/counseling/therapy and keep your approach consistent with group goals.
- Be aware of your own transference/counter-transference issues.
- Be aware of your time, stamina and professional liability limitations.
- Know your community resources that other care participants' may need.

PROBLEMS IN THE GROUP

In the best run groups with the most carefully screened participants, problems can arise which impact the group dynamic. The bereaved represent every aspect of society and the entire human condition. Difficulties with communication and relationships that existed prior to the death of a loved one persist and are brought into the group. Many times, the group can help participants process these very issues, but the facilitator needs to take action when these communication conflicts become evident.

RED FLAGS IN GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP PARTICIPANTS

- Suicidality
- Attends group under influence of drugs or alcohol
- Serious mental health disorder: worsening or emergent
- Anxiety that prevents group participation
- Uncontrollable rage
- Physical harm: threats to self or others
- Unresponsive to group by the group midpoint (around 4 weeks)

CHALLENGING COMMUNICATION STYLES OF THE PARTICIPANTS

ADVICE GIVING PARTICIPANTS

This frequently occurs, as it is a natural response of well-meaning helpers. Yet, the experience of receiving unwanted advice is one of the most frustrating parts of many grievers' experience. Remind advice-givers of the group ground rules. Model and encourage participants to express ideas in a "this worked for me" format, rather than in a "this would solve your problem" style.

BLAMING PARTICIPANTS

Blaming others and self-blame are frequently issues in grief processing. Often, there is a true focus of blame; the drunk-driver, the medical failure, the inattention to seatbelt use, etc. Of concern for group process is a pattern of deflecting blame to others, often extending to blaming other group members as the cause of problems. Most typically, this represents an ineffective coping or communication pattern the participant utilized over the life course.

The facilitator responds by challenging the blaming individual to accept personal responsibility for their thoughts and feelings, and for behaviors, perhaps including the circumstances of the death. Pointing out the ineffectiveness of this pattern of thinking, and teaching and modeling alternatives in self and in the group can be helpful.

CONVERSATION CONTROLLING PARTICIPANTS

This can occur as either a long-rambling speaking style, or as frequent interruptions. The facilitator is responsible for the conversational flow of the group and must state and assure that each participant has time for personal expression.

In each case, return these participants to the agreed upon rules of the group. The facilitator can use subtle redirects, linking the points of the rambling speaker to comments made earlier by another participant, or may use direct comments on moving the conversation to another speaker. Most participants respond to these redirects and value the idea of equal time; it is very important not to allow a "my grief is bigger than your grief" perception to those seeking more group discussion time.

FAITH CHAMPIONING PARTICIPANTS

Many times, the grieving participant, genuinely sustained by personal beliefs, desires to share personal beliefs as a solution for all. Frequently, grieving persons are angry with God and their faith communities or perceive that God has abandoned them; their feelings should find acceptance and opportunity for expression in the group. The faith champion can increase hostility and conflict.

While conveying respect for each participant's beliefs and values, the facilitator can handle this as advice-giving, remarking that one approach does not work for everyone, and reminding the group of the rule of mutual respect. As with other forms of advice giving, grievers often feel burdened and oppressed by strident "this is the only way" suggestions.

OVERLY SOCIAL PARTICIPANTS

Meeting the need for human connection and support is a core goal of the grief support groups, but it is only one element of an effective group. Frequently, the overly social participant uses humor or small talk to divert the group whenever the content becomes emotionally charged. This is often an effort to "save" the group from difficult content and can reflect the participant's own discomfort with emotional issues. The facilitator can comment on the socializing participant's remark, then return to

the group's discussion content. It is often helpful to point out the participant's deflection and inquire about his or her own thoughts and feelings about the area of discussion.

THE FACILITATOR AS A POSITIVE AGENT OF HEALTHY GRIEF

Therese Rando (1993) has written many excellent books for grieving persons and for clinicians. She shares the following clinical perspectives on encouraging a healthy grief process:

- Remember that you cannot take away the pain from the bereaved
- Do not let your own sense of helplessness restrain you from reaching out to the bereaved
- Expect to tolerate volatile reactions from the bereaved
- Recognize the critical therapeutic value of your presence
- Make sure to view the loss from the bereaved's unique perspective
- Let genuine concern and caring show
- Do not let your personal needs determine the experience for the bereaved
- Do not attempt to explain the loss in religious or philosophical terms too early
- Do not suggest that the bereaved feel better because there are other loved ones still alive
- Do not attempt to minimize the situation
- Do not forget to plant seeds of hope
- Do not encourage actions or responses that inhibit healthy mourning
- Maintain an appropriate therapeutic distance from the bereaved
- Do not fail to hold out the expectation that the bereaved ultimately will successfully accommodate the loss and that the pain will subside.

GRIEF AND BEREAVEMENT BASICS

Grief is a normal and natural, though often deeply painful response to loss. The death of a family member is the most common way we think of loss, but many other significant changes in one's life can involve loss and therefore grief. The more significant the loss, in the life and perception of the individual griever, the more intense the grief is likely to be.

- **Grief:** The process of psychological, social and somatic reactions to the perception of loss.
- **Mourning:** The cultural response to grief.
- **Bereavement:** The state of having suffered a loss.

Grief may be:

- **Present:** relating to a loss that has happened within the immediate year.
- **Past:** relating to an event years earlier. Current losses can trigger memories and struggles with earlier losses.
- **Anticipatory:** associated with an upcoming loss.

Grief is highly individualized. Each person responds to grief differently according to:

- The nature of the loss to the person
- The individual's personality
- The norms within the person's culture and family
- The other stressors in the person's life
- The person's history of coping with other losses

TRANSITIONS IN THE GRIEF PROCESS

SHOCK is often the initial reaction to loss.

SUFFERING is the long period of grief during which the person gradually comes to terms with the reality of the loss.

RECOVERY is the acceptance of the loss, resuming a "normal" life, and regaining the ability to reinvest time, attention, energy, and emotion into other parts of his/her life.

The shock phase includes the death itself, if the grieving person was present and the notification of death. The process of notifying other family and friends, preparing for care of the body, funeral and memorial planning and frequently, the memorial services itself occur during the phase of shock. These days frequently exist in a phase of "psychological anesthesia", and it is not uncommon for grievers to have limited recollection of these events, or to have certain moments retained with highly accurate detail.

When we join with the grieving in grief support groups, we find them in their long phase of suffering. These are the moments when support groups and individual care can be highly effective in guiding the mourning on their grief journey.

CURRENT RESEARCH ON GRIEF STAGES

The idea that grief follows a progressive temporal course is pervasively held in both popular culture and in the clinical professions. Recent work by Stroebe, Schut and Boerner take issue with the perspective that bereaved people go through a set pattern of specific reactions over time following the death of someone close, noting that, "It has frequently been interpreted prescriptively, as a progression that bereaved persons must follow in order to adapt to loss" with "the expectation that bereaved persons will, even should, go through stages of grieving can be harmful to those who do not." (2017, p 455-456).

Rather than affirming a linear process, we suggest describing grief as a roller coaster, as a spiral or a tornado, and support each grieving participant's sense of the unpredictability of grief—especially in the early days and months.

COMPLICATED OR PROLONGED GRIEF AS A DISTINCT PSYCHIATRIC CONDITION

A diagnosis of Prolonged Grief (formerly described as Complicated Grief) requires that the bereaved person must have persistent and disruptive yearning, pining, and longing for the deceased. Diagnostic criteria specify that an additional four of the following eight symptoms be experienced at least several times a day and/or to a severely distressing and disruptive degree: trouble accepting the death; inability to trust others since the death; excessive bitterness related to the death; feeling uneasy about moving on; detachment from formerly close others; feeling life is meaningless without the deceased; feeling that the future holds no prospect for fulfillment without the deceased; feeling agitated since the death. The symptomatic distress has to endure for at least 12 months and must be associated with significant impairment in social, occupational, or other important domain of functioning.

The American Psychiatric Association reclassified this constellation of symptoms as "Prolonged Grief Disorder" in the March 2022 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-5-TR). We continue to find some aspects of this nomenclature troubling. First, the duration of grief is an incomplete explanation of grief that is unrelenting and results in social and functional limitations. Time—and the associated necessary patience is essential in grieving, but time alone does not "heal." Labeling grief as problematic by duration of symptoms is simplistic and fails to address the many varieties of grief framed by culture, religion and other situations. The term "complicated" better captures the many factors that prevent some grievers from reconciling their loss and creating a life without the deceased. Further, while we strongly advocate for the correct, evidence-based, and effective therapeutic approach to the care of grieving persons, we do find the term "disorder" concerning. Our world is, for the most part, impatient and dismissive of grief, and we share unease about labeling persons with a "disorder" when they may be instead lacking the proper care and resources to proceed. A recognition that the experience of grievers with prolonged and complicated grief may be a "normal reaction to an abnormal problem" can assuage this concern. Yet, given the need for diagnostic clarity, we refer to this situation as prolonged grief.

While concerns about diagnostic criteria have implications for proper identification and treatment of persons with disabling grief, we take the disabling forms of grief seriously and screen all participants for complicated grief and try to optimize their options for suitable care.

A HEALTHY GRIEF PROCESS

Grief is the response to bereavement; a combination of emotional, cognitive, physical, social and spiritual processes used to adjust to a world profoundly and irrevocably altered by a close other's death. Grief necessitates progressive adjustment and re-evaluation of one's internal self-concept, expectations of self and others (including the deceased) and social role transitions. These processes are ongoing, and the components, as well as the intensity of the experience fluctuate over time. Grief is a transition state that both bridges and facilitates the psychological transformation from knowing a close other is alive to acceptance that this person has died. Grief can be considered the permanent means by which we continue our relationships with those who have died, and find an avenue for personal change and growth informed by the relationship with the one who died. Notably, the human mind is essentially "hard-wired" to grieve, and while grief can be profoundly painful, most people accomplish the transition with time, coping skills, social supports and understanding based in spirituality or a personal philosophy.

J.W. Worden (2002) describes the therapeutic process of grief as recognizing the reality and permanence of the loss, expressing and processing thoughts and feelings related to the loss, readjusting to an environment where the deceased is absent, and reinvesting in life and relationships, while remembering the deceased. These are likely the goals of many participants, though perhaps not articulated this way. Please note what is missing in this process; there is no mention of "being done," of "getting over it," or of "life going on as it was before." It is helpful to assist participants in realistic and humane goal setting. The burden on grievers to be "done" with grief and to "relinquish the memory of their loved one" persists. We can instead help those in grief grow toward their "new normal." That said, setting goals, both for the grief participants hope for and goals for their new life without the deceased are important.

RESILIENCE IN COPING

Pauline Boss (2006) described grief resiliency in the context of her work on Ambiguous Loss. Resilience is the ability to recover quickly from misfortune. It is the human ability regain stability following disruptive change, or misfortune without being overwhelmed or acting in dysfunctional or harmful ways. We support the emerging resilience of grieving persons when we assist them with growing life mastery, reconstructing their identity, navigating relationships and discovering hope.

MEANING MAKING

The process of making sense of the loss is referred to as meaning-making and is based on the work of Robert Neimeyer (2016), though deeply informed by the writings of Viktor Frankl. Meaning making and the construction of meaning following a death include the capability of grievers to come to terms with the loss, to realize growth or benefit that the experience of loss may have brought them, and to reorganize personal identity in the context of loss.

INTEGRATED GRIEF

While grief never truly ends, our efforts are designed to facilitate progress toward integrated grief; the enduring residual form of grief in which the reality and meaning of the death are gradually

understood and the bereaved person is able to participate once again in pleasurable and satisfying relationships and activities. Integrated grief does not mean that individuals forget the one who died, miss them any less or not feel sadness when thinking about them. The loss becomes integrated into one's memory, meaning that thoughts or memories of the deceased are no longer as preoccupying or disabling. The grieving person finds a way of remaining connected to the deceased without their physical presence. Once an individual's grief has become integrated they are more easily able to engage in other activities without grief constantly demanding their mind. However, there may be periods when the acute grief re-emerges, this is common and does not reflect a failure or malfunction of the grieving process. This can occur around the time of significant events, such as holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, another loss, or a particularly stressful time.

GRIEF LITERACY

Grief Literacy is a goal within the larger compassionate communities movement. Recognizing that our society is fragmented, and the varying norms and traditions to support one another in times of suffering are unclear, increasing grief knowledge would "enable the general public and professionals to identify grief more readily, to seek out relevant information and to adopt appropriate supports and thereby be proactive in avoiding complications from the grieving process such as depression" (Clark 2003). In addition to formal care offered by organizations such as Caring Connections, and by grief counselors and palliative and hospice care professionals, the Grief Literacy Movement seeks to equip all citizens to support one another in times of loss and bereavement.

Many grieving persons struggle with people in their lives who are insensitive to their experience. Most frequently, they describe people who don't "show up" to share support, perhaps due to uncertainty or awkwardness. Other times, grievers endure well-meaning persons who say or do things that are unintentionally hurtful or filled with expectations of how they "should" be grieving. Still others—a minority—are demanding or unkind to those in grief, conveying a "get over it" attitude that disenfranchises the griever's sorrow.

THE CARE OF THE BEREAVEMENT CLINICIAN

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF AS A MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

Topics such as "burnout," "preventing staff turnover," "increasing morale and motivation in the workplace," and "stress management" are frequently found on conference agendas at professional mental health meetings. Are mental health clinicians more aware of the signs and symptoms of trouble? Or do we have difficulty accepting the advice we give clients and their caregivers?

The ability of clinicians to care for themselves and each other, and a work environment that recognizes and values this need are important components of quality service delivery. In this section, a few points relevant to care of self while caring for those suffering from grief and loss will be highlighted.

RECOGNIZE THE DIFFICULTIES INHERENT IN SERVING THE GRIEVING

- Loss is a predominant theme
- Problems that emerge in grief work may have been years in the making
- Grieving persons are especially vulnerable to the impact of new loss and change
- Supports (financial, family, friends, and services) may be minimal or absent

SET REASONABLE GOALS IN YOUR CARE

- Set small, attainable goals for clinical progress
- Accept appropriate praise for your efforts as well as "success"
- Anticipate setbacks; recognize them apart from "failure"

USE YOUR "TEAM" OF PROFESSIONAL COLLEAGUES

- Communicate clearly and regularly with those who support you professionally
- Offer support and praise; commiserate with each other
- Utilize each member's expertise while encouraging new challenges and clinical variety

GET AWAY FROM YOUR WORK

- Do the good stuff you tell clients to do…vacation, exercise, meditate, hug your kids, and have fun
- Avoid self-destructive choices; sloth, smoking, over-eating, substance use
- Get more education and training

CHECK YOUR PERSPECTIVE

- On your very best day, you are only part of the solution
- Don't allow yourself to become anybody's "only" source of support
- Understand your resources as finite, draw in other resources; replenish yourself
- The only two permanent crises are suicide and homicide…almost everything else gets a second chance
- You are capable of giving compassionate and effective care in situations most people would never attempt to work in

In clinical care of suffering persons, struggles can persist despite our best efforts. Normal aging progresses, disease advances. Families may crumble or reconstitute themselves in effective ways. Relationships may fail or be edified through forgiveness and reconciliation. The outcome is not cure. The outcome is a process of care in the clinical relationship than can be a powerful agent of change and growth in moments of intense distress and suffering.

> ***"We can do no great things; only small things with great love."***
>
> ***—Mother Theresa***

GRIEF ASSESSMENT INTAKE FORM

NAME _____

AGE _____ DATE OF BIRTH _____

GENDER _____ PREFERRED PRONOUNS _____

RACE/ETHNICITY _____

STREET ADDRESS _____

_____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

E-MAIL _____

PREF. _____

PHONES: (HOME) _____ (OFFICE) _____

(CELL) _____

EMERGENCY CONTACT NAME _____

RELATIONSHIP _____

BEST NUMBER _____ CELL _____

NAME OF THE DECEASED _____

AGE AT DEATH _____ DATE OF DEATH _____

CAUSE OF DEATH _____

_____

WAS THE DEATH UNEXPECTED TO YOU? ☐ YES ☐ NO

TO WHAT EXTENT WERE YOU PREPARED FOR THIS PERSON'S DEATH?

☐ NOT AT ALL ☐ SOMEWHAT ☐ VERY MUCH

DETAILS: _____

_____

_____

HOW ARE YOU RELATED TO THE DECEASED? THIS PERSON WAS MY:

☐ SIBLING ☐ SPOUSE ☐ PARENT ☐ CHILD ☐ GRANDCHILD ☐ GRANDPARENT

☐ OTHER (SPECIFY) _____

_____

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE LOSS: _____

_____

_____

_____

DO YOU HAVE FAMILY MEMBERS LIVING IN YOUR HOME? ☐ YES ☐ NO

IF YES, NAMES, AGES, & RELATIONSHIPS: _____

_____

_____

_____

IS THERE ONGOING LITIGATION REGARDING THIS LOSS? ☐ YES ☐ NO

IF YES, DESCRIBE: _____

_____

_____

_____

HAVE YOU HAD ANY PREVIOUS LOSSES? ☐ YES ☐ NO

IF YES, DESCRIBE _____

_____

_____

_____

DO YOU HAVE ANY ADDITIONAL STRESSES IN YOUR LIFE RIGHT NOW? ☐ YES ☐ NO

IF YES, DESCRIBE: _____

_____

_____

_____

COMPARED TO OTHERS YOUR OWN AGE, HOW DO YOU RATE YOUR HEALTH?

☐ EXCELLENT ☐ VERY GOOD ☐ GOOD ☐ FAIR ☐ POOR

HAVE YOU HAD OR ARE YOU CURRENTLY IN THERAPY? ☐ YES ☐ NO

THERAPIST'S NAME _____

PHONE _____

ARE YOU CURRENTLY TAKING ANY MEDICATION FOR YOUR GRIEF? ☐ YES ☐ NO

IF SO, WHAT? _____

_____

_____

_____

HAVE YOU HAD ANY PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES WITH DEPRESSION? ☐ YES ☐ NO

IF YES, WAS IT WITHIN THE LAST 5 YEARS? ☐ YES ☐ NO

DO YOU HAVE A HISTORY OF MEDICATION OR SUBSTANCE USE/OVERUSE/ABUSE? ☐ YES ☐ NO

IF YES, DESCRIBE: _____

_____

_____

_____

HAVE YOU THOUGHT OF HURTING AND/OR KILLING YOURSELF? ☐ YES ☐ NO

ARE YOU COMMITTED TO STAYING WITH THE GROUP FOR ALL SESSIONS? ☐ YES ☐ NO

PROLONGED GRIEF DISORDER (PG-13: REVISED)

Holly G. Prigerson, Ph.D., Jiehui Xu, M.S., Paul K. Maciejewski, Ph.D.

Q1. Have you lost someone significant to you? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Q2. How many months has it been since your significant other died? _____ Months

For each item below, please indicate how you currently feel.

Since the death, or as a result of the death...	Not at all	Slightly	Somewhat	Quite a bit	Overwhelmingly
Q3. Do you feel yourself longing or yearning for the person who died?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Q4. Do you have trouble doing the things you normally do because you are thinking so much about the person who died?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Q5. Do you feel confused about your role in life or feel like you don't know who you are any more (i.e., feeling like that a part of you has died)?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Q6. Do you have trouble believing that the person who died is really gone?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Q7. Do you avoid reminders that the person who died is really gone?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Since the death, or as a result of the death...	Not at all	Slightly	Somewhat	Quite a bit	Overwhelmingly
Q8. Do you feel emotional pain (e.g., anger, bitterness, sorrow) related to the death?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Q9. Do you feel that you have trouble re-engaging in life (e.g., problems engaging with friends, pursuing interests, planning for the future)?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Q10. Do you feel emotionally numb or detached from others?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Q11. Do you feel that life is meaningless without the person who died?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Q12. Do you feel alone or lonely without the deceased?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Q13. Have the symptoms above caused significant impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

FACILITATING THE PARTICIPANT MANUAL

The Participant Manual has been reproduced below but with a few additions specific to facilitators. The first eight chapters of the Participant Manual (Part 1) are preceded by a weekly guide that details how to facilitate the session. In the second part, an additional chapter has been included for facilitators on unique losses (see Chapter 11).

INTRODUCTION: THE JOURNEY OF GRIEF

ORIENTATION TO THE GROUP

Welcome. Please accept our condolences on the loss of your family member or friend. We want this group to be both helpful and valuable to you.

A trained clinician or educator skilled in the areas of grief and bereavement will facilitate this group. Your facilitator will share information about the grief process and see that the group runs smoothly. We value your contribution to the group as well, and request that you review and follow these guidelines for participation.

GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPATION

- I want a safe group in which to share my feelings and experiences; therefore, I promise **confidentiality.**
- I understand the importance of **consistency;** therefore, I will attend each group meeting.
- I recognize that my needs are important and that in this group **I have an opportunity to share.**
- I trust we all have the inner resources to heal from our loss; therefore, **I will not interrupt, ask questions, or give advice unless asked.**
- **I trust that my silence will be honored** if I do not wish to talk.
- **I will allow you your feelings** and listen with care and trust in your process.
- I heal best when I am present for myself; therefore, **I will not use alcohol or drugs** before group.
- I want my group to start and end on time; therefore, I will come on time and leave when the group is over.
- I have my own faith and belief and will **honor all others.**
- If I am unable to attend, I will **notify the group coordinator or facilitator.**

COMING TOGETHER IN GRIEF

Over the next several weeks, we will be working as a group to understand grief and help each other on this journey. In the grief support group, you are encouraged to relinquish the burden of experiencing a "normal life" or "normal grief." Nothing is "normal" now, and you will be finding your "new normal" as you grieve. We want you to feel safe here and share your real experience.

GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER AND SHARING YOUR STORY

One of the benefits of joining a grief support group is the opportunity to share the story of your close other's life and death in a setting that is accepting and nonjudgmental. Your facilitator will invite you to tell this story in the group, and you may share as much as you feel comfortable sharing. It is common for this first telling in the group to be accompanied by strong memories and feelings. Members of the group listen to each other's stories and often reflect on how the stories of others are different or similar to their own. Group members join with each other in both telling and listening to stories of loss.

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THE GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP

We have found that those who benefit most from our program attend every session, do the suggested grief practices, and share their experiences to the extent they are comfortable.

One of the most important approaches we will work on is how to be present with your grief, allowing it to come and be fully experienced, and how to set grief aside for small amounts of time, to focus your attention on your new changed life, and on self-care activities. This is difficult, and at first you may feel it is impossible. We know you will grieve this loss forever, but we hope you will feel control in your grief—rather than having the grief control you.

PART 1: THE GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP FOR TEENS

It is worth mentioning as we begin the group that teens experiencing the death of someone close often feel very big emotions that can lead to withdrawal and isolation. In this support program you will not be pressured to share, but we hope you feel this is a safe place to share your story and feel accepted.

If you are thinking or feeling that you might wish to end your own life, please speak with us. We are here to help you. Or reach out to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: Call or text 988.

Please also download the SafeUT app on your phone. SafeUT is a crisis chat and tip line that provides real-time crisis intervention for students, parents/guardians, and educators through live chat and a confidential tip line—right from your smartphone.

WEEK 1: WHAT IS GRIEF?

FOCUS ON THE FACILITATOR

Take care to Review the Guidelines for Participation.

GOALS FOR THIS SESSION

- Review group expectations.
- Normalize the grief experience for participants.
- Attempt to reassure participants about "being stuck" or "not moving quickly enough through grief."
- Model and promote courteous dialogue.

This session begins with introductions and each participant telling the group about the person who died and about the circumstances of the death. Allow time for each story, respecting the overall time for everyone to speak. Allow time for other group members to respond to each participant's story; typically, people will remark on similarities and differences in their stories—as they do so, they are forming relationships with each other.

In this session, it's important to cover the manual content closely, as participants want to understand what grief is about. Unless they are profoundly distressed, normalize their feelings and encourage the group to do so, as appropriate. Take care to support those for whom it has been a long time since the death; "long duration" grievers are frequently embarrassed by coming to a support group years after the death.

We hope you have reviewed the assessment of each participant, and you are aware of their other losses. As the group begins, listen to each story and do your own "loss assessment." Does this person describe this loss as a "failure," or do they suggest a sense of "mastery" in their ability to cope? Comment on any strengths you observe (no platitudes, though!) and refer to those strengths now and especially in session 4.

All sessions end with a mindfulness activity to promote calm and closure of the session. This session's mindfulness activity is a simple explanation of breath awareness, and a gentle body scan. If you are new to leading guided meditation, please read through this section ahead of time and practice reading aloud.

As this session wraps up, encourage participants to bring to the next session a photograph or "linking object" (Klass, Silverman and Nickman, 1996) that reminds them of the one who died. You may wish to do this more than once if the group benefits from the exercise.

Encourage participants to begin journaling or another method of documenting feelings, thoughts, and ideas. This is a great tool for the participant, the group, and the facilitator to observe growth in grieving.

Emphasize that those who get the most out of the group attend regularly, do the weekly grief practices at home and journal or find another means of self-expression.

Please Note: many participants will have disturbed sleep—encourage them to read the Tips for a Good Night's Sleep in Chapter 12.

SUGGESTED GRIEF GROUP ACTIVITY: WHAT IS GRIEF?

Write the phrase "Grief is Like…" on a large whiteboard or sheet of butcher paper. Invite participants to call out words or phrases that complete that phrase. You may offer a few examples to get the conversation going e.g. "Grief is Like a heavy weight on my shoulders," "Grief is like a hurricane." Add the phrases the group members contribute to the board. Alternately, give each participant a marker and invite them to add to the list themselves, making a mural with all group members contributions. Discuss the phrases they come up with and offer validation and affirmation.

Materials Needed: Whiteboard or butcher paper, thick markers

OTHER IDEAS FOR THIS SESSION OR FOR GRIEF PRACTICE AT HOME

Recalling the early days of loss: allow participants to discuss or journal their reaction to the death, the most significant change this loss has brought, and identify their greatest need in life without the deceased. Set goals for the grief journey: where does each participant hope to be in a month, at the end of the group, in the coming year?

A THOUGHT FOR YOU AS YOU CLOSE TONIGHT

> ***"The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet."***
>
> ***—Rachel Naomi Remen***

CHAPTER 1: WHAT IS GRIEF?

> ***"You will lose someone you can't live without, and your heart will be badly broken, and the bad news is that you never completely get over the loss of your beloved. But this is also the good news. They live forever in your broken heart that doesn't seal back up. And you come through. It's like having a broken leg that never heals perfectly—that still hurts when the weather gets cold, but you learn to dance with the limp."***
>
> ***—Anne Lamott, from Plan B: Further Thoughts On Faith***

Death is the most natural and inevitable of human events, yet none of us is prepared for the loss of someone close to us. Grief is understood to be a normal reaction to loss and an essential part of dealing with loss—especially loss in death. When we discuss grief, it is important to understand that grief is **universal**—every person will experience it at some time, and also **unique**—every person will experience grief in their own way.

It is helpful to view grief as a process, a process the grieving person experiences over time. We use the term *mourning* to describe both our individual and collective reactions to loss, and this is seen in our traditions, religious and cultural responses, and personal experiences. We use the term *bereavement* to describe the state of having suffered a loss.

Social scientists, anthropologists, and health-science researchers have been studying grief since the work of Freud in 1917, and considerable effort has been expended in identifying "normal" grief. Most people are somewhat familiar with the idea that people go through the grief process in stages. We will explore the process of grief more in Chapter 2, but it is generally accepted that people experience feelings and thoughts of disbelief, yearning, anger, sadness, and acceptance, and these thoughts and feelings can fluctuate, cycling around again and again. We now understand that grief is not a straightforward process of transitioning through stages.

It may be helpful to think of grief as a spiral; you might experience several different feelings more than once over time, revisiting anger, loneliness, sadness, guilt, and acceptance in a difficult but progressive manner. It may also be helpful to think of the grief process as a season in life. It may seem that you are in a dark, cold, stormy winter—sometimes feeling that spring is coming, but still feeling knocked around and caught unaware by an early spring blizzard of sorrow. You might also think of grief as a journey—as though you are traveling a road without a road map, with or without traveling companions, and with little idea of what to expect around the next bend.

We do know that grief brings intense suffering, and that suffering is experienced as sorrow. In your grief, you may experience sorrow in every

area of life. There are physical, emotional, you must care for your mind, body, and spirit—as well as your other relationships in life. Perhaps you are becoming aware that nothing will ever be the same as it was before the death of a close person.

Grief is a natural, though unwelcome, part of life. We grieve the loss of that which is valuable, not things we are indifferent to. Grief can only happen when there has been a significant connection between the one who died and those who remain. With few exceptions—the very young who die, and those who never connect deeply with others, for example—we will all grieve. For most people, grief is a normal life transition, and you will be able to proceed with time, with helpful social support, with new ways to think and remember, and with some new coping skills.

WHAT TO EXPECT OF YOURSELF WHEN YOU ARE GRIEVING

While it is difficult to believe in this moment, every human being is actually "hard-wired" to grieve. Each person has natural physical, psychological—both emotional and cognitive, social, and spiritual processes to do this very difficult work.

You may have some unique reactions that are normal for your age and lived experience, including:

- The need to be overly responsible.
- Taking on the role of the "new" man or woman of the household, distracting yourself from your own feelings by taking care of everyone else.
- Feeling that the death was your "fault."
- Heaviness in the chest or tightness in the throat.
- A loss of appetite, or overeating.
- Sleeplessness or troubling dreams.
- Assuming mannerisms, traits or wearing clothes that were favorites of the deceased.
- Guilt over something that "feels" said or done, or something left unsaid or undone.
- Anger and lashing out at others, sometimes "for no reason."
- Intense anger at the deceased for dying, and later feelings of guilt for being angry.
- Mood changes over small things that would not have been upsetting before the death.
- Unexpected outbursts of strong emotion or crying.
- Feelings of restlessness and, at the same time, difficulty concentrating on a task.
- A feeling that the death isn't real and didn't happen at all.
- Sensing the deceased's presence, hearing his or her voice, or a sensation of "seeing" the deceased out of the corner of their eye.
- Talking to pictures.

- Conversing with the deceased in a special place.
- An unceasing and repetitive need to retell and remember things about the person who died to anyone who will listen.

You will probably meet some people who have specific ideas about how you should grieve. While you can welcome suggestions, no one else will know what will work for you. Only you will know, and you can try out different things to see what works for you in this group.

COMMON RESPONSES TO THE LOSS OF A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND

There are at least 12 typical responses to grief. While not everyone will experience all of these common grief responses, they will experience some of them. Understanding these grief responses is important in understanding your grief. Most people will experience some of these grief responses. These are:

- Shock, Denial, or Numbness
- Sadness
- Depression
- Loneliness
- Anger
- Guilt
- Anxiety or Panic
- Relief
- Meaninglessness/Purposelessness
- Confusion or Difficulty Concentrating
- Thoughts of Dying or Being Dead
- Grieving Behaviors
- Spirituality

Each of these common responses is described more thoroughly in the sections below.

SHOCK, DENIAL, OR NUMBNESS

The initial response to hearing about the death of someone close is often shock or numbness, frequently evidenced as denial. There is the feeling of being in a dream, of watching the world, but not being part of it. It is thought that this initial numbness is the mind's way of providing a cushion for the person to slowly adapt to the new information. Generally, this initial state of shock wears off gradually, and nearly all shock dissipates after a month. However, there are moments, especially upon waking up, when a person may feel like the death is not real.

Framing sentence describing this list:

- "It couldn't have happened."
- "This is not true."
- "I feel like I am in a bad dream."
- "I feel like I am on autopilot."
- "I don't know what to do."

SADNESS

Probably the most recognizable characteristic of grieving is sadness. Crying and moaning are expressions of this sadness. Sighing and sad facial expressions are also typical of this response. People often cry to exhaustion, which can interfere with other major life activities like sleeping and eating. Others may be less expressive, yet it is all part of their profound sadness. Some may "wall off" all feelings, along with the feeling of sadness. For many, crying is a way of releasing the pressure of the sorrow of grief.

Framing sentence describing this list:

- "I have cried for hours."
- "I can't even cry; I have no feelings."
- "I am exhausted from crying."

DEPRESSION

The central characteristic of depression is a lack of interest in the world around you. Common activities that would have been enjoyable no longer bring any feelings of happiness or positive emotion. This is usually felt as deep sadness. Also, depression may be accompanied by withdrawal from people. There may be feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and a sense of worthlessness. Other accompanying experiences are loss of appetite, increase in appetite, and difficulty sleeping. Physical symptoms of fatigue, headaches, backaches, and stomach distress may be part of the depression. Depression is not the same as grief. The sadness and sorrow of grief is focused on the loss, the sorrow of depression is pervasive and disrupts all aspects of living. Depression requires specific care above and beyond the work of grief.

- "Life has no meaning."
- "I don't care about anything anymore."
- "I'd rather just be by myself and not do anything."
- "I wish people would just leave me alone."

LONELINESS

Time by yourself may dramatically increase after the death of someone close. Being alone takes on a new dimension. The death of a parent or a sibling can make an obvious change in one's life routine. But the experience of loneliness may become the most profound and enduring response to the death. One not only misses the time spent with the person who died, but also the loss of activities,

conversations, and routines that accompanied the relationship. The role of son, or brother, for example, may have been an important part of a person's identity. Without that role, your own sense of self and purpose may be another loss.

- "I am so lonely, I could scream."
- "I miss the everyday physical contact."
- "My house seems so empty; I don't want to go home after I've been away."
- "I wish I could talk with my friend about…"

ANGER

Anger toward the deceased for dying may seem irrational but is a very natural response during grief. The anger can be specific or generalized to other people or issues in the environment, including medical personnel, the police, other family members, or God. The strong feelings of anger that accompany grief are often very surprising to some people. Strong feelings can show up as irritability or explosive verbal and/or physical behavior. It is very important to find safe ways of expressing the energy that accompanies anger, in outlets that will not bring harm to yourself, others, or cause damage to property. Some examples include physical exercise, slamming a pillow on a bed, stomping, or lifting something heavy. Irritability is a common expression of grief and, it might feel confusing if you find yourself annoyed by people trying to offer comfort.

- "I am so mad at him for leaving me alone."
- "I can't believe that I am angry all the time, I never used to get angry."
- "I got into a fight yesterday. I never get into fights."

GUILT

Guilt generally involves blaming yourself for some aspect of the death. It could be something you did or did not do. These thoughts may or may not be realistic, but the feeling is of responsibility, as though you could have made the difference between life and death. When there is an element of blame, the feeling of guilt may be overwhelming, which may lead to acts of withdrawal or self-punishment. Most of the guilt experienced by grievers is disproportionately larger than any actual contribution to the circumstances of the death. It is common to feel that you didn't do enough or weren't enough, or 'should have' done one more thing.

- "If only I had…"
- "Did I do what was right?"
- "If I hadn't left the room…"

ANXIETY OR PANIC

When someone close dies, there is an increased recognition of your own vulnerability in life and in death. As you look at the world around you, you see the potential for life-threatening events. The fear of bodily harm may be so profound that you may actually develop a panic response to going out of the house or engaging in other activities. Anxiety may be experienced as increased thoughts of danger or fear, sweating, and an increase in heart rate. Other feelings may be more general, such as worrying about family and friends, fear about the future or of losing control.

- “I am afraid to go to school.”
- “I worry about everything.”
- “I am exhausted from worrying about my family.”
- “I text my friends all the time to see that they are all right.”

RELIEF

In some cases, the death of someone close is experienced as relief, especially when there has been a long-term debilitating and painful illness. You not only feel relief for the person who was suffering but may feel relief for yourself from the exhausting caregiving functions. While relief is a very common response under these circumstances, it may lead to a feeling of guilt that one is relieved at the death. There may also be feelings of relief when the relationship with the person who died was full of conflict, especially if there was physical violence.

- “At last, it has ended.”
- “I am glad that it is over.”
- “It is better that she is not suffering.”

MEANINGLESSNESS/PURPOSELESSNESS

Early on in grief, as they feel alone and unprepared to live without the one who died, grieving people may believe that life no longer has purpose. For most people, this belief transitions into loneliness and a sense of rootlessness, and gradually declines as they reconnect with other people and activities. It is a challenge to find new meaning in a life that was purposefully bound to the one who died. When people do find meaning in the death and in life without the person who died, they typically do so by creating a new life deeply informed by and connected to the one they loved.

- “It just doesn’t make sense to even get up each day.”
- “Without my brother, I feel like I am missing a piece of myself.”
- “I’ve helped care for my mom since she got sick, what will my life look like without her?”

CONFUSION OR DIFFICULTY CONCENTRATING

An awareness of poor cognition can be frightening. Forgetting dates (like homework deadlines), names, and times of things one knew routinely is a very common grief response. Overall, there may be a feeling of being disorganized or being absent-minded. Concentrating may be very difficult. Some people report that they find they have been “zoning out” or scrolling through social media for long periods of time, and not accomplishing the tasks they had set for themselves. Following a conversation may be difficult. Making lists may help with memory tasks. Asking others to remind you of appointments or deadlines may be a help. This is normal and the brain’s way of facing deep sorrow in more manageable doses. It is generally temporary but can be very frightening to some people. Some people say, “I feel like I’m ‘losing my mind.”

- “I can’t remember anything; I keep forgetting to finish my homework.”
- “I can’t concentrate at practice; I’m afraid coach will kick me off the team.”
- “It’s like I can’t think anymore.”

THOUGHTS OF DYING OR BEING DEAD

People grieving the loss of a family member or friend often report that they have thoughts of joining the person who died in death. The sadness, depression, and loneliness may combine in making the changes in your life emotionally painful. Occasional thinking about death and what it would be like if you were dead is different from actively planning your own death. Active suicidal thinking includes contemplating the act of suicide and pursuing a plan to end your own life. If you are having suicidal thoughts, talk to your instructor or counselor immediately to help you find appropriate resources and support.

- "I wonder what it would be like to be dead."
- "When my dad first died, I wanted to die to be with him."

GRIEVING BEHAVIORS

People vary in how they behave in the experience of grief. Some like to go to the cemetery frequently, others not at all. Some people talk to the one who died, others do not. Some will keep mementos of the person who died, like a favorite t-shirt, while others want to get rid of these items as soon as possible. There are no right or wrong ways to manage these things.

Another common response to grief is an after-death encounter with the person who has died. Most often these occur in dreams. Sometimes there may be vague feelings that the person is present, or you may hear the voice of or have a visual encounter with the person who died. There is no way to predict who will or will not experience such an encounter. These experiences are usually temporary and do not frequently reoccur. For some people, these encounters are experienced as being very pleasant; for others, as a spiritual experience; for still others, they are frightening, and the person feels mentally unstable.

- "I think I am going crazy; I walked into his room and felt as if he were there."
- "I heard a voice telling me that he was OK now, and I could stop worrying."
- "I had a dream where I saw her, and she was happy."

SPIRITUALITY

The death of a family member or close friend may challenge your religious or spiritual beliefs. Some people will feel anger toward God for the death, or they may feel that God is punishing them for some misdeed they've committed in their life. Your faith may be particularly challenged at this time.

For others, their spiritual and religious beliefs may be the support that carries them through these difficult times. Their comfort in prayer or other routines associated with their faith or rituals may assist them in healing or recovering from the more difficult experiences of grief. The profound experience of grief enables some people to tap into their spirituality in new and uplifting ways.

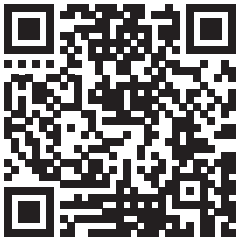
- "My grief helped me to understand how much I am loved by my God."
- "I can't feel close to anything, not even God."
- "I am angry and feel abandoned by God."
- "I am much more aware of how precious life can be."
- "I want to dedicate my life to serving others who had a loss like mine."

SELF-CARE

Grief is emotionally draining, physically exhausting, and can preoccupy your thoughts and attention. To have the energy and stamina to grieve, we recommend regular and intentional self-care. In every session of this 8-week program, there will be a self-care activity that is designed to restore and sustain you. We will practice this activity in the session but recommend that you incorporate the practice into your daily routine. Over the course of the program, you will develop a "toolkit" of restorative activities. The self-care strategies we will practice are based in the approach of mindfulness, as developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn (2005). Briefly, "mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn, 2005, p. 2). Using these brief mindfulness practices, you will be better equipped to be present with your grief in a calm and intentional way.

SELF-CARE PRACTICE 1: BODY SCAN MEDITATION

1. Begin by bringing your attention into your body
2. You can close your eyes if that's comfortable to you or drop your gaze to your lap
3. You can notice your body, seated, wherever you're seated, feeling the weight of your body, on the chair, on the floor
4. And take a few deep breaths
5. And as you take a deep breath, bringing in more oxygen and enlivening the body
6. And as you exhale, have a sense of relaxing more deeply
7. As you start to scan your body, you can bring your attention back to your breath as an anchor to the exercise
8. You can notice your feet on the floor; notice the sensation of your feet touching the floor—the weight and pressure, vibration, heat
9. You can notice your legs against the chair—pressure, pulsing, heaviness, lightness
10. Notice your back against the chair
11. Bring your attention into your stomach area; if your stomach is tense or tight, let it soften
12. Take a breath
13. Notice your hands; are your hands tense or tight? See if you can allow them to soften
14. Notice your arms; feel any sensation in your arms
15. Let your shoulders be soft
16. Notice your neck and throat; let them be soft, relaxed
17. Soften your jaw; let your face and facial muscles be soft
18. Then notice your whole body present
19. Take one more breath
20. Be aware of your whole body, as best you can
21. And then when you're ready you can open your eyes



A POEM FOR REFLECTION: LONELINESS BY MARY OLIVER

I too have known loneliness.

I too have known what it is to feel

misunderstood,

rejected, and suddenly

not at all beautiful.

Oh, mother earth,

your comfort is great, your arms never withhold.

It has saved my life to know this.

Your rivers flowing, your roses opening in the morning.

Oh, motions of tenderness!

GRIEF PRACTICE IDEA TO TRY THIS WEEK: JOURNAL WRITING

Bring a photo or other memento of your family member or friend to the next group. Reflect on why you chose this photo or item. What does it remind you of? What does sharing this photo or item with others mean to you?

Consider writing your thoughts and feelings in a journal as a form of self-care. A journal can be any type of writing: scraps of paper, long paragraphs in a notebook, or a diary, or the notes app on your phone. Journal writing is less about grammar and sentence structure than the free flowing of words. The idea of journaling is to take the intense feelings and thoughts that are churning around inside you and get them outside of you onto paper. It is one way of taking the activity of our mind and translating it to a behavior. Some people are not "writers" and accomplish this by drawing, doodling, singing, playing an instrument, or some other expressive means. Many group participants find that using a writing journal to express their thoughts, feelings, and memories as they go through the groups is especially helpful.

THOUGHTS AND JOTS

(Use this page to write down any feelings, questions, or ideas that come up—anything you'd like to "jot down" after reading this chapter.)

WEEK 2: YOUR OWN GRIEF JOURNEY

FOCUS ON THE FACILITATOR

GOALS FOR THIS SESSION

- To strengthen respect and relationships between and among group participants.
- To begin a dialogue about reasonable expectations in the personal grief journey.

If you elected to have your group participants bring a photograph or remembrance object, allow ample time for discussion. You might ask—What does this photo or possession say about your relationship with the one who died? Has this memento taken on greater meaning since your loss? What object or photograph would those who love you select to represent their memory of you?

In this session, it is important to emphasize grief as a process vs. grief as a linear journey through stages. Use the image in this session as an example and ask participants to describe their own grief experience. Listen carefully to those who say/feel they are "stuck." Usually, something is changing in their grief, however small, and the facilitator and group can build on that small momentum.

The participant manual describes Worden's "Tasks of Grief." You might also wish to describe Pauline Boss' steps toward "Resiliency Coping" if they seem interested and/or ready. The concepts include Finding Meaning (in the death, in the changed life), Tempering Mastery (believing we can do it all ourselves, self-blame), Reconstructing Identity (without the deceased), Normalizing Ambivalence (normalizing anger and guilt, but not harmful actions; seeing conflicted feelings as normal), Revising Attachment (how am I connected to the person who died? recognizing that the one who died is both here and gone, grieving what was lost, recognizing/celebrating what one still has, finding new human connections), and Discovering Hope (becoming more comfortable with ambiguity/spirituality, laughing at absurdity, redefining justice, finding something one can control or master to balance the "not knowing," accepting the "good-enough" relationship). These are ideas that "bubble up" in grief support groups, and it can help people to know there is science behind their experience in grief and in growth (Boss, 2006).

SUGGESTED GRIEF GROUP ACTIVITY: MY GRIEF JOURNEY: FROM HURT TO HOPE

Talking about hurt and hope is a good way to express our feelings, but art is another helpful way. When it is hard to think about words to say, sometimes pictures and colors can help us express ourselves.

This week's activity is an expressive arts activity that can be done using a variety of supplies. Depending on supplies and amount of time available, you may use colored pencils, crayons, markers, or paint. Invite participants to remember different points along their grief journey. For each point, have them choose a color that reminds them of the feeling they had during that time.

Different points you may consider:

- When they first had an inkling something was wrong before the person died (first time a phone call was missed, the person didn't come home on time, or the person references a slight pain)
- When they knew something was wrong
- When the person died—or when they found out they died
- At a funeral or memorial service
- When making a major decision
- When talking with others about the person
- When thinking about the future
- Any other significant experiences

As they select colors, they may add the colors to their supplies. Finally, invite them to choose a color that represents hope.

With the color that represents hope, walk them through this meditation:

- Now, close your eyes and picture that color that represents hope.
- Imagine that peaceful color is floating all around you.
- Take a big deep breath and breathe that peaceful color into your body, all the way down into your toes.
- Imagine that peaceful color coming into your mind and into your heart.
- Imagine it wrapping itself around all those other colors, especially the ones that represent difficult feelings.
- Take some more deep breaths and breathe that color into your body.
- What do you notice as you breathe it in?
  - How does it make you feel?
  - Can you hold on to that feeling in your heart?
- As you hold onto it, each of you can take the pallet of colors you have made and go and find a space to make a work of art that represents your grief journey.

After the art has been created, invite participants back together to share their projects. You may wish to have them share their projects as an "art show."

Some questions to ask:

- What do you notice about your grief journey painting?
- Tell us what some of the colors represent.

Materials Needed: Thick Paper, Paint, paintbrushes (alternately, could use crayons, markers, or colored pencils if paint is unavailable)

OTHER IDEAS FOR THIS SESSION OR FOR GRIEF PRACTICE AT HOME

Encourage reminiscence journaling or dialogue (some people use photographs of the person who died to do this). What is/was the most important part about your relationship? What values, goals and ideas did you have in common? What were your greatest differences; were these differences a positive or negative factor in your relationship? Describe some of the good days and/or bad days you had in your relationship.

A THOUGHT FOR YOU AS YOU CLOSE TONIGHT

"If we wish to know about a man, we ask what is his story—his real, inmost story."

—Oliver Sacks

CHAPTER 2: YOUR OWN GRIEF JOURNEY

"Everyone grieves in different ways. For some, it could take longer or shorter. I do know it never disappears. An ember still smolders inside me. Most days, I don't notice it, but, out of the blue, it'll flare to life."

—Maria V. Snyder, Storm Glass

UNDERSTANDING GRIEF

As discussed in Chapter 1, grief is a normal and natural, though often deeply painful, response to loss. The death of a family member is the most common way we think of loss, but many other significant changes in your life can involve loss and therefore grief. Typically, the more significant the loss is to the griever, the more intense the grief is likely to be.

The grief you are experiencing may be in the present, relating to a loss that has happened recently and the loss that brought you to this group. But grief may also be connected to the past, relating to an event from years earlier. Current losses can activate memories and struggles with earlier losses. Grief may also be anticipatory; associated with an upcoming loss or related to the multiple "secondary losses" that this death has brought. All losses are connected to every other loss one has experienced. We know that some people also come from families or communities that have a long history of trauma; these experiences can add to what you might be feeling with your present grief and make it more challenging to cope.

Grief is highly individualized. Each person responds to grief differently according to:

- The nature of the loss to the person.
- The grieving person's personality.
- The norms within the grieving person's culture and family.
- The other stressors in the grieving person's life.

The grieving person's history of coping with other losses.

GRIEF AS A PROCESS

While we no longer maintain that all grievers proceed through grief stages in a step-by-step, orderly way, most people experience three overall phases of grief:

- **SHOCK** is often the initial reaction to loss.
- **SUFFERING** is the long period of grief during which the person gradually comes to terms with the reality of the loss.
- **RECOVERY** is the acceptance of the loss, finding a "new normal" life, and regaining the ability to reinvest time, attention, energy, and emotion into other parts of life.

You might recall shock as the experience of learning of the death, and a kind of emotional and cognitive numbing that carried you through the early moments after you found out about the death and through the funeral or memorial service.

Suffering is the experience you are having now and the reason for your participation in the support group. For some, suffering can be fluctuating feelings that are experienced like a roller-coaster ride; for others, it can be experienced as being stuck, with little hope that one will get better.

Grief counselors describe the grief process as being made up of three parts: loss orientation, restoration orientation, and oscillation (back and forth movement) between the two. Margaret Strobe and Helmut Shut (1999, 2007)

Loss orientation includes thoughts about the death, both pleasant and unpleasant feelings or memories about the person who died, and awareness that the person who died is no longer "present."

The second part, restoration orientation, includes things that need to be "kept up with" in your daily life, like staying on top of schoolwork or maintaining relationships with friends, for example, and how to deal with those concerns.

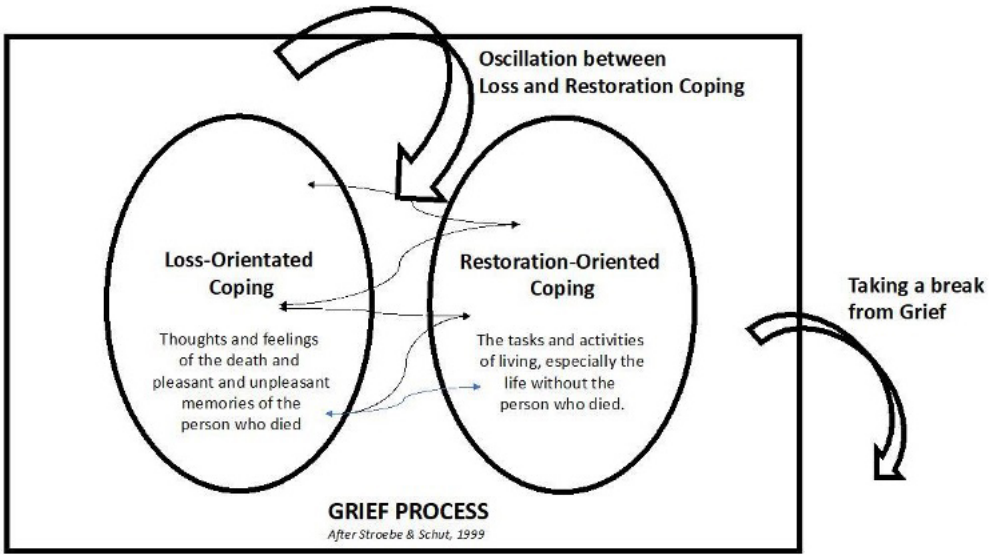


Figure 1: Grief Process (After Stroebe & Schut, 1999)

When we shift back and forth (or 'oscillate') between thinking and feeling about the loss and moving ahead with restoration, it is sort of like the experience of learning to swim. There may be times when we focus on pushing our body to its limit, and then there may be other times when we focus on learning new strokes and building new muscles.

The oscillation in grief may feel unpredictable and maybe even a little like riding choppy waves as you are learning to swim, but it is actually how you are strengthening your emotional muscles.

In Chapter 4, we will discuss how to cope with grief by taking a break from it—and learning new ways of living. In Chapter 5, we discuss how to "sit with your grief" and move toward ways to remember the one who died.

HOW AM I EXPERIENCING GRIEF?

One of the greatest challenges of grief is dealing with our own expectations and the expectations others have about how we "should be" grieving. Your own expectations may demand that you should be "done by now," "over the loss," or "getting on with life by now." To be sure, grief will assault your sense of self. Perhaps you were always strong and capable, and now you feel weak and diminished. Suppose you were the one who previously brought comfort, and now you find yourself in need of comfort. Perhaps you felt people understood and supported you before, but now you find their words unsettling and their ability to go on with their own lives without the one who died, or without acknowledging your loss, upsetting.

It was once considered important to learn how to "let go" of the person who died in order to "move through" grief. However, many grieving people continue to have strong memories and connections to their loved ones after their passing, while others report more of an ability to "let it be." We discuss ways of remembering the person who died in Chapter 7.

In your grief, you may find that others expect that you should complete your grief work by a certain time or in a certain way. A common myth of grief is that after getting through a year of holidays and milestone events, that you should be "done" with grief. Many grievers have been burdened by the idea that they must have their grief work done "on schedule." For example, sometimes schools will give students an excused absence for just a couple of days. Did you feel ready to return to school after just a couple of days?

The struggle of expectations is especially challenging in families and among friends, particularly when each of these family members or friends may also be grieving, and each will grieve in their own way. The impact of loss and grief on relationships are discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

You might feel worried that you will never "get through" with your grief and will never have a "normal" life again. While this loss will always be a very significant part of your life, most people do re-build life—never the same as what might have been, but satisfying and productive in new and different ways.

This is described as *integrated grief*—the enduring form of grief in which you are able to accept the reality and meaning of the loss you've endured, but you are able to participate once again in pleasurable and satisfying relationships and activities.

Integrated grief does not mean that you've forgotten the person who died, miss them any less, or do not feel sadness when thinking about them. In time, and with support, the loss becomes integrated into your memory, meaning that thoughts or memories of the person who died are no longer as preoccupying or disabling.

You will find a way of remaining connected to the person who died without their physical presence. You will more easily be able to engage in other activities without grief constantly demanding your attention. However, there may be periods when your grief re-emerges; this is common and does not reflect a failure or malfunction of the grieving process. This can occur around the time of significant events, such as holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, another loss, or a particularly stressful time.

Grief specialists have described four "tasks" of mourning, and it may be helpful to reflect on these as you consider your own experiences in grieving:

1. To accept the reality of the loss
2. To process the pain of grief
3. To adjust to a world without the deceased
4. To find an enduring connection with the deceased in the midst of embarking on a new life

SELF-CARE PRACTICE 2: SELF-COMPASSION BREAK

Think of a situation in your grief right now that is difficult, that is causing you stress. Call the situation to mind and see if you can actually feel the stress and emotional discomfort in your body. Now, say to yourself:

- **This is a moment of suffering.** This is mindful awareness of sorrow.
  - This hurts so much.
  - This is so hard to bear.
  - This is stressful.

You may want to focus on your breath and how it feels in your body as you feel this emotion and focus on these statements:

- **Suffering is a part of life.** Suffering is common to all humanity.
  - Other people feel this way.
  - I'm not alone.
  - We all struggle in our lives.

You may want to focus on your breath and how it feels in your body as you feel this emotion and focus on these statements.

Now, put your hands over your heart. Feel the warmth of your hands and the gentle touch of your hands on your chest. Say to yourself:

- **May I be kind to myself.**
  - May I give myself the compassion that I need
  - May I learn to accept myself as I am
  - May I forgive myself
  - May I be strong
  - May I be patient

You may want to focus on your breath and how it feels in your body as you feel this emotion and focus on these statements.

This practice can be used any time of day or night and will help you remember to evoke the three aspects of self-compassion when you need it most.

A POEM FOR REFLECTION: MAY PERPETUAL LIGHT SHINE BY PATRICIA SPEARS JONES

We have encountered storms
Perfect in their drench and wreck

Each of us bears an ornament of grief
A ring, a notebook, a ticket torn, scar
It is how humans know their kind—

What is known as love, what can become
the heart's food stored away for some future
Famine

Love remains a jewel in the hand, guarded
Shared fragments of earth & air drift & despair.

We ponder what patterns matter other than moons and tides:
musical beats—rumba or waltz or cha cha cha
cosmic waves like batons furiously twirling
colors proclaiming sparkle of darkness
as those we love begin to delight
in the stars embracing

GRIEF PRACTICE IDEA TO TRY THIS WEEK: EXPECTATIONS OF GRIEF

Challenge your own expectations: In your journal or in your mind, identify how you believe you "should" be right now. List these beliefs and examine them. Are your expectations of yourself fair or unfair? Ask yourself if you would expect someone very close to you to meet these same expectations.

THOUGHTS AND JOTS

(Use this page to write down any feelings, questions, or ideas that come up-anything you'd like to "jot down" after reading this chapter.)

WEEK 3: HOW GRIEF AFFECTS THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS

FOCUS ON THE FACILITATOR

GOALS FOR THIS SESSION

- To normalize feelings; the variety, the intensity, the duration and the unpredictability of feelings.
- To review and practice ways of dealing with distressing feelings and thoughts.
- To develop new and healthy ways of thinking about grief and the loss of a close family member or friend.

Begin by revisiting the personal expectations that group participants might have reflected on as part of their grief practice at home. Allow participants to discuss their own expectations about how they "should" be grieving—many participants feel burdened by their unrealistic expectations or the expectations of others.

Allow ample time for participants to describe their feelings. The discussion might elicit an immediate expression of strong emotion in some participants, as they may now feel safe enough in the group to share more deeply felt emotions. Have tissues and attentive listening skills ready. Encourage more dialogue between group members as they express emotions and thoughts.

Take care to review the Ways to Deal with Distressing Feelings section with the group, and practice sitting with their grief during the supportive atmosphere of the group. Encourage home practice of this new skill.

SUGGESTED GRIEF GROUP ACTIVITY: INSIDE MY GRIEVING HEART

Invite participants to think about 5+ grief related emotions or thoughts they have had in the past couple weeks. Have participants list those things on a sheet of paper.

Using crayons, markers, or colored pencils, invite the participants to assign each emotion a color, use that color to circle or mark the emotion it represents.

On the same sheet of paper, invite participants to draw a picture of a heart. Say "this heart represents your grieving heart." Using the colors they have selected to represent their emotions, have them add those colors to the inside of their grieving heart.

Invite them to share and process.

Thoughts for reflection:

- What does your grieving heart need? (Consider choosing a color for that and adding it to the art)
- What does it need to feel better?

Materials Needed: Paper, pens, pencils, colored pencils, markers, or crayons (could use watercolors or watercolor markers if desired).

OTHER IDEAS FOR THIS SESSION OR FOR GRIEF PRACTICE AT HOME

Describe your most prevalent feeling. When and where does it happen? Is it comforting or distressing? Do you welcome or avoid it? Is it unpredictable? Does it interfere with daily life? If you could describe intense feelings in the words of a song, what song would it be?

A THOUGHT FOR YOU AS YOU CLOSE TONIGHT

"If you want the truth,

I'll tell you the truth:

Listen to the secret sound,

the real sound,

which is inside you."

—Kabir

CHAPTER 3: HOW GRIEF AFFECTS THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS

"Time doesn't heal anything; it just teaches us how to live with pain."

—Itachi Uchiha, Naruto Shippuuden

"Although the world is full of suffering, it is full also of the overcoming of it."

—Helen Keller, Optimism

FEELINGS AND THOUGHTS

It is not unusual for grieving people to report strong and seemingly uncontrollable emotions. You may feel overcome by sadness, cry at inopportune times, or feel consumed by despair. You may feel numb or be unable to feel emotions.

We certainly know that grieving people can have difficulty concentrating and may be troubled by thoughts and memories associated with the death of the one who died or thoughts of unfinished business. There can certainly be pleasant and joyful thoughts and feelings in grief, as well; fond memories, feelings of reconciliation, and peace can break through the gloom only to waver again toward sadness. The sensation of having one's thoughts or emotions out of control and unpredictable can be very unsettling. One can accept the idea that all emotions are natural and acceptable, but the experience of certain emotions can be unpleasant and can also affect relationships in challenging ways. Rather than viewing these as "negative" emotions, anger, guilt, doubt, sadness, and depression are better considered as "distressing" emotions.

Distress is an unpleasant emotional experience of a psychological (cognitive, behavioral, emotional), social, and/or spiritual nature that may interfere with the ability to cope effectively. Distress extends along a continuum, ranging from common normal feelings of vulnerability, sadness, and fears to problems that can become disabling, such as depression, anxiety, panic, social isolation, and existential and spiritual crises.

ANGER: WHAT IS IT?

Anger is an intense emotional and cognitive state induced by displeasure or frustration.

You are not alone in your anger. The anger can be directed in many different ways: at yourself, at others, at God, even at the person who died.

While feelings of anger are normal, how these feelings are expressed can have an impact on us and the others in our lives. Angry feelings can affect relationships, especially if the angry feelings develop into outbursts or words of blame.

EXPRESSING ANGER IN HEALTHY WAYS

Take responsibility for your own angry feelings. It is healthy to recognize and admit that you are angry; you are less likely to blame others for your feelings if you are aware of your anger.

Use "I" statements: "I get angry when I think about the drunk driver who hit my mom." "I get angry when you expect me to feel better by now." Combining an "I" statement with a request is often a helpful way to keep hostility from building up.

Try to express your angry feelings as you feel angry. If you "bottle up" your feelings, they can burst out unexpectedly. You gain more control of anger if you express it honestly, assertively, but without harming others. This means effectively communicating your feelings in a way that does not put the other person on the defensive and in such a way that the person will listen, understand the problem, and consider responding in a way you find helpful.

When anger feels overwhelming, try safe physical activity to burn off frustration. Exercise as vigorously as you can or write down your angry thoughts and set them aside or tear them up.

Angry feelings can also be processed by thinking them through. This is difficult to do when you are angry, but it is worth trying to catch yourself when angry and ask yourself, "Who am I angry with now?" "What am I angry about now?" "Is my anger realistic and proportional to what is happening now?"

Reflect on your anger. If it is appropriate, use it to bring change in your situation.

GUILT: WHAT IS IT?

Guilt can have two different meanings for the grieving person. It may be the awareness of one who has committed an offense, especially consciously, or it may be inaccurate feelings of fault or blame, especially for imagined offenses or from a sense of inadequacy.

HANDLING GUILT IN HEALTHY WAYS

Reflect on your situation. Most grieving people have feelings of guilt, and this is a normal reaction to the loss of someone close. Talk about whatever is bothering you with a nonjudgmental person. Expressing these guilty feelings gives you perspective and helps you relinquish the feelings. Use this person as an objective "sounding board."

If you have done or failed to do something and the opportunity for restitution exists, consider an act of making amends, but discuss it with someone you trust first. Occasionally, the other party may not be ready to receive your apology or offer of restitution.

For the most part, we do the best we can with what we know at the time. Forgive yourself and others. You don't need to punish yourself. Be realistic and remember that you are only human. Many things are beyond our control, accidents truly happen, and often no one is to blame.

While it is difficult to accept imperfections in others and ourselves, acceptance is an essential part of human relationships. No one can change the past, and holding on to an "if only I had… " thought can become a prison.

Finally, reflect on the person who died. Is holding on to guilt (real or imagined) the best way to honor and remember the person who died?

DOUBT: WHAT IS IT?

Doubt is uncertainty of what has happened or may have happened that often interferes with decision making, giving rise to uncertainty, hesitation, or suspense, a lack of confidence, or an inclination not to believe or accept an expected reality.

You might experience doubt as a challenge to your self-worth or self-esteem, as diminished confidence in those you have trusted, or as an assault on your faith or spiritual beliefs.

HEALTHY WAYS TO DEAL WITH DOUBT

An objective, nonjudgmental listener can help. Regaining confidence in others and ourselves takes time and can feel like learning to walk again.

While faith and spiritual beliefs can be a comfort to many experiencing loss, doubt and frustration with God or the universe are entirely normal and are part of the spiritual journey in nearly all faith traditions. The decision about seeking support needs to be considered carefully. Often, those who want to discuss faith challenges are met with clichés rather than given acceptance and comfort, so be selective. You may be well supported by those within your faith tradition or benefit from guidance from an objective outsider who respects your history and present experience of spirituality.

DEPRESSION: WHAT IS IT?

Depression is a state of feeling profoundly sad, a disorder marked especially by sorrow, inactivity, difficulty in thinking and concentration, a significant increase or decrease in appetite and time spent sleeping, feelings of dejection and hopelessness, and sometimes suicidal tendencies.

Depression in the setting of grief is difficult to assess, especially in the early days and weeks after the death. We expect that in your grief, you will experience sadness—even profound sorrow—that impairs your ability to function in the day-to-day world. How are sadness and sorrow different from depression? In grief, we see many of the same "symptoms" as depression: poor concentration, difficulty sleeping, appetite changes, and loss of pleasure in usual activities. In clinical depression, there is typically poor self-esteem not usually seen in grief, and consuming sadness about all aspects of life. You may feel "less than your usual self" or "at a loss" without the one who died, but feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness, while fleeting, do not occur as the major themes in grief. If you are concerned that your grief may include serious depression, please discuss this with your group facilitator, parent, or other trusted adult.

HEALTHY WAYS TO DEAL WITH DEPRESSION

Grief is a painful yet normal part of human existence. As difficult as it is, grief is something we experience and endure and grow from. Unlike grief, pervasive depression is a very serious but treatable medical condition. When people feel helpless, worthless, or hopeless, or feel they would rather be dead, that indicates clinical or major depression. Very few seriously depressed individuals can manage without professional support. Grieving while experiencing depression is like fighting a battle on two fronts.

Depression is treatable, and those who receive appropriate treatment can return to productive and satisfying lives. Those who were experiencing depression before the loss of a close person have a particularly difficult time with grief but benefit from professional care and good interpersonal support. Continuing in a support group can be very helpful, but you and your facilitator, parent, or other trusted adult may want to discuss referral for additional professional support if you are not currently receiving it.

MANAGING THE THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS OF GRIEF

> ***"The older I get, the more aware I become of the ebb and flow of certain feelings in my life. I know, for instance, to save certain things for the times when my inner strength is like a steady wind—filling the sails to take me where I need to go. Some tasks ask me to wait for a better day, until I've got plenty of energy to get going, or wait until my confidence is growing stronger. I may delay a difficult call that must be made, a visit that requires my happiest face, or a duty that requires an abundance of courage. If I can wait until the time is right, I'm more likely to get to my destination. In the same way, that you can't sail out to sea when the tide is out, you need to heed the ebb and flow of the feelings in your life. Like waves on the ocean, coming ever closer to the shore, courage and strength will rejoin you—soon, steadily and forevermore."***
>
> ***—Douglas Pagels***

As human beings, we are designed to experience the full range of emotions, and grief can bring a flood of feelings. Feelings are normal and are meant to be felt, but the feelings of grief rarely occur in predictable, manageable ways in the early days and months after loss. There are times when you may feel better able to "sit" with your feelings of grief and remember the one who died, and there will be times when—out of necessity—you need to set those feelings aside and focus on something else—or just take some time off from grief.

WAYS TO DEAL WITH DISTRESSING FEELINGS

When feelings seem overwhelming, it is often best to take a brief pause, assess what you are feeling, and decide whether you want to let the feeling "run its course," or try—without judgment, for a "reset":

- **Feel** the feeling: What is the feeling I am feeling now?
- **Attribute** the feeling: What prompted me to feel this now?
- **Time** the feeling: How long will I give myself to deal with this now?

If the time and situation permit, you can:

- **Allow the feeling:** Let yourself feel the feeling to the depths, but for a limited time or in a certain safe place. Some people set a timer for a specific amount of time to have these feelings.

And/or:

- **Take a break from the feeling:** Tell yourself you can't "do" this feeling right now but be sure to set a date and time to get back to it. It's perfectly fine to set aside difficult feelings for a while, but continual avoidance of distressing feelings leads to an unproductive pattern of denial.

Take care to:

- **Measure the feeling:** Is it better, worse, or in any way different from the last time I felt it?
- **Prepare to revisit the feeling:** Recognize that we are really never "done" with feelings. They reoccur and we gain mastery of them, and every occurrence brings new practice opportunities.

SELF-CARE PRACTICE 3: SITTING WITH YOUR GRIEF

In addition to managing difficult feelings as they "bubble up" as uninvited "grief bursts," we specifically recommend this as a practice to sit with your grief. We will practice this in this session as a group and invite you to practice this week as your **"Idea to Try This Week."**

In this practice, you will sit with your grief, followed by leaving your grief. Before beginning, have a restorative, self-care activity planned for after this remembrance practice.

Now—it is time to sit with your grief.

Find a comfortable, seated position—either on a cushion or in a chair that allows you to keep your posture erect.

Relax your face and jaw. Allow your shoulders to gently relax. Close your eyes.

Begin by drawing a deep breath in to the count of four, then slowly release the breath. Do this three or four more times. It may help to count to four on each slow inhale and count to four on each slow exhale.

Now, allow your breathing to assume its natural rhythm. Keep up your slow counting to maintain a relaxed, gentle focus on the breath. There is no right or wrong way to breathe—just continue to breathe without judgment.

Now, call to mind the name of the person whom you are grieving. Keep breathing and allow yourself to visualize this person. Allow your emotions to come—just acknowledge your feelings without judgment. Simply name the feeling and continue to breathe.

Allow a memory of the person you are grieving to come and let your feelings accompany the memory. Let your mind recall the memory, without judgment. You may find yourself crying; just continue to breathe as you recall the memory. You may find yourself smiling, even laughing; just continue to breathe as you recall the memory. If the memory overwhelms you—pause for a moment and draw a deeper breath in—followed by a long, slow breath out.

Place your hands on your chest, crossing them over your heart. Gently draw in a breath of kindness for yourself. As you exhale, breathe loving kindness out to the person you are grieving. You might say … "grateful"; you might say … "miss you"; you might say … "love you" … on the exhale. Just allow your loving kindness to flow from your heart to the person you lost.

Now, take a deep, slow inhalation. Slowly exhale to calm your mind and body. Repeat this four more times. Sit quietly for a few more moments as you gather yourself back to the present. Slowly, open your eyes.

Now—it is time to leave your grief. Get up from your seated position. Go into the bathroom and gently wash your face with cool water. Reflect for a moment on the courage to sit with your grief. Now, proceed with your well-deserved restorative activity.

A POEM FOR REFLECTION: WHEN YOU HATE YOURSELF FOR REVISITING OLD WOUNDS BY NIKITA GILL

You revisit old wounds for the same reason

birds will come back to the places

their nests have been destroyed

The mind walks into the same room

because it wants to know how to fix

those floorboards, paint the walls,

turn this into a more habitable place

if it tries something different from the last time.

This is survival.

This is learning how to live through pain

once the skeletons have decided to walk out

of the closet and refuse to go back in again.

Call it the worst story you have ever owned,

a car crash within your bones

that you cannot stop staring at.

But the only way to understand pain

is to look at it and feel it

without turning away.

There is no shame in this.

Eventually, it will scab over and heal.

GRIEF PRACTICE IDEA TO TRY THIS WEEK: TIME TO GRIEVE

Plan to experience your feelings during your "safest" time to grieve. Identify your most comfortable place to grieve. Set aside that time and place several times a week and allow your grief to come. Set a timer and at first, limit this time to 10–15 minutes. Some people use photos or mementos of the person who died as prompts. Whether it is invited in, or not, your grief will come, but eventually most people feel stronger when they are in charge of their grief rather than feeling the grief is in control of them. Over time, grief experienced regularly in this safer place and time can become a setting and practice for honoring the one who died.

THOUGHTS AND JOTS

(Use this page to write down any feelings, questions, or ideas that come up—anything you'd like to "jot down" after reading this chapter.)

WEEK 4: COPING AS YOU GRIEVE

FOCUS ON THE FACILITATOR

GOALS FOR THIS SESSION

- To understand the differences between healthy and unhealthy coping behaviors.
- To learn the key supports required for effective coping.
- To learn new coping skills for the present and future.
- To differentiate between the emotions one feels and behaviors which one does.

This session places the facilitator at risk for 'judging" the current coping strategies of participants, but the responsibility to confront markedly unhealthy and destructive coping patterns remains with the facilitator, though ideally the group would comment as well. Ample praise should be provided for healthy coping strategies, even if the participants do not yet "feel" the benefits of them. Do remind participants that they will need multiple coping strategies. A single coping strategy (such as exercise), however helpful, cannot be put to use all of the time—they will need many tools in their toolkits.

Affirm the value of taking a break from grief. Pay particular attention to those who feel guilty if they take a break from grief ("what kind of sister would I be if I enjoyed an afternoon with my girlfriends? —Does that mean I will forget or don't love my sister?").

After discussing their various coping strategies, spend some time with the concept of alternating engagement with rest. Emphasize that replenishment is necessary to do the hard work of grief. Encourage every participant to name one (very small) self-care coping skill they might try this week. You could ask, "what is the smallest thing you could try this week to cope with this experience of grief?"

Encourage participants to try a mindfulness app and the self-compassion downloads.

SUGGESTED GRIEF GROUP ACTIVITY: HELPING MYSELF THROUGH HARD TIMES

This week's activity will include a discussion about challenges and a discussion about affirmations. Ask a couple of questions to open the discussion:

- What has been hard for you and your family during your grief?
- How many of you have felt stressed about changes you've seen in yourself or your family in grief?
- How many have been stressed by seeing your parents stressed out?
- What else has been hard for you along this grief journey?

Using the hexagon handout, invite participants to identify the things that help them. On each side of the hexagon, ask participants to identify one of the following:

1. A person who helps me
2. Something I'm good at
3. A place that helps me
4. Something I can do to help my family
5. An object that brings me comfort
6. An affirmation for myself

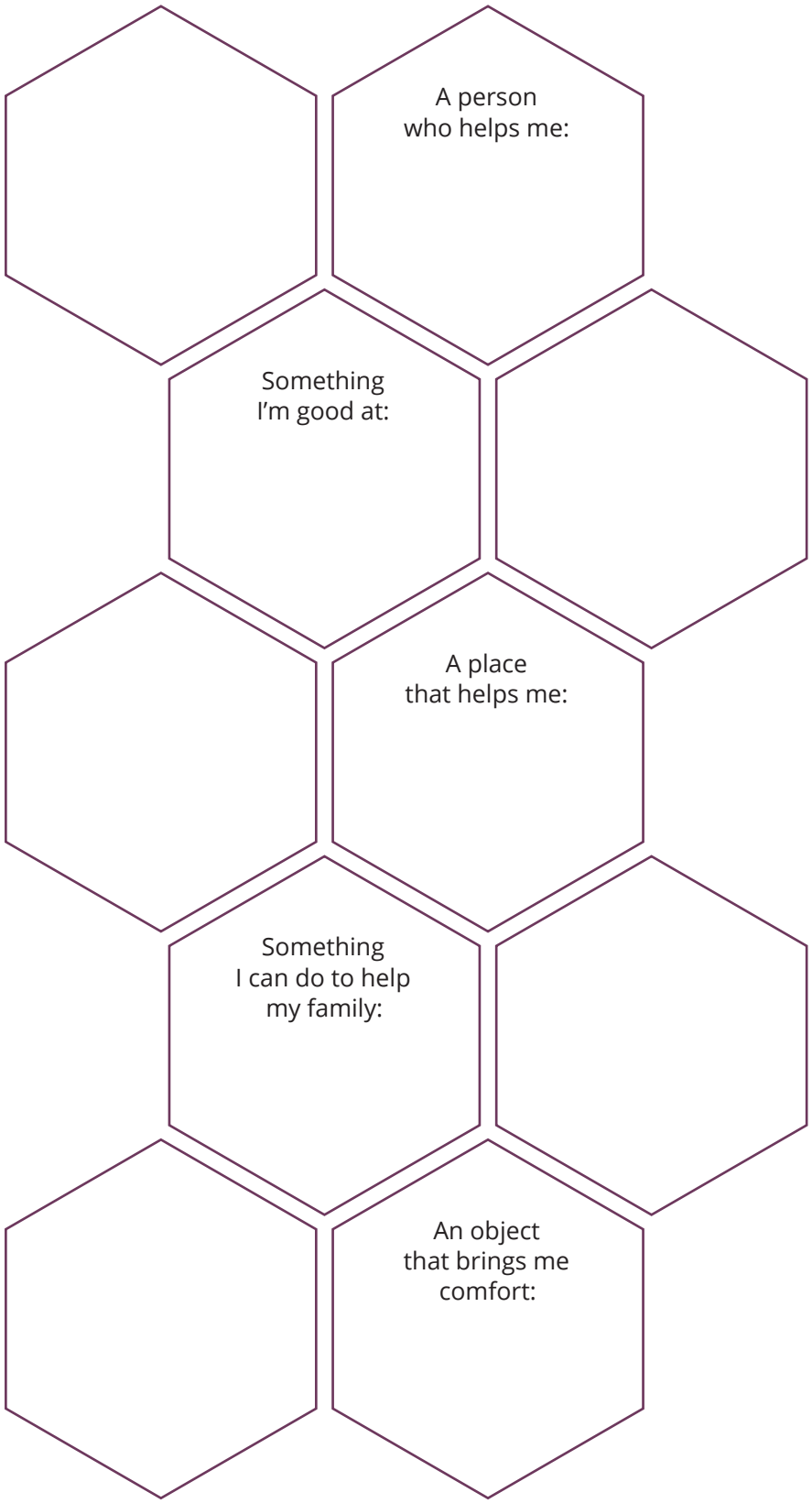
Invite participants to share these reflections, particularly the affirmations they have identified.

Questions to close the discussion:

- What is a strength of yours?
- Something you're good at?
- What have you learned about yourself after completing this activity?

HEXAGON HANDOUT

Read the prompts in the hexagons. Write an answer to each prompt on each side of the blank hexagon next to it.



My Affirmation: _____

OTHER IDEAS FOR THIS SESSION OR FOR GRIEF PRACTICE AT HOME

Are there things that prevent you from using your existing effective coping skills? In what situations do you find yourself more vulnerable to ineffective coping? What growth do you see in this area thus far?

A THOUGHT FOR YOU AS YOU CLOSE TONIGHT

> ***"The capacity to give one's attention to a sufferer is a very rare and difficult thing; it is almost a miracle; it is a miracle."***
>
> ***—Simone Weil***

CHAPTER 4: COPING AS YOU GREIVE

"Mere change is not growth. Growth is the synthesis of change and continuity, and where there is no continuity there is no growth."

—C. S. Lewis, from "Hamlet: The Prince or Poem? In Selected Literary Essays

YOUR COPING SKILLS

As mentioned in Chapter 2, healthy grief requires attention to the loss of the one who died and attention to the tasks of living. We focus on how to attend to the loss in the next chapter. In this chapter, we focus on coping with the challenges of the new life.

When change or challenge comes in our lives, we cope with it. We may not cope well or successfully, but whenever we respond to change or challenge, we are coping. The techniques we use to manage in our daily lives are our coping skills. Coping skills may be adaptive, healthy, and effective, or they may be harmful, unhealthy, and maladaptive. Obvious examples of maladaptive coping skills are drug misuse, self-harm behaviors, impulsivity, blame, vengeance, withdrawal, and shame.

Some methods of coping may be healthy in moderation but not in excess or exclusivity. Some coping skills are adaptive in the short term but not for longer duration. It is not unusual for a person to experience denial immediately after a death and for some time thereafter; it is an expected part of the initial shock. But denial that goes on for months or years is an unhealthy adaptation, even though grieving people can carry elements of disbelief about the death for months or years.

To support their coping abilities, grieving people require:

- Time
- Small Goals
- Security
- Small Pleasures
- Hope

These skills are further described below.

TIME

Time is a necessary factor in a healthy grief process. You will need the solitude of time alone as well as time with others. You will need more time than you can even imagine to come to terms with this loss. The expression "time heals" is too simple. It is important to recognize that healing and growth do not happen instantly. Time, while necessary, is not by itself sufficient for grief to become manageable. Grief takes time, and people do not and should not expect to "snap out of it."

SMALL GOALS

The idea of goals may be overwhelming now, but having something small or simple to look forward to will feel like momentum in the right direction. It's doubtful you will experience much satisfaction at first, but small steps can help you gain confidence about your immediate future. We recommend that you develop small goals for your grief and for your self-care.

SECURITY

For a lot of families, grief causes stress about things like finances or legal and medical issues. You may notice some of that stress rubbing off on you. You may also be worried about your parents' grief, your friends' grief, or the grief of your siblings. This can create uncertainty and feelings of insecurity. These are hard challenges, and it is important to reach out for more support. Try to think about who is in your corner and talk to them about your concerns.

SMALL PLEASURES

Small pleasures and simple creature comforts can be restorative and healing. Favorite activities, time with those you love, and especially humor can bring life and light into your sorrow. It is not uncommon for grieving people to feel a measure of guilt when they first experience small pleasures, but this is an important part of restoration and to foster the emergence of gratitude.

HOPE

Hope can help us navigate through dark and challenging times by helping us look "forward," perhaps toward a new goal we'd like to work toward, or in pushing us to recognize the love and support we may already have in our lives. Hope can come from many avenues—the awareness that others have experienced pain and gone on, the sustaining qualities of faith and family, intentional steps to honor the person who died, and the wishes the one who died might have had for your life. Hope can become confidence that positive things can happen to you.

STRESS: WHAT IS IT?

> ***"One must go through periods of numbness that are harder to bear than grief."***
>
> ***—Anne Morrow Lindbergh, Hour Of Gold, Hour Of Lead: Diaries And Letters Of Anne Morrow Lindbergh, 1929-1932***

Stress is a self-perception of a situation that overwhelms one's physical, cognitive, emotional, and/or spiritual resources, often occurring because of change or an unanticipated event.

All change, whether good or bad, is inherently stressful. Each person is unique in their ability to manage stress. We all know people who thrive on change and chaos and find it energizing. We

all know people for whom small changes can be devastating. Some people prefer variety and excitement, others predictability and calm.

Death is the greatest of upheavals, and even those who anticipate the death of someone close cannot be fully prepared for the changes death brings and the stress that accompanies the life adjustments that need to be made. Stress is an inevitable part of grief; it is understandable to feel inundated by all of these decisions and adjustments. Overwhelming stress can bring distress, fear, doubt, loneliness, guilt, and sadness, and negatively affect physical health and well-being.

TAKING A BREAK FROM GRIEF

Coping well has three components: acknowledging that life has changed, and one must adapt, turning to others for assistance, and discovering new ways of thinking and living. To do this well, grievers must also replenish themselves. Many grieving people have benefited from these suggestions to restore a sense of life balance. No one suggestion will be a complete solution, nor will every idea be helpful to everyone. When you experience distress, you can decide to engage with that distress and cope with it, or you may choose in that moment, to take a rest from the distress. Each approach is healthy, and your decision to engage or rest will depend on the circumstances of the moment.

ENGAGE YOUR BODY OR REST YOUR BODY

Exercise is a healthy way to cope with any stressful situation, but it may be particularly useful for grievers. Even simple daily exercise can clear the mind and help with concentration. Being active creates a sensation of moving forward, that one is making progress and living again. For many, physical activity brings focus to one's body and is a welcome distraction from difficult thoughts and feelings. For others, it can be a time to process feelings and a time of active remembrance. You may choose to exercise with a companion or alone. Plan to build at least 15 minutes of exercise into your day; if you schedule it, you are more likely to do it. Be attentive to your stamina: Grief is exhausting, so balance activity with rest.

Learn your body's warning signs of physical overload. Even if sleep is difficult for now, try to get daily rest. Look for ways to pamper your body—walking, watching a movie, taking a long shower or bath, snuggling in a cozy blanket, dancing in your bedroom, or yoga are some options to consider. Allow your body to work at a slower pace and be gentle with yourself.

ENGAGE YOUR MIND OR REST YOUR MIND

Reading is an active distraction that will also help with concentration. You may find this is an effective time to engage in journaling. Watching television or a movie, while more passive, can also provide a welcome break. Many people turn to their cell phones or social media as a "time out." This can be helpful if you direct yourself to positive content or to supportive people. Endless scrolling is more likely to bring you down, so think about your purpose in looking at your phone or social media. Ask yourself, "what am I looking for?" "What could I see or who could I connect with to give me "a lift" right now?

It is also important to rest your mind. You will surely have worries and concerns as you face life without the one who died, but you will be more productive if you are able to set the worries aside, even for short intervals. We suggest listening to music, meditation and will discuss relaxation, affirmations, meditation, music, and mindfulness in detail in the next chapter.

ENGAGE YOUR SOCIAL SUPPORTS OR SEEK SOLITUDE

You will need time with trusted companions who will support you on your grief journey. It helps to have a variety of supportive people who can listen, help with new tasks, are accepting of your thoughts, feelings, questions, and memories, and will offer gentle guidance. Thoughtfully identify those people who are supportive and helpful. Try to find people who knew and cared about the person who died and others who did not know the person. This variety is important, because your family and acquaintances who are also grieving the loss may or may not be able to support you in the way that you need it. We will discuss this more in Chapter 6, but by now you have probably realized that you must take some initiative in seeking out supportive people. We also remind you that you might need to withdraw somewhat from those who are not helpful or are even hurtful in your grief. We are not always free to step away from unhelpful people—they may be family, friends, other students, teachers, or coaches- but a healthy distance from unhealthy people is a decision we support.

You will also need times of solitude. This can be very difficult, as it is the time you are most likely to feel more loneliness. You will, however, need times of quiet reflection to process the depths of your grief. While it is a good idea to be active at times, we have found that if you constantly keep busy to avoid any painful feelings and thoughts about the death, it might actually have a negative impact on your grief process.

ENGAGE PURPOSIVELY OR WITHDRAW CONFIDENTLY

You may find it difficult to revisit places that you shared with the one who died, or you may welcome those visits. When possible, also try to expand your horizons with travel to new locations and with new activities. Find an activity that allows you to contribute to the world.

But remember to also be patient with yourself as you try new things and set new goals. You will need both short breaks and longer periods of rest. Remember, grief is more like a marathon than a sprint. Consider your long-term goals, surrender those goals that are only a distraction, and focus on what you truly value.

How is your coping style working for you now? You have been developing coping skills throughout your life, but grief may be bigger than what your tried-and-true coping skills are able to manage. When an important person dies, the grievers' world turns upside down and coping mechanisms falter or fail. Sometimes, coping skills that worked in earlier crises may not work with the loss you are now grieving, and that can leave you feeling stuck or like you are failing to grieve. You will need to make adaptations to the new reality of life without the person who died. Coping skills are put to the ultimate test. Some of these coping skills work, some prove ineffective and should be discarded, and new ones can be learned and put to use.

When people who have grieved a loss tell us that they have grown or learned from loss, they are often referring to new coping skills they have acquired and new insights they have gained. This in no way diminishes their loss but can help make living with the loss bearable.

SELF-CARE PRACTICE 4: MINDFUL LISTENING

Mindful listening is a way of hearing in which we are fully present with what is happening in this moment without trying to control it, change it, or judge it. Too often when we are listening, we are formulating a response in our minds without fully attending to what is being said. To listen deeply, we must let go of the "background noise" happening in our mind and our usual assumptions and listen with respect for precisely what is being said.

This requires a contemplative mind, one that is open, calm, attentive, and receptive. This is a difficult skill, but it can be cultivated through calm practice. It requires the listener to be attentive rather than reactive.

This approach will gift the entire group with the supportive, nonjudgmental listening we have fostered these many weeks.

Exercise:

- Try to sit stable and still, like a mountain. Be relaxed and alert. Close your eyes.
- Start by paying attention to your breaths, allowing them to become slow and deep.
- Listen to the sounds as they occur.
- Do not imagine, name, or analyze the sounds. As names arise, release them and return to the sounds.
- Just listen with wide-open awareness.
- Let the sounds come to you and touch your eardrums.
- As thoughts, emotions, memories, or associations arise in your mind, notice them, gently let them go, and return to the sounds.
- Notice how the sounds arise and fall away.
- Do not grasp at sounds.
- Do not reject sounds.
- If there are no sounds, listen and rest in the silence.
- When you are ready to finish the exercise, bring your attention back to your slow, deep breaths. Then open your eyes.

After the exercise:

In your daily life notice the positive and negative habits you might have in your approach to listening. Ask yourself:

- What helps me to listen fully, without judgment?
- If I am in a place that is very noisy, how can I help myself? Must I find a quieter place or wear earplugs? Or can I be with these sounds in a different way?

A POEM FOR REFLECTION: A HOUSE CALLED TOMORROW BY ALBERTO RIOS

You are not fifteen, or twelve, or seventeen—
You are a hundred wild centuries

And fifteen, bringing with you
In every breath and in every step

Everyone who has come before you,
All the yous that you have been,

The mothers of your mother,
The fathers of your father.

If someone in your family tree was trouble,
A hundred were not:

The bad do not win—not finally,
No matter how loud they are.

We simply would not be here
If that were so.

You are made, fundamentally, from the good.
With this knowledge, you never march alone.

You are the breaking news of the century.
You are the good who has come forward

Through it all, even if so many days
Feel otherwise. But think:

When you as a child learned to speak,
It's not that you didn't know words—

It's that, from the centuries, you knew so many,
And it's hard to choose the words that will be your own.

From those centuries we human beings bring with us
The simple solutions and songs,

The river bridges and star charts and song harmonies
All in service to a simple idea:

That we can make a house called tomorrow.
What we bring, finally, into the new day, every day,

Is ourselves. And that's all we need
To start. That's everything we require to keep going.

Look back only for as long as you must,
Then go forward into the history you will make.

Be good, then better. Write books. Cure disease.
Make us proud. Make yourself proud.

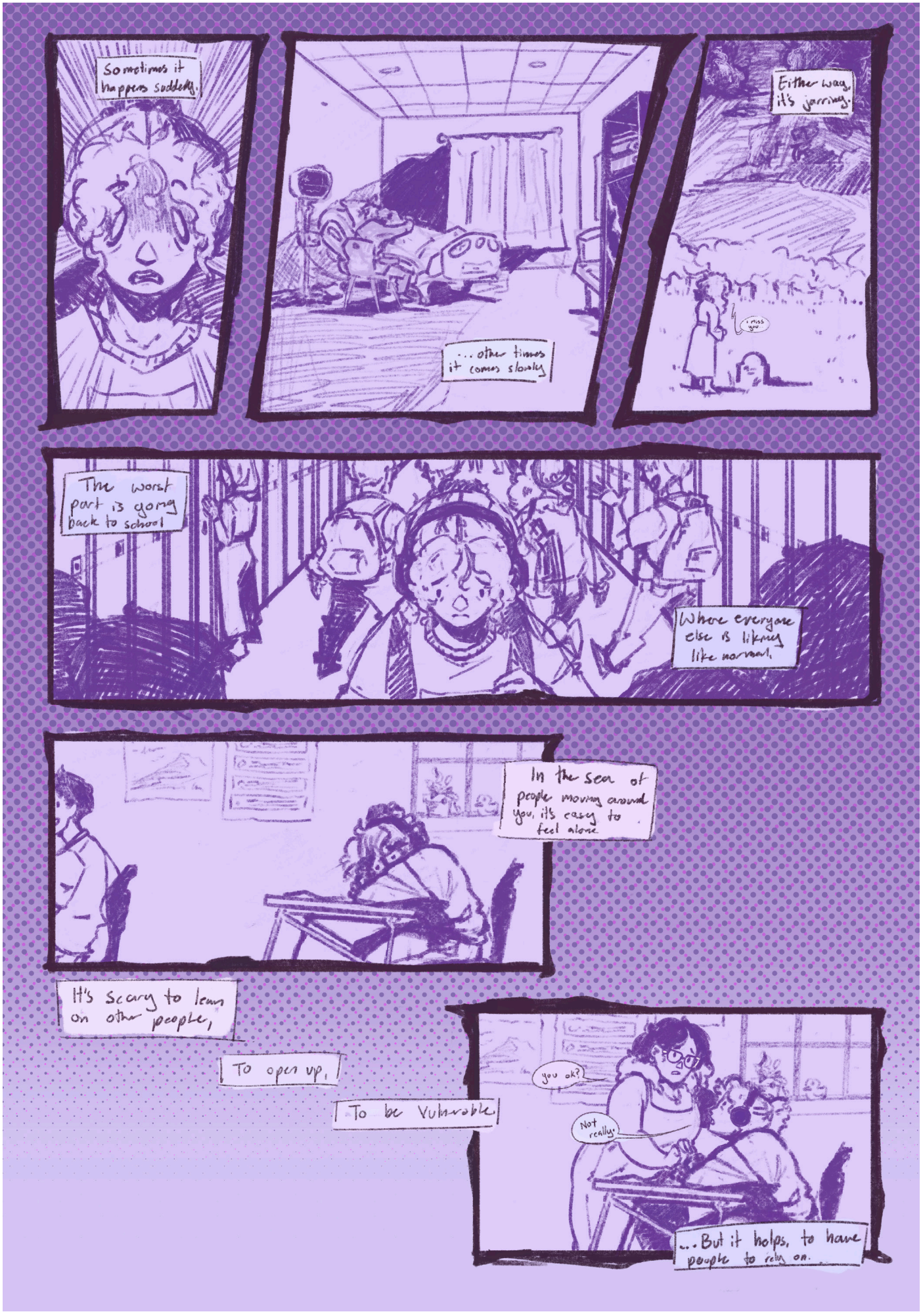
And those who came before you? When you hear thunder,
Hear it as their applause.

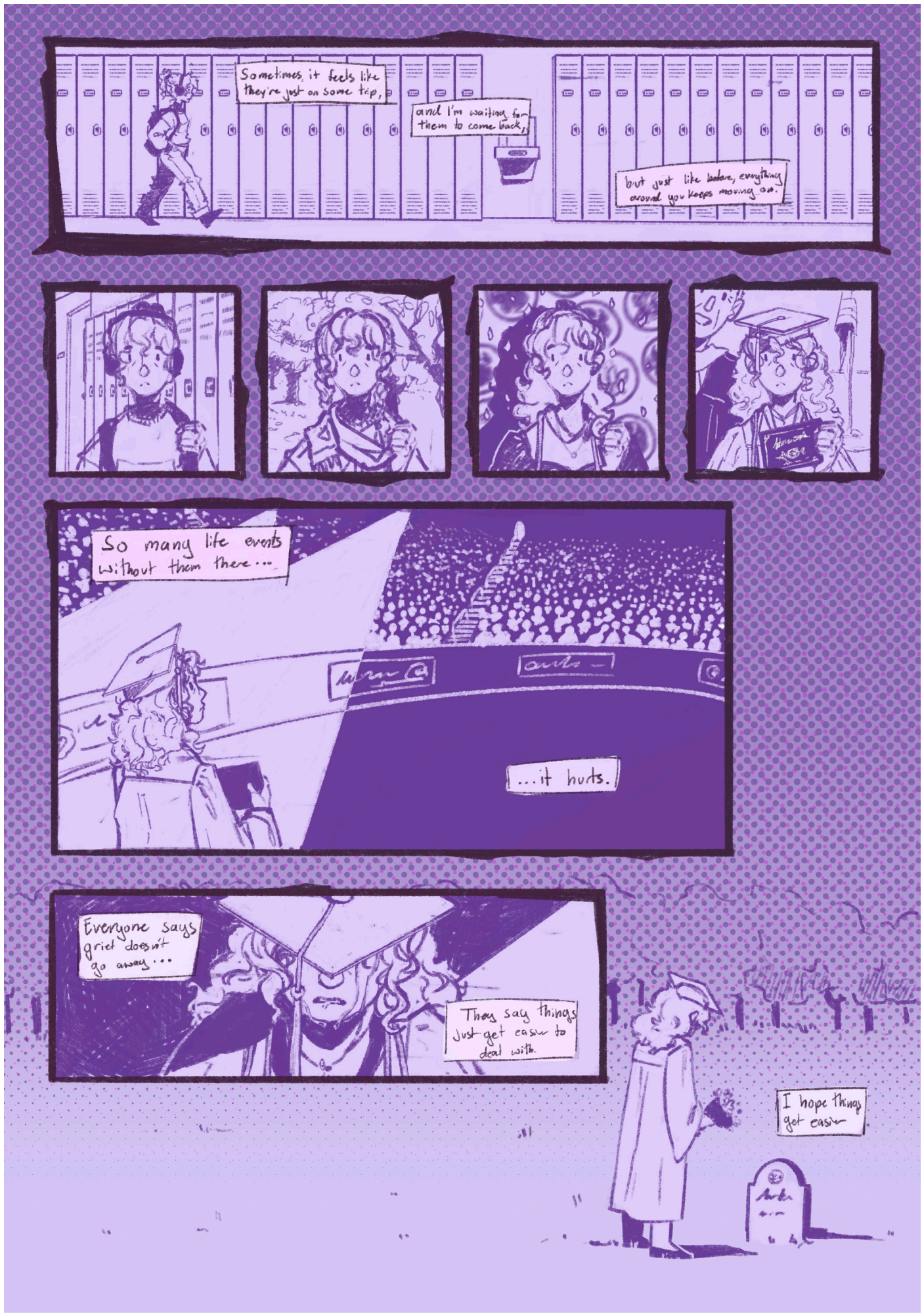
GRIEF PRACTICE IDEA TO TRY THIS WEEK: COPING SKILLS INVENTORY

Conduct a coping-skills inventory. List the behaviors you have been using to manage your grief. On your list, label them as + or – according to their effectiveness in helping you with your grief and with your day-to-day life. Perhaps some are positive but need to be used in moderation or used more frequently. Write about and/or discuss how you can develop your positive coping skills into habits.

THOUGHTS AND JOTS

(Use this page to write down any feelings, questions, or ideas that come up—anything you'd like to "jot down" after reading this chapter.)


Sometimes it happens suddenly.
...other times it comes slowly
Either way, it's jarring.
I miss you
The worst part is going back to school
Where everyone else is living like normal.
In the sea of people moving around you, it's easy to feel alone
It's scary to lean on other people,
To open up,
To be vulnerable
you ok?
Not really
...But it helps, to have people to rely on.


Sometimes it feels like they're just on some trip,
and I'm waiting for them to come back,
but just like before, everything around you keeps moving on.
So many life events without them there...
...it hurts.
Everyone says grief doesn't go away...
They say things just get easier to deal with.
I hope things get easier

WEEK 5: BEING PRESENT WITH YOUR GRIEF

FOCUS ON THE FACILITATOR

GOALS FOR THIS SESSION

- To recognize the difficulty of mindfully being present with grief.
- To normalize stress as a part of grief and mourning.
- To allow participants to identify key stressors in their current life and obtain stress management ideas from other participants.
- To learn and practice mindfulness and stress reduction skills.

Present a definition of mindfulness. Review the differences between "taking a break" and avoidance or denial. Explain the differences between being present with grief and being consumed by grief.

In the session, briefly practice deep breathing and deep muscle relaxation. During the session do a guided relaxation exercise, using quiet and guided imagery. You may want to use a tape with soft music, sounds of nature, speak the words yourself, or try one of the self-compassion exercises. By this session, you will probably have a good idea of what would resonate with your group. Allow enough time to discuss affirmations and various meditation and prayer practices. If group participants engage in discussion on these options and weigh the relative merits of each tool for their own grief, they are likelier to utilize them.

SUGGESTED GRIEF GROUP ACTIVITY: WHAT DO I NEED?

This activity will help participants identify their own needs, and how they can work to meet their needs. Invite participants to complete the "What I Need Handout," with attention to their physical, mental, emotional, and social needs. As they complete the handout, invite a discussion on the different ways they can meet their own needs, and how they can ask for support to meet their needs.

OTHER IDEAS FOR THIS SESSION OR FOR GRIEF PRACTICE AT HOME

Encourage group participants to practice the activities in chapter 5 on their own—have them select the activity they feel might be most helpful to them this week.

For journaling:

- Describe your most significant stressor right now?
- What have you tried so far?
- Identify three things that are interfering with your ability to manage this stressor.
- What is the smallest thing you could do that would make you feel you are making progress in this area?

UNDERSTANDING WHAT I NEED HANDOUT

Physical Needs (What my body needs)

When my body feels:

- Tired
- Hot
- Cold
- Hungry
- Restless
- Sick

I might need:

- Sleep/Rest
- Water
- Movement of my body (exercise/sports/walking)
- Something to eat
- A blanket

Emotional Needs (What my feelings need)

When I feel:

- Sad
- Angry
- Happy
- Bored
- Worried
- Scared

I might need:

- To Cry
- To Laugh
- To be Understood
- To be Listened to
- Permission to feel what I feel
- A Hug
- Time alone
- My pet/stuffed animal
- A way to release my feelings, such as through art, music, or exercise

Cognitive Needs (What my thoughts need)

When I feel:

- Distracted
- Stressed
- Overwhelmed
- Foggy
- Forgetful

I might need:

- A distraction
- Meditation/Yoga
- Reassurance
- A way to organize my thoughts
- Action steps
- A way to simplify
- Positive thoughts or affirmations, like “I can do this”

Social Needs (What I need from other people)

When I feel:

- Lonely
- Disconnected
- Misunderstood
- Different

I might need:

- To be understood
- To do something fun or lighthearted
- To be with someone who cares
- To call a friend
- To be alone

A THOUGHT FOR YOU AS YOU CLOSE TONIGHT

"One cannot remain in this work for long without being wounded. Caregivers who function only as technicians, who do not instinctively offer their souls, hands, and hearts, will not thrive. Therefore, by serving well, they, by definition, operate from a position of tenderness and vulnerability. Learning how to manage the accumulated sadness in growth- enhancing rather than destructive ways may be the central task."

—I. Hill

CHAPTER 5: BEING PRESENT WITH YOUR GRIEF

"We can only be said to be alive in those moments when our hearts are conscious of our treasures."

—Thornton Wilder, The Woman of Andros

"You can shed tears that she is gone, or you can smile because she has lived. You can close your eyes and pray that she'll come back, or you can open your eyes and see all she's left. Your heart can be empty because you can't see her, or you can be full of the love you shared. You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday, or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday. You can remember her only that she is gone, or you can cherish her memory and let it live on. You can cry and close your mind, be empty and turn your back. Or you can do what she'd want: smile, open your eyes, love and go on."

—David Harkins, "She is Gone" or "Remember Me"

There is a time to distract yourself from the pain of loss and the tasks at hand and a time to face them. We have discussed coping with the new life and taking a break from grief, but the depths of loss remain to be addressed. Ultimately, what we long for is a healthy way to remember the person who died, to make sense of the meaning and value of our relationship, and to reflect on how that relationship will inform and guide our future. For most grievers, this means allowing the grief to come and be fully experienced. When we are able to do this without judgment of ourselves and others, we can be present with our grief in a constructive, mindful way.

Mindfulness is a state of active attention to the present moment. For grievers, it is an intentional means of engaging with the loss—with thoughts of the person who died, with one's own feelings and memories. It is a time of "sitting with your grief." When one grieves mindfully, grief is invited to come. Without judging thoughts, feelings, and memories as good or bad, one experiences the grief. This activity is not goal-directed so much as it is a connection with what is happening in your present life experience. This is intentional grief. The mindfully intentional griever chooses a safe time and location and may use some of the methods listed in this chapter. Intentional grief is a way to transform the painful reality of loss to warm yet realistic memories.

WAYS TO RELAX

Relaxation may seem the very opposite of the grief experience, and in some ways it is. Relaxation is not avoidance of discomfort; it is a tool to bring to help in a distressing situation. When we are relaxed, we are able to remain calm, stay mentally focused, move from one feeling to another, and attain a sense of peace. There are many ways people can relax, but when we speak of relaxation techniques, we are referring to four broad categories: deep breathing, deep muscle relaxation, affirmations, and meditation.

DEEP BREATHING

When people are under stress, their body responds by preparing them for "fight or flight or freeze." This natural response creates rapid, shallow breathing, which works well when in an instance of physical danger but can be debilitating when you are already feeling emotional or spiritual distress. The fourth possible option is "face it." But you must do this in a gentle, self-compassionate way. Breathing deeply and slowly can create a physical state of calm, which promotes emotional and spiritual calm.

Begin by sitting comfortably. Slowly, exhale fully, trying to completely empty your lungs by blowing air out through your mouth. Inhale slowly through your nose, trying to fill your belly with air. Hold your breath for a second or two, just long enough to slow yourself down. You don't need to force this. It can take several breaths to get into a deep, slow rhythm. If you find holding your breath overwhelming, focus instead on steady inhales and exhales. Do this for 5–10 breaths. Slowly close your eyes and breathe in and out slowly for 5–10 more breaths. Slowly open your eyes.

DEEP MUSCLE RELAXATION

This technique targets the tense and tired muscles in your body and can help promote sleep. You may have noticed a tendency to "hold" stress in a part of your body, such as your neck and shoulders. As with deep breathing, bringing relaxation to your body can calm your mind.

Begin by sitting comfortably or lie down. Close your eyes. You will move from your head to your feet, going slowly.

- Tense or tighten the muscles in your face and hold for 5 seconds, then relax.
- Tighten the muscles of your neck and shoulders; hold for 5 seconds, then relax.
- Tighten your belly muscles; hold for 5 seconds, then relax.
- Tighten the muscles in your lower back; hold for 5 seconds, then relax.
- Tighten the muscles in your upper legs; hold for 5 seconds, then relax.
- Tighten your feet, pulling them up toward your legs; hold for 5 seconds, then relax.
- Before opening your eyes, take a few slow, deep breaths.

AFFIRMATIONS

The use of affirmations is more than trying to have positive thoughts. It's important not to use platitudes or clichés here: Affirmations need to be truthful to you and for you. Affirmations are statements that reflect your values and goals, and things that are meaningful to you. They could be quotes, scripture verses, supportive and loving comments people have made, and even thoughts

from the sympathy cards you might have received. Affirmations are written down in a way that enables you to read them throughout the day. You might try writing them in a journal, using them as a wallpaper on your phone, setting an alarm on your phone so that the affirmations come up at specific times in the day, or using sticky notes on a mirror.

Some of the quotes sprinkled throughout this manual may help, and other ideas are in the section of this manual labeled Inspirations.

Begin by reflecting on yourself and your situation. What have you found helpful so far?

If you have been using a journal, reread a bit of it. Do you see some growth or change? Write down your observations of growth on some sticky notes, a whiteboard at home, or in the notes app on your phone. Then, write down the thoughts of others that you find uplifting. You don't need to confine yourself to how things are now. Write down beliefs and hopes of how you want things to be in the months and years ahead. Once you have three or four thoughts written out, read them at specific times of the day, perhaps the difficult time of getting up or the lonely time of going to bed. If possible, carry the thoughts with you to read during "down" times in the day.

MUSIC

Music can be a powerful way to regulate emotions. Everyone gravitates to the music that speaks to them, the music that feels true, and usually, the music of their generation. Listening and moving to music can be especially helpful to grieving people. We often suggest making several playlists: one can be music that connects you to the person who died, another can be music to completely distract you from your grief. In particular, when you are very sad, it can help to build a playlist that connects you to the low feelings you are feeling but moves through songs that are increasingly "up tempo"—songs that lift you to where you want your feelings to be.

As the rap artist Frank Ocean observed, "when you're happy, you enjoy the music but when you're sad, you understand the lyrics." The lyrics of songs, like poetry, can connect us to our grief, and, if thoughtfully selected can resonate and lift our spirits, helping us realize that we are not the first or last to feel this way, sing these words or dance to this beat.

SELF-COMPASSION

Self-compassion is extending the same compassion you would graciously extend to others to yourself in instances of perceived inadequacy, failure, or general suffering. According to Dr. Kristen Neff, there are three components of self-compassion: self-kindness instead of self-judgment, identifying with humanity instead of seeking isolation, and mindfully accepting thoughts and feelings as happening now instead of maintaining that today's thoughts and feelings will always be the same. Self-compassion exercises are particularly useful if you find yourself preoccupied by regret, guilt, or shame. For some suggestions, visit self-compassion.org (http://self-compassion.org/category/exercises/#exercises) or use the QR code below.

MEDITATION

The term meditation describes the practice of seeking a state of mind that is simultaneously relaxed and aware. This state of mind can come naturally but is typically attained by a great variety of methods. In most practices of meditation, the body is engaged in exercise, a posture, or a repetitive activity like doodling, crafting, shooting free throws, dancing, etc. The mind, while alert, can roam, or may be deliberately directed to a thought, chant, prayer, or simple idea. Meditation is almost always practiced in quiet.

Here are a few simple mindful meditation practices for a start:

ONE MINUTE OF MINDFULNESS

This is an easy mindfulness exercise and one that you can do anytime throughout the day. For the next minute, focus all your attention on your breathing. You will be surprised at how long a minute feels. Leave your eyes open and breathe normally. Notice your mind wandering off (it will) and gently return your attention to your breath whenever it does so.

Practice this exercise throughout the day to restore your mind to the present moment. Gradually extend the duration of this exercise to longer and longer periods. This exercise is actually the foundation of a correct mindfulness meditation technique.

CONSCIOUS OBSERVATION

Select an object you wish to observe. For grievers, this could be a memento or photograph associated with the one who died. Hold it in your hands and allow your attention to be fully absorbed by the object. Observe it. Don't assess it, think about it, or study it intellectually; just observe it for what it is. Conscious observation enhances a feeling of "being awake."

MEMORY-FOCUSED MEDITATION

To begin, have a thought, phrase, or simple idea in mind. This can be an affirming sentence, a section of scripture, a prayer or verse from a holy text, or a line from a simple, pleasant song. Decide whether you prefer to sit, stand, or kneel. Allow your body to become comfortable in the position before focusing your mind on the thought. Most people find it helpful to say the phrase aloud in a soft voice. Slowly repeat this phrase over and over again. You may prefer to concentrate on the thought or concentrate on the experience of your body. Do whatever feels comfortable and natural to you.

There are many high-quality, mindfulness smartphone apps, such as Calm, the Mindfulness app, and Headspace available to support your personal practice.

PRAYER

Prayer is an important component of many spiritual traditions and can give voice to thoughts and feelings in relationship with God or one's higher power. Many grieving persons struggle with their faith and religious beliefs, and this is normal and healthy. Those who have had a prayerful life may continue to benefit from the practice of prayer, despite distressing thoughts and feelings.

It is a challenge to live life in the moment under stressful circumstances. Yet, those who manage to find pleasure and meaning in painful life situations tell us that this is the very focus they aim for. They neither forget the past nor ignore the future, but they attempt to live fully in the day they are in.

SELF-CARE PRACTICE 5: WHERE DOES YOUR GRIEF LIVE IN YOUR BODY?

In this body scan, you will be able to note where you feel the stress of grief in specific body locations. For some, it is in the jaw, for others, in the pit of the stomach, for others, as "heartache" in the chest.

- Sit up tall as you do this meditation.
- Begin by bringing your attention into your body
- You can close your eyes if that's comfortable to you
- You can notice your body, seated, wherever you're seated, feeling the weight of your body, on the chair, on the floor
- And take a few deep breaths
- Imagine you are an hourglass with all the sand at the top
- As you breathe in and out slowly, "feel" the sand slowly flow to the bottom of the hourglass
- And as you take a deep breath, bringing in more oxygen and enlivening the body
- And as you exhale, bring a sense of relaxing more deeply
- As you start to scan your body, you can bring your attention back to your breath as an anchor to the exercise
- Today as you scan your body, focus on where you feel your grief in your body—with each body part, notice if you feel your grief there
- You can notice your feet on the floor; notice the sensation of your feet touching the floor—the weight and pressure, vibration, heat
- You can notice your legs against the chair—pressure, pulsing, heaviness, lightness
- Notice your back against the chair
- Bring your attention into your stomach area; if your stomach is tense or tight, let it soften
- Take a breath
- Notice your hands; are your hands tense or tight? See if you can allow them to soften
- Notice your arms; feel any sensation in your arms
- Let your shoulders be soft, drop them, and tuck your shoulder blades like birdwings
- Notice your neck and throat; let them be soft, relaxed
- Soften your jaw; let your face and facial muscles be soft
- Then notice your whole body, bring it to the present moment
- Take one more breath
- Be aware of your whole body, as best you can
- Take another deep breath
- And then when you're ready
- You can open your eyes

A POEM FOR REFLECTION: WATCHING MYSELF AS I LEARN TO LET GO BY ROSEMERRY WAHTOLA TROMMER

She remembers how at the orchard
the wind would sometimes
rip the ripening fruit from the trees.
Not because it was cruel.
It was wind doing what wind does.
And life does what life does.
It takes. It gives. It takes. It gives.
Not because life is cruel or generous,
but because it is life.
Look how the word why forms on her lips—
look how saying the word
requires a small pucker like a kiss.
She doesn't seem to expect an answer.
Perhaps she is practicing
how to lean into the silence that always follows
when she asks the unanswerable.
Perhaps she is practicing how to kiss the unknown.
If she could have stopped the wind from blowing,
she would have. If she could have stopped
her son from dying, her father from dying,
her friend from dying, she would have.
Instead, she is learning this:
no matter how much she does,
no matter how good, how quick,
how noble, how loving, how well-intentioned,
life will do what life does.
And still the invitation
to bring to every moment her best,
which is to say whatever
the moment asks of her.
See her hair blow in the wind.
The only thing she can do
is choose to notice the place within
that remains still no matter
how hard the wind blows.
Perhaps she will learn how this stillness, too,
is life doing what life does.

GRIEF PRACTICE IDEA TO TRY THIS WEEK: STRESS RELIEF

Select a new way to seek stress relief this week. Is your stress expressing itself as pent-up energy or frustration? Try an active form of stress relief; select one of the relaxation techniques mentioned above and practice it. Is your stress expressing itself as distracted or painful thoughts and sorrow? Try a quiet form of stress relief. Write about your experience in your journal. What helped or didn't help about this method? Remember that relaxation takes practice, and self-compassion can help you be patient with yourself.

THOUGHTS AND JOTS

(Use this page to write down any feelings, questions, or ideas that come up—anything you'd like to "jot down" after reading this chapter.)

WEEK 6: RELATIONSHIPS

FOCUS ON THE FACILITATOR

GOALS FOR THIS SESSION

- To discuss the varied relationships in each participant's life.
- To encourage participants to practice self-care.
- To encourage participants to give and receive support and care.
- To learn about the nature of caregiving, burden and compassion fatigue.
- To encourage participants to develop a broader network of support.

In this session, the facilitator helps participants identify their key sources of support, as well as burdensome or unhelpful relationships. Patience in relationships should be encouraged as it often takes relationships longer to equilibrate to loss and change than it does for individuals to equilibrate. Encourage discussion about how grief is going in each participant's family and social network. If a participant feels unsupported, invite the group to comment, recognizing that each person in a social network has also had a loss and is experiencing that loss in their own unique way.

Grieving people need to navigate many different relationships. One participant may have a teacher or coach that demands the performance that was expected before the death, another may have small siblings they're helping to support, another may feel forced to be "the strong one" in the family. The group members will benefit from others' experiences in navigating relationships. One way facilitators can truly help in this arena is to give permission to grievers to avoid difficult people and toxic relationships. Grievers may not be able to avoid them forever (teachers, difficult family members), but they can be encouraged to postpone those encounters until they are stronger.

In the context of relationships, we again have the opportunity to emphasize self-care, by encouraging the griever to accept help and support from trusted, caring individuals. This ability is vital, because this support group will end—and participants must find additional avenues of support.

SUGGESTED GRIEF GROUP ACTIVITY: WHO'S IN MY CORNER?

This week's activity will help participants identify people who support them in their life.

To open the discussion, affirm that coping with grief in your family can be very challenging. Invite participants to share if they have discovered other people or pets who are helping them along the way. Let participants know this activity will help them name some people or pets who have really helped since their person died.

- Invite participants to list some names of people who care about you or who have helped you along the way.
    - Think about lots of different areas of your life: church, school, sports teams, extended family.

- Then choose a paper circle that might represent that person or pet in your life. You may decide to choose a bigger circle for someone who has especially helped you a lot.
- Write or decorate each circle with a person or pet who has helped you.
- Glue the circles of support on to a larger sheet of paper.

Materials Needed: paper circles of varying sizes and colors, glue, larger sheet of paper.

OTHER IDEAS FOR THIS SESSION OR FOR GRIEF PRACTICE AT HOME

Reflect on the key relationships in your life. Are these relationships important, distressing, satisfying, mutual, and growing? How have these relationships accommodated to your changed circumstances?

A THOUGHT FOR YOU AS YOU CLOSE TONIGHT

> ***"Let us not underestimate how hard it is to be compassionate. Compassion is hard because it requires the inner disposition to go with others to place where they are weak, vulnerable, lonely, and broken. But this is not our spontaneous response to suffering. What we desire most is to do away with suffering by fleeing from it or finding a quick cure for it."***
>
> ***—Henri J.M. Nouwen***

CHAPTER 6: RELATIONSHIPS

"Grief and pain are the price we humans have to pay for the love and total commitment we have for another person. The more we love, the more we are hurt when we lose the object of our love. But if we are honest with ourselves, would we have it any other way?"

—C. S. Lewis, A Grief Observed

"Grief knits two hearts in closer bonds than happiness ever can; and common sufferings are far stronger links than common joys."

—Alphonse de Lamartine, "Raphael: Or, Pages of the Book of Life at Twenty"

CARING FOR YOURSELF

We briefly discussed the importance of self-care earlier. Self-care is one reflection of your relationship with yourself. Even if you have other responsibilities such as schoolwork, a job, or caring for younger siblings, you will be better equipped to fulfill those responsibilities if you attend to your own needs. This principle is like the instructions flight attendants give prior to takeoff: "In the event of a loss of cabin pressure… place your own oxygen mask on before attempting to assist others."

Grief can take a toll on our closest relationships, or it can bring us even closer to the people we care about most. The most common challenge to relationships following a death is that the very people who would be most supportive in time of tragedy are likely grieving themselves. This may make them less available, unable to help, or demanding of your time and attention. Families are composed of individuals, and each member of the family is experiencing this loss differently and will grieve differently. Combine that with individual temperaments and the natural sadness and irritability that accompany grief, and one can readily understand how the closest families and friends can struggle with communication and mutual support in bereavement.

With care and time, families that have always been close report that their shared grief draws them together. In the best of circumstances, grief may strain loving relationships, and mourning and bereavement can be undermined if relationships within the family have long been difficult or unhealthy.

MAKING RELATIONSHIPS WORK IN THE MIDST OF GRIEF

Recognize how challenging the work of grieving is for everyone. Acknowledge your own grief and grief needs and share them with your family and close friends (with the exception of very young children). By sharing your own needs, you model open communication and invite your family and friends to be direct yet reasonable with their own feelings and expectations.

Think about why you care about the grief of others who share your love for the person who died. Why do YOU need to care? It is likely that you:

- Feel love and are responsive to the grief of others.
- Have a desire to do the right thing.
- Have an understanding of your family members' and friends' personalities and needs.

What are the difficulties you will face as family and friends? These might be:

- Limited resources (money, time, family, and friends)
- Ongoing loss, expectations, and disappointments
- Limited energy (other family members, a job, demands of school or extracurricular activities and sports)
- Letting go of the future you thought you would have
- Changing needs of your family members; their grief work

We suggest you…

Set Reasonable Goals

- Grief goals to share with your family members:
  - Small, attainable goals
  - Keep "attitude" goals as well as "functional" goals
  - Anticipate setbacks; try not to label struggles as failure
- Grief goals for yourself as a caring person:
  - Keep small, attainable goals for yourself, too!
  - Accept praise for effort as well as success.
  - Try to remain flexible.

Get Support and Create a Team

- Identify your informal supports: family, friends, teachers, coaches, church members, and neighbors.
- Keep them informed and use them; most people who offer help actually want to help if they are given clear direction and a specific role.
- Use support groups and educational programs.

- Say “Thank you.” It’s important to show others that you see the effort they are putting into supporting you.

Get Away From Your Situation—Take a Break From the Demands of Others

- Don’t become the only helper in a grieving family situation.
- Find a grief mentor or buddy and use that person as a sounding board.
- Avoid self-destructive choices: isolation, over/under eating, substance use.
- Do the good stuff instead: Exercise, meditate, go for a walk, take a bath, give a hug, get a hug.

Get a Perspective

- Set short-term goals for family relationships:
  - Giving or obtaining care for your grieving family members
  - Maintaining and improving your relationships
  - Keeping healthy boundaries and expectations
- Set long-term goals for family relationships:
  - Preparing for future needs
  - Growing and maintaining your relationships
  - Developing yourself as a human being
  - Leaving a legacy of appropriate grief

Be patient with yourself as you navigate and learn new family roles that need to be redefined in the absence of the person who died. The role of a teen-child changes with the death of a sibling, sibling roles realign when a parent dies, friendships are transformed. Give yourself the time to learn and create new roles and reclaim your new “self” in the grief journey.

The most important thing about navigating relationships is sharing the story of the person who died in a way that “cues” others on how to engage with your grief. It is your story to tell. Share as much or as little as you wish, but share stories of the life, not just of the death. This gives others clearer guidance on how to respond, what you want to talk about, and how to support you.

DIFFICULT PEOPLE

The support of caring others is invaluable in grief, but we have all types of relationships with all kinds of people. Many people can be insensitive and hurtful to grieving people. We will discuss communication in the next chapter. As people grieve, it is advisable that they minimize their contact with unhelpful people to the extent that is possible, and maximize their contact with supportive, helpful people. This good advice may not be possible with family relationships, or even teachers and friends, but you can try to limit contact with these difficult people to essential issues. Even with necessary, ongoing contact with a difficult person, it is important to claim some personal time for yourself and enlist the support of thoughtful people who may be less directly connected to the person who died or to your difficult family member.

SELF-CARE PRACTICE 6: MANAGING COMPASSION FATIGUE

Please bring to mind someone who can exhaust you or frustrate you, or someone who suffers with whom you feel sympathy. See the person clearly in your mind and feel the struggle in your own body. Now, please listen carefully to these words, letting them gently roll through your mind:

Everyone is on their own life journey. I am not the cause of this person's suffering, nor is it within my power to make it go away, even if I wish I could. Moments like this are difficult to bear, yet I may still try to help if I can.

Now, aware of the stress you are carrying in your body, inhaling fully and deeply, drawing compassion inside your body and filling every cell in your body with compassion. Letting yourself be soothed by inhaling deeply, and by giving yourself the compassion you need when you experience discomfort.

As you exhale, sending out compassion to the other person who is associated with your discomfort, or exhaling compassion to living beings in general. Continue breathing compassion in and out, letting your body gradually find a natural, relaxed breathing rhythm. Breathing in for yourself and out for the other. "One for me, one for you." Occasionally scanning your inner landscape for any distress and responding by inhaling compassion for yourself and exhaling compassion for the person who needs it. If you find that you or the other person need extra compassion, feel free to focus your breath more in that direction. Noticing the gentle rocking motion of your body as you breathe, like the tides flowing in and out on an ocean of compassion. A limitless ocean that embraces all suffering.

And listening to these words once again:

Everyone is on their own life journey. I am not the cause of this person's suffering, nor is it within my power to make it go away, even if I wish I could. Moments like this are difficult to bear, yet I may still try to help if I can.

A POEM FOR REFLECTION: SMALL KINDNESSES BY DANISHA LAMERIS

I've been thinking about the way, when you walk
down a crowded aisle, people pull in their legs
to let you by. Or how strangers still say "bless you"
when someone sneezes, a leftover
from the Bubonic plague. "Don't die," we are saying.
And sometimes, when you spill lemons
from your grocery bag, someone else will help you
pick them up. Mostly, we don't want to harm each other.
We want to be handed our cup of coffee hot,
and to say thank you to the person handing it. To smile
at them and for them to smile back. For the waitress
to call us honey when she sets down the bowl of clam chowder,
and for the driver in the red pick-up truck to let us pass.
We have so little of each other, now. So far
from tribe and fire. Only these brief moments of exchange.
What if they are the true dwelling of the holy, these
fleeting temples we make together when we say, "Here,
have my seat," "Go ahead—you first," "I like your hat."

GRIEF PRACTICE IDEA TO TRY THIS WEEK: SELF NURTURING

For one full week, apply your nurturing skills to yourself with the same dedication you have given to others. Identify one comfortable, trustworthy person and schedule time with that person during this week.

THOUGHTS AND JOTS

(Use this page to write down any feelings, questions, or ideas that come up—anything you'd like to "jot down" after reading this chapter.)

WEEK 7: COMMUNICATION

FOCUS ON THE FACILITATOR

GOALS FOR THIS SESSION

- To model compassionate and respectful communication in the group.
- To discuss the difficulties in balancing what is hard to talk about and what is hard for others to hear.
- To help participants identify safe and comfortable settings for communicating their feelings of loss and suffering.

This is a great session to discuss clichés that participants have heard and perhaps endured; how did they react to clichés and platitudes? Have they previously used some of these same expressions? Will they again? Part of this session is frequently focused on the negative and hurtful comments and behaviors that grieving people endure, not only from thoughtless people, but also from well-intentioned people. Allow the group to share these experiences; it will deepen their relationship with each other, foster some understanding of those who have said hurtful things, and unite the group in a conviction that they will be more sensitive to the pain of others in the future, as they have done in this group. This conviction alone is a milestone in grief, as the griever appreciates that their pain and suffering is mirrored in the experiences of others.

In this session, we also discuss how to remember the person who died. Often, group participants revisit funerals or describe how they handled difficult anniversaries (death anniversary, birthdays, holidays). This conversation can naturally segue into intentional grieving, a meaningful and powerful way to remember the person who died such that the future life without the deceased is informed by the life that was shared. Rituals can be discussed and supported as a valuable way to be present with one's grief.

Some groups plan a "celebration" for the last session—usually a simple potluck or dessert. You are invited to do whatever your group wishes, but plan for that to be in week 8, at the conclusion of the group (perhaps the last half-hour) and at the group location.

SUGGESTED GRIEF GROUP ACTIVITIES: YOU JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND!

There are several activities to choose from this week, with the focus on identifying pitfalls and challenges in communication.

TELEPHONE GAME OR "TELESTRATIONS" STYLE GAME

Have group sit in a circle. Start with a word or phrase, whispered in the ear of one group member. Have group pass it around the circle by whispering it 1 time into the group member's ear sitting next to them. The last group member vocalizes what he/she heard from the group member beside him/her.

Possible Phrases to use:

- The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog
- A guppy in a shark tank
- Sometimes I just want to be mad
- Cancer sucks
- There are lots of ups/downs
- I like eating toasted cheese and tuna sandwiches
- (Contribution from group member)

OREO TOWER

In in Oreo tower, participants build a tower from creme inside Oreos without talking (compete against smaller groups).

Process questions for after the towers have been created:

- What is it like to do build the tower without talking?
- What ways other than talking do we have to communicate with one another?
- Has there ever been a time when you communicated something that was misunderstood or misinterpreted?
- Has there ever been a time where you misunderstood what someone else?

Talk briefly about how sometimes things get "lost in communication" or we hear things differently than what was said or meant. Communication is what we say and how we say it. Up to 90% of communication is nonverbal, like tone of voice, body language, volume, etc. When we receive or hear communication, we also hear it through our own filters, such as our own emotions at the time (e.g., tired, sad, hungry, lonely), our perceptions of the other person ("he/she is nosy" etc.), or perceived pressures ("I have to be the "man" of the house").

Group Discussion: What is it that you feel like other people "Just Don't Understand" about grief? How can we respond in those situations.

ROLE PLAYING: RESPONDING TO CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Ask group and have them write down:

- What are some awkward or uncomfortable things you've been asked or told about grief or death?

Validate the group around these challenges and emotions: stressful, uncomfortable, surprising, etc.

Practice ways of answering these questions. Have an adult be the responder and a child be the question asker.

Group Process:

- What has worked for the group members, in knowing how to respond to these awkward or insensitive questions?
- What did you say/do?

OTHER IDEAS FOR THIS SESSION OR FOR GRIEF PRACTICE AT HOME

Identify the most important things you need to share with others. Do you need to expand your circle of support? What qualities are you looking for in a "good listener"? Are there people close to you that you are having a particularly difficult time communicating with? Are you comfortable approaching them? What would make that feel safe to you?

A THOUGHT FOR YOU AS YOU CLOSE TONIGHT

"Well, while I'm here I'll do the work—and what's the work? To ease the pain of living."

—Allen Ginsberg

CHAPTER 7: COMMUNICATION

"A death has occurred and everything is changed.

We are painfully aware that life can never be the same again.

But there is another way to look upon this truth. If life went on the same without the presence of the one who has died, we could only conclude that the life we here remember filled no space—meant nothing.

Life can be the same after a trinket has been lost, but never after the loss of a treasure."

—Paul Irion

SHARING YOUR GRIEF WITH OTHERS

Communicating with others can be very difficult when you are grieving. It's not unusual for grieving people to get tired of responding to questions about how they are doing. It can be difficult to have conversations without crying. It's all right to cry, of course, but sometimes public crying is uncomfortable. Grieving people may feel they need to "put on a good face," and respond that they are "fine" when they are not fine at all.

Often, however, grieving people wish to talk, to remember the one who died, to share stories, to hear stories, but they find many people feel awkward about grief and avoid them altogether.

Well-meaning people who don't know what to say try to change the subject or avoid the grieving person altogether. As mentioned earlier, give some thought to the memories and stories of your person that you are comfortable sharing. Of course, these recollections will vary according to the trust you feel with different people. People are more likely to respond to the stories you share and will be less likely to offer unwelcome comments. How you share recollections "signals" others on how you want conversations to proceed.

Another painful communication barrier is the use of clichés. People respond to grief with statements such as, "He's in a better place;" "She was old, after all;" "God had a bigger need for her;" "You can manage… you're strong;" "Keep busy, that worked for me." These statements might be made with good intentions, and that can make them doubly hard to respond to.

How does one deal with this push–pull between what can be hard to say and what is hard to hear? Consider: What do you want to share, when do you want to talk, and with whom do you wish to communicate? What feelings are you comfortable revealing? What memories do you wish to share? One cannot always orchestrate communication; in fact, some of the greatest conversations happen spontaneously with unexpected people. Still, it helps to prepare for conversation and be forthright about your own needs and boundaries. Even as you are comfortable widening your circle of support, you may find it best to seek time with a few trusted and accepting people.

Some valued people may simply be unavailable to you now, most likely because they are also grieving. You may feel like you'd like to be able to support fellow grievers, as was discussed in Chapter 6.

It also makes sense to pick your time and location, if possible. Certain times of the day are easier than others; some locations offer privacy, or peacefulness. They may or may not be associated with memories of your family member or close friend, and that can be a factor in your comfort.

Seek out a good listener, someone with a nonjudgmental personality and a compassionate heart. This is a person (or persons) who will listen with acceptance to your feelings and the story of your loss. How can you make the best use of your good listener? First, be honest. This is not the person you should say "I'm fine" to. If your good listener is accepting of your painful feelings and thoughts, by all means share them. Second, pay attention to your listener's good counsel. The good listener will not bother you with empty platitudes but might see healthy growth and change in your grief that you aren't noticing yet. Finally, be fair with time and boundaries. Even the best listener needs a break and cannot meet all your needs for time and attention. Be a good steward of your good listener, and you will find a rewarding and enduring friendship.

An important thing to remember is, even as you may be supporting other grievers in your family or friend group, it is not your job to process anyone else's grief. You can be kind, but you cannot do anyone's else's grief, just as they cannot do yours. Try not to "collect" the pain of others—it doesn't help anyone.

GRIEF PRACTICE IDEA TO TRY THIS WEEK: SHARING

Think about what you want to share with a good listener. You may find that what you felt comfortable sharing in the group might give you guidance about what you are ready to discuss. Identify someone new that you could seek out and share your grief experience with. This may be someone new, a coach, clergyperson, a counselor, or someone you have been sharing your feelings with all along. After your conversation, think about and journal what worked and didn't work in your discussion.

WAYS TO REMEMBER: SHARING YOUR MEMORIES OF THE PERSON WHO DIED

> ***"Do not cheat thy heart and tell her 'grief will pass away, hope for fairer times in the future, and forget today.' Tell her, if you will, that sorrow need not come in vain; tell her that the lesson taught her far outweighs the pain."***
>
> ***—Adelaide Ann Proctor***

There is no one “right” way to remember and commemorate family members and friends who have died. Many people feel comforted by following their family’s established traditions, and others find new ideas more appealing.

Often, memories resurface suddenly and can bring a flood of feelings and memories you might not feel prepared to address. The act of remembering and honoring requires focused attention and can be a very constructive, healing, and gratifying process. Intentional remembrance increases your mastery of your grief. These actions may be shared with others or cherished individually.

Here are some ideas that grieving people have found helpful to grieve with intentional remembrance:

- Commemorate the person who died
- Remember the person who died
- Affirm the legacy of the person who died
- Other healing rituals

These ways to grieve with intentional remembrance are described in detail below.

COMMEMORATE THE PERSON WHO DIED

1. To serve as a memorial or reminder of
2. To honor the memory of by some observance
3. To make honorable mention of a beloved or respected individual

Plant a tree or garden area, support a charity or cause you both value, preserve photographs and stories, display mementos, visit the gravesite, share possessions of the one who died with others. Consider making a playlist of songs that the person enjoyed or that remind you of them, creating a piece of artwork or music in their honor, gathering with friends and family, telling stories about the one who died to others who may not have been as closely acquainted—especially children in the family.

REMEMBER THE PERSON WHO DIED

1. To recall to the mind by an act or effort of memory; think again
2. To retain in the memory, keep in mind, remain aware of
3. To have something come into the mind again

Have formal or informal acknowledgment of anniversaries and important events. Light a candle in honor of the one who died, share stories and reminiscences, read a favorite poem or scripture that recalls the one who died, play music that you associate with the one who died, revisit photos and videos, arrange memorial prayers consistent with your spiritual practices, add a quiet time of appreciation in your meditation, journal your memories. Share with others as you desire.

AFFIRM THE LEGACY OF THE PERSON WHO DIED

1. Recall a gift or donation made by this person, traditions, or values
2. Anything handed down from the past, as from an ancestor or predecessor
3. Cherish the values and lessons you learned from this person.

Reflect on what your experience with the one who died has taught you and how your life has been affected by that life. Allow yourself to recall both happy and sad times, and both positive and negative aspects of the relationship. What have you taken away from this relationship? What of this person have you incorporated into your own life— personality, values, attitudes, behaviors? Reflect on your own personhood and the legacy you are leaving to those who know you and are influenced by your life. Memories will come, and the care taken to select remembrances that are comforting and supportive in your own grief is usually worth the effort. When we love someone, even if our thoughts and feelings are conflicted by the death, we can remember the person who died in ways that are not determined by the circumstances of the death.

OTHER HEALING RITUALS

Rituals can help to restore a sense of balance to life. They strengthen the bonds that connect family and friends and help us to express our feelings and beliefs. New traditions can be created that give comfort and nurture a sense of completion. Some things families have done to honor the memory of the deceased are:

- Sharing stories of the individual—both good and bad times
- Displaying photographs or keepsakes
- Having memorial prayers said at special times
- Lighting a memorial candle in the home on special occasions or when desired
- Visiting the gravesite
- Creating artwork and journal writing—two powerful ways of creating self-expression
- Writing a poem, or writing reminiscences or a life history
- Singing or playing a song
- Reading a favorite quotation, prayer, or blessing
- Sharing the family member's personal belongings with others
- Supporting a charity or activity that the one who died valued
- Returning to visit special places

SELF-CARE PRACTICE 7: MINDFUL REMEMBRANCE

Sit, alone or with a comforting friend.

When you are ready, begin by sensing your breath. Feel your breathing in the area of your chest. This can help you become present to what is within you. Take one hand and hold it gently on your heart as if you were holding a vulnerable child.

Breathe in slowly. Exhale slowly. Allow your hand to warm your chest and heart.

As you continue to breathe, bring to mind the person you are grieving. Let the story, the images, the feelings come naturally. Hold them gently. Take your time. Let the feelings come layer by layer, a little at a time.

Keep breathing softly, compassionately. Let whatever feelings are there, pain and tears, anger and love, fear and sorrow, come as they will. Touch them gently. Hold them in your hand as you touch your heart.

Let these thoughts and feelings float out of your body and mind. Make space for any memories that arise. Breathe in and hold it all with tenderness and compassion. Breathe out and let the feelings, thoughts and memories flow out gently; for it all, for you and for others.

The grief we carry is part of the grief of the world. Hold it gently. Let it be honored. You do not have to keep it in anymore. You hold it deep in your heart of compassion. You can release it into the heart of the world.

Holding and releasing the grief we carry can a long process. Trust it, trust the unfolding. Gift yourself with time. With patience. Today's breath is enough.

Let the timeless wisdom within you carry you through grief and awaken a tender, open heart.

Grief ebbs and flows in waves and gradually, with growing compassion, there comes more space around it.

In time, in time. The body relaxes. The mind calmly remembers. The heart renews itself.

A POEM FOR REFLECTION: EVERYTHING IS WAITING FOR YOU BY DAVID WHYTE

Your great mistake is to act the drama
as if you were alone. As if life
were a progressive and cunning crime
with no witness to the tiny hidden
transgressions. To feel abandoned is to deny
the intimacy of your surroundings. Surely,
even you, at times, have felt the grand array;
the swelling presence, and the chorus, crowding
out your solo voice You must note
the way the soap dish enables you,
or the window latch grants you freedom.
Alertness is the hidden discipline of familiarity.
The stairs are your mentor of things
to come, the doors have always been there
to frighten you and invite you,
and the tiny speaker in the phone
is your dream-ladder to divinity.
Put down the weight of your aloneness and ease into
the conversation. The kettle is singing
even as it pours you a drink, the cooking pots
have left their arrogant aloofness and
seen the good in you at last. All the birds
and creatures of the world are unutterably
themselves. Everything is waiting for you.

GRIEF PRACTICE IDEA TO TRY THIS WEEK: REFLECTING

Perhaps you have found ways to remember and share memories about the person who died. Reflect on your ways of remembering. Do you feel satisfied with how the memories were conveyed to others? Have you started a new tradition? Select one of the suggested ways of remembering and try it with intention and care.

THOUGHTS AND JOTS

(Use this page to write down any feelings, questions, or ideas that come up—anything you'd like to "jot down" after reading this chapter.)

WEEK 8: FINDING YOUR WAY

FOCUS ON THE FACILITATOR

GOALS FOR THIS SESSION

- To point out progress in each participant's grief journey; the group members as well as the facilitator should actively affirm the growth that has taken place, collectively and individually.
- To affirm and remember the past.
- To encourage participants to accept the value of this day; without minimizing the loss, to foster acceptance of the new reality.
- To bring hope and focus on the future.

The group closes with individual recollections of the deceased and shared reflections on the group. Reassure participants that their grief is not "done," and in fact, it will never be "done." Their hard work and support of each other is moving them toward growth, and they have likely benefited, despite their remaining sorrow. They have certainly helped each other.

Please assure participants that even though the group is ending, you remain available to support them. You may wish to have a list of additional resources in your community available for your group participants.

SUGGESTED GRIEF GROUP ACTIVITIES: TOKENS OF GRIEF AND FRIENDSHIP

This week's activities will focus on creating tokens of remembrance to honor their grief, as well as closing the group with through the creation of a group friendship bracelet.

CREATION OF CLAY TOKENS

- Invite them to begin softening the clay with their hands.
- As they soften the clay, invite them to consider their grief journey, particularly their time in the group.
- Let them know they can use the air-dry clay to create little reminders of the work they have done in the group.
- Creation of 4 Tokens:
  - One in honor of themselves,
  - Of their family,
  - Of a grief, and
  - Of a hope they'd like to carry forward after group.
- Have paper available if they want to brainstorm a design for their token

CLOSING: GROUP YARN ACTIVITY

Invite participants to share one thing that they hope to take with you from their group experience. Instruct them to share it with the group, then wrap the yarn around their wrist and pass the twine/yarn to the person on their left. When everyone has had a turn to share, cut the yarn between each participant and the yarn that was wrapped around their wrists can be tied off to create a group friendship bracelet.

A THOUGHT FOR YOU AS YOU CLOSE TONIGHT

> ***"Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief. Do justly, now. Love mercy, now. Walk humbly, now. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it."***
>
> ***—Talmud (attributed)***

CHAPTER 8: FINDING YOUR WAY

"Life was meant to be lived, and curiosity must be kept alive. One must never, for whatever reason, turn his back on life."

—Eleanor Roosevelt, The Autobiography of Eleanor Roosevelt

UNDERSTANDING AND ACCEPTING YOUR NEW LIFE

How are you doing? When you think back on how you began this group and your goals for participating, have you observed any growth in yourself? Are there any changes in how you are experiencing grief now? It's normal for group members to still feel stuck in some respects, and to feel like they are still circling some of the same grief territory. The purpose of this program is that you recognize that your grief is unique, yet an experience you share with many. We hope you feel supported. We hope you have gained some new skills and confidence for your grief journey.

We have suggested that a healthy grief process includes mindful, intentional grieving—times when the griever sits with the loss, reflects on the relationship in a realistic way, and determines how to remember the one who died. This process also includes times of planning for the future, focusing on new tasks and skills, but also how the relationship with the deceased will be carried into the new life. Finally, healthy grief requires setting aside grief sometimes and resting, replenishing, and rediscovering pleasures and other relationships.

Where do you want to be in your grief now? Where do you think you should be? As people journey through grief and attain a sense of healing, William Worden (2009) reminds us that several transitions take place:

- The grieving person is able to imagine life without the deceased.
- The grieving person experiences the change from imbalance to balance.
- The grieving person is able to reinvest the love and care into new relationships and ideas.
- The grieving person experiences a continuing bond with the one who died and carries the realistic memory of the deceased into life.

Grief involves a slow transition from merely surviving to a sense of progress toward peace.

You cannot hurry healing, and you will spiral over the same thoughts and feelings for some time, especially with anger, doubt, and loneliness.

Hope is an essential part of living. Hope does not depend on a particular belief, but one's faith or a sense of spiritual well-being can foster hope. It is important to support yourself spiritually, whether through religious practices and observances, time in reflection and meditation, counsel from a spiritual mentor, or solitary time enjoying nature.

Hope exists and gives value to the process of living, not just the achievements of life. This calls us to value the journey as much as the destination.

IS THERE SUCH A THING AS THE "NEW-NORMAL" LIFE?

There is no finish line in grief. We hope that participating in this grief support program has given you a sense of what you have lost, where you are now, and where you hope to journey toward. We hope we have affirmed your progress toward an integrated grief, a grief in which the reality and meaning of the death are gradually understood and you are able to participate once again in pleasurable and satisfying relationships and activities, while maintaining a continuing relationship with the one who died. As an individual's grief becomes more integrated, they are more easily able to engage in other activities without grief constantly demanding their attention. However, there may be periods when the acute grief re-emerges, this is common and does not reflect a failure or malfunction of the grieving process. This can occur around the time of significant events, such as holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, another loss, or a particularly stressful time.

Just as we can emerge from the dread of loss that engulfs us, so we can find our way out of emptiness and despair. The term new normal is unsatisfying, because life may never feel fully "normal" in the same way again but must certainly proceed in a different way. For most people, this requires a combination of time, compassionate support, new coping skills and courage. Allow yourself the time to recover from this emotional turmoil. Seek out the company of those who will listen to your story of grief with an open heart. Give yourself the freedom to face a new day under changed circumstances—not the circumstances you would have chosen, to be sure, but the conditions of the life ahead. And take a moment to reflect again on what is working during this time of grief that you are traveling through. You need not forget the past, you cannot avoid the future, but you can choose to allow yourself to live in the day you are in.

SELF-CARE PRACTICE 8: LOVING KINDNESS MEDITATION

Close your eyes. Sit comfortably with your feet flat on the floor and your spine straight. Relax your whole body. Keep your eyes closed throughout the whole visualization and bring your awareness inward. Without straining or concentrating, just relax and gently follow the instructions. Take a deep breath in. And breathe out.

RECEIVING LOVING KINDNESS

- Keeping your eyes closed, think of a person close to you who loves you very much.
- It could be someone from the past or the present, someone still in life or who has died.

- Imagine that person standing on your right side, sending you their love.
- That person is sending you wishes for your safety, for your well-being and happiness.
- Feel the warm wishes and love coming from that person toward you.
- Now bring to mind the same person or another person who cherishes you deeply.
- Imagine that person standing on your left side, sending you wishes for your wellness, for your health and happiness.
- Feel the kindness and warmth coming to you from that person.
- Now imagine that you are surrounded on all sides by all the people who love you and have loved you.
- Picture all of your friends and loved ones surrounding you.
- They are sending you wishes for your happiness, well-being, and health.
- Bask in the warm wishes and love coming from all sides.
- You are filled and overflowing with warmth and love.

SENDING LOVING KINDNESS TO OTHERS

- Now bring your awareness back to the person sitting on your right side.
- Begin to send the love that you feel back to that person.
- You and this person are similar. Just like you, this person wishes to be happy.
- Send all your love and warm wishes to that person.
- Repeat the following phrase three times silently:
  - May you live with ease, may you be happy, may you be free from pain.
- Now focus your awareness on the person standing on your left side.
- Begin to direct the love within you to that person.
- Send all your love and warmth to that person.
- That person and you are very much alike. Just like you, that person wishes to have a good life.
- Repeat the following phrase three times silently:
  - Just as I wish to, may you be safe, may you be healthy, may you live with ease and happiness.

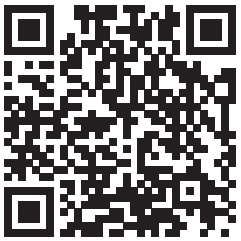
SENDING LOVING KINDNESS TO PEOPLE WHO DO NOT UNDERSTAND YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES

- Now think of an acquaintance, someone you don't know very well and toward whom you do not have any particular feeling.
- You and this person are alike in your wish to have a good life.

- Send all your wishes for well-being to that person, repeating the following phrase three times silently:
  - Just as I wish to, may you also live with ease and happiness.
- Now bring to mind another acquaintance toward whom you feel neutral.
  - It could be a neighbor, another student, or someone else that you see around but do not know very well.
- Like you, this person wishes to experience joy and well-being in their life.
- Send all your good wishes to that person, repeating the following phrase three times silently:
  - May you be happy, may you be healthy, may you be free from all pain.

SENDING LOVING KINDNESS TO ALL LIVING BEINGS

- Now expand your awareness and picture the whole earth in front of you as a little ball.
- Send warm wishes to all living beings on the earth who, like you, want to be happy, repeating the following phrase three times silently:
  - Just as I wish to, may you live with ease, happiness, and good health.
- Take a deep breath in. And breathe out.
- And another deep breath in and let it go.
- Notice the state of your mind and how you feel after this meditation.
- When you're ready, you may open your eyes.



A POEM FOR REFLECTION: ENOUGH BY DAVID WHYTE

Enough. These few words are enough.
If not these words, this breath.
If not this breath, this sitting here.

This opening to life
we have refused
again and again
until now.

Until now.

GRIEF PRACTICE IDEA TO TRY THIS WEEK: WALKING MEDITATION

Imagine your life 6 months from now, a year from now. Reflect and perhaps write down your hopes for your life at that time. What goals do you have for the things you would like to be doing? What thoughts or feelings do you hope you will have? How will you want to look back on these days?

WALKING MEDITATION—WALKING INTO LIFE

We have discussed integrating the full experience of grief—body, emotions, thoughts, spirit. One helpful mediation that engages this holism is walking meditation. With practice, we can bring this integration into our restored life. You may do this alone, or with a companion. For more resources visit mindful.org (https://mindful.org) or use the QR code below.

Before you begin your meditation, find a quiet space to walk. It could be outdoors, in a hallway, or even a large room, walking back and forth.

Walking meditation can be a formal practice, like focusing on the breath. Or it can be informal, bringing awareness to this everyday activity whenever you need to travel from Point A to Point B. Walking meditation gives us an opportunity to gather our awareness, which so often becomes distracted or even stuck when the mind is left to its own devices. Whether moving between floors of a building, on a city street, or in the woods, it is an opportunity to guide ourselves out of the distracted autopilot mode we live in throughout so much of our day.

Paying attention in this way, we stay safe by remaining fully aware of whatever is around. On any walk, hike, run, or other physical activity, without effort we may mentally "check out"—or we can practice this satisfying awareness instead.

HOW TO DO IT

1. As you begin, walk at a natural pace.
    a. Place your hands wherever comfortable: on your belly, behind your back, or at your sides.
    b. If you find it useful, you can count steps up to 10, and then start back at 1 again.
        i. If you're in a small space, as you reach 10, pause, and with intention, choose a moment to turn around.
    c. With each step, pay attention to the lifting and falling of your foot.
        i. Notice movement in your legs and the rest of your body.
        ii. Notice any shifting of your body from side to side.

    d. Whatever else captures your attention, come back to the sensation of walking.

        i. Your mind will wander, so without frustration, guide it back again as many times as you need.

    e. Particularly outdoors, maintain a larger sense of the environment around you, taking it all in, staying safe and aware.

2. Now, for a few minutes, expand your attention to sounds.

    a. Whether you're indoors, in the woods, or in the city, pay attention to sounds without labeling or naming them, or getting caught up in whether you find them pleasant or unpleasant.

    b. Notice sounds as nothing more or less than sounds.

3. Shift your awareness to your sense of smell.

    a. Again, simply notice.

    b. Don't push or force yourself to feel anything at all; just bring attention to the sense of smell, whatever you discover.

4. Now, move to vision: colors and objects and whatever else you see.

    a. Patiently coming back each time something grabs your attention, or even if something needs addressing, like avoiding an obstacle.

    b. Staying natural, not overly rigid, not daydreaming and drifting, but with sustained awareness.

5. Keep this open awareness of everything around you, wherever you are.

    a. Nothing to do, nothing to fix, nothing to change.

    b. Fully aware, and walking.

6. In the last moments, come back to awareness of the physical sensations of walking, wherever else your mind found itself throughout the practice.

    a. Notice again your feet touching the ground.

    b. Notice again the movements in your body with each step.

7. When you're ready to end your walking meditation, stand still for a moment again.

    a. Pausing, choose a moment to end the practice.

    b. As you finish, consider how you might bring this kind of awareness into the rest of your day.

THOUGHTS AND JOTS

(Use this page to write down any feelings, questions, or ideas that come up—anything you'd like to "jot down" after reading this chapter.)

PART 1: CONCLUSION

HOW TO KNOW IF YOU NEED MORE SUPPORT

Grief support groups are helpful for most people, but some grieving people need additional support. We discussed the differences between grief and depression earlier, and whether it might be useful to set up an appointment with a clinician about additional counseling or perhaps medication. Individual counseling is often a wonderful complement to grief support groups and can add energy and momentum to the grief journey.

If, after participating in this group, you find yourself experiencing any of these thoughts or feelings:

- Excessive anger about the death
- Feeling numb or detached from emotional experience
- Feeling that life has no meaning
- Feelings of profound insecurity
- Searching for, yearning for, or intrusive thoughts of the person who died
- Experiencing the medical symptoms or behaviors of the one who died

Or, if you find yourself:

- Being active to the point of exhaustion
- Using alcohol or other drugs to avoid grief
- Struggling with unrealistic promises made to the deceased
- Avoiding grief from a previous loss
- Acting resentful toward those who try to help

We recommend you discuss this with your group facilitator, who can assist in directing you to additional support.

Your group will close with a reflection and sharing activity. Because grieving people often do not observe their own growth and change, listen to the feedback, support, and suggestions of your group peers and of your group facilitator to allow your grief journey to continue as the group concludes.

> ***"She was no longer wrestling with the grief, but could sit down with it as a lasting companion and make it a sharer in her thoughts."***
>
> ***—George Eliot, Middlemarch***

Thank you for participating in this grief support group. We hope you have obtained guidance in the group, experienced your deceased family member or friend thoughtfully, remembered and felt your grief honored. We welcome your ideas and suggestions, and will help in any way we can. The following chapters have additional information and resources.

KINTSUGI

Kintsugi is a Japanese form of art that symbolizes healing and beauty. The word kintsugi translates to “joined with gold” and as an art form, involves piecing together broken pottery with gold to transform it into a singularly beautiful object.

Kintsugi is derived from a deeper Japanese philosophy that sees imperfections and “brokenness” as inherently beautiful. As applied in kintsugi—the original object was beautiful, but through gradual and intentional growth and repair as symbolized by the inlay of gold into the cracks, the transformed object takes on a new beauty that is unique.

Grief necessarily brings a brokenness and things that were once assured are now changed forever. Through gradual and intentional growth in grieving, the griever is transformed into a different, but beautiful person.

What is the gold that fills the griever’s “cracks…?” The tender, yet healing wounds? Memories? Compassion? Deeper or new relationships? Permanence of the person who died forever held in one’s heart?

PART TWO: OTHER RESOURCES

CHAPTER 9: SUDDEN DEATH/ ANTICIPATED DEATH

> ***"Courage, it would seem, is nothing less than the power to overcome danger, misfortune, fear, injustice, while continuing to affirm inwardly that life with all its sorrows is good; that everything is meaningful even if, in a sense beyond our understanding; and that there is always tomorrow."***
>
> ***—Dorothy Thompson***

In this chapter, we describe some of the common differences between grief following sudden death and grief that may have been anticipated, such as a death of someone who has been ill for some time. The term sudden death refers to death that occurred over a very brief interval, minutes to hours to days, and usually, to death that was unexpected. These are very general concepts, however. One could easily imagine death in a person having a longstanding chronic illness who was overcome suddenly by an acute illness. Similarly, another person may sustain a sudden medical event or life-ending accident, survive for hours to days, allowing family the opportunity to prepare and say "good-bye," and then die. The grief experience is truly set in the context and perception of the griever: One person may experience the death of a close other as proceeding slowly, another may view death after long illness as a surprising event.

In most cases, death that is anticipated is death that can be prepared for. This, in large part, is through palliative care and hospice care. In an expected dying process, the dying person's goals and wishes can be addressed, symptoms can be managed, and the opportunities for farewells offered. Hospice care is as much for the surviving family and friends as for the patient. It can make a big difference when family and friends are supported, educated, and allowed to participate in care in meaningful ways.

There is evidence to suggest that people cope with death better in settings that are both calm and predictable and allow them to prepare for the death. This in no way suggests that the magnitude of the loss is any less in anticipated death, but rather that grieving persons have many of the "what" questions addressed early on, though, of course, the difficult "why" questions remain.

Most people experience sudden death as a traumatic shock. Few people prepare for a life-ending event such as a motor vehicle accident, drowning, cardiac event, or stroke. Fewer still anticipate death by overdose death, suicide, or homicide. Many factors affect how people cope with sudden loss, including the nature of the relationship with the person who died (ex: if the person was a close family member or friend), the nature of the death—or deaths, if there were multiple deaths—and if the surviving family member or friend witnessed the event.

The tragedy of losing someone to sudden death is further complicated by unanswered questions about the circumstances and cause of the death, if others were involved, and the experience of suffering in the death. If there is uncertainty about the nature of the death, it may lead to assigning blame, and feelings of shame, guilt, anger, and doubt.

It is unfair to characterize one type of death as better or worse than another, or one grief experience as easier or harder than another. Instead, it is helpful to recognize the differences between grief in sudden death and grief in anticipated death, remembering that each loss deserves care and understanding.

CHAPTER 10: HELPING YOUNGER SIBLINGS UNDERSTAND DEATH

It is challenging to discuss death with children—we naturally want to shield children from pain. Even as we recognize that children are preparing for life, we must recognize that they are also living in life now. Grief touches them and affects them.

Yet, children do grieve differently than adults. Supporting children of all ages requires sensitivity, tenderness, and a respect for each child's personality. Here are some suggestions to help children understand death and what it means:

- Use simple words to tell that the death has happened.
  - "When someone dies, it means their body no longer works. Their heart stops working and they can't breathe anymore."
  - "None of the parts of the body work. They can't hear, see, smell, talk, or move."
- Avoid words like "left us," "gone away," or "passed on."
  - The child may think the person is on a trip and will return.
  - Do not hold out any false hope for return.
- Avoid describing death as "going to sleep."
  - Many young children become fearful of sleeping, night, or bedtime if they hear this expression as an explanation of death.
- If you are in the position to talk about how the death happened, use the medical terms—cancer, heart attack, etc.—to help differentiate between everyday sickness and diseases that cause death.
- Reassure them that all their feelings are normal.
  - Encourage the child to express their thoughts through words, drawings, and play.
  - Let the child know that you have these feelings too, and that people who are grieving the same loss often react very differently.
- Give information about who will take care of them.
  - Children have three basic questions:
    1. Did I cause this illness or death to happen?
    2. Will this eventually happen to me?
    3. Who will take care of me now?
- Help kids understand that they are not all powerful.
  - If they say, "I wish you were dead," assure them it isn't going to come true.
- Try to help them maintain their routine at home.

    - It helps when they feel secure in their routine at home and at school.
- Don't hide your tears.
    - Let them know this is a sad time and it's perfectly normal to cry.
- Help them understand that things will get better.
- You may be surprised that children may grieve one minute and comfortably play in the next minute.

Think of how this might differ, or be similar, to your own experience and needs while you are grieving. Perhaps you would prefer a balance between having a supportive person nearby and needing some privacy at times. Maybe you feel like you need to "be strong" for others in your family or need to "be an adult" and take on new responsibilities. Remember that it is important to check in with others—family and friends—about what you are feeling, and if you might need a different kind of support in that moment.

Adolescents and young adults experience the death of a close person in ways often different from adults. No longer children, and not yet adults, teens require a balance of supportive presence and respect for privacy that can be challenging for caring adults to navigate. "Being available to listen without judgment, when I need it" is the request most often heard from grieving teens. As younger children do, teens "take a break" from grief, and this can lead adults to think their teens are "just fine." Frequent revisits to the feelings and thoughts teens are having are necessary. In the case of a death in the family, parents may be grieving themselves and have less time and energy to devote to the needs of their teen and young-adult children. Teens, perhaps more than children of other ages, may feel the need to be strong for their parents. In the case of the death of a parent, teens are often told that they must now "be an adult," and may be pushed to accept responsibility beyond their natural, developmental abilities.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHILDREN

NEWBORN TO AGE 3

- Can sense changes in routine
- Perceive excitement at home, sadness or anxiety, the presence of new people
- Notice parents being gone at odd times
- Notice that a significant person in their life is missing
- Notice changes in behavior (i.e., crankiness, altered sleep patterns, change in eating habits); if you notice these changes, you can respond more sensitively to their needs

AGES 3 TO 6

- Think death is reversible: People will come back from death
- Draw conclusions that may not be accurate

- Wonder:
  - Does this mean someone else is going to die? (e.g., "Grandpa died from a headache; Mommy has headaches too" or "Old people die—Daddy is old—Will Daddy die too?")
  - May feel responsible for the death; correct any misconceptions the child may have
- Explain that crying, feeling bad, and feeling angry are all normal.

AGES 6 TO 9

- Most understand that death is final, but some might still believe that the dead person will come back
- Need a more detailed explanation; explain the difference between a fatal illness and just being sick ("It's not like when you get a stomach ache or a cold.")
- Fears of losing a parent may be intensified when a single parent is raising the child
- May also fear that death will come and take them; may not want to go into a house where someone has died
- Reassure that the emotions they are feeling are normal by sharing how you are feeling
- Reassure that their thoughts or actions did not cause the death.

AGES 9 TO 12

- More aware that death is final; also aware of the impact of death on family security and finances
- Think of death as punishment for bad behavior; may have guilt feelings for avoiding doing things for or with the person who died
- Interested in the biological details of what happened
- Sharing your thoughts and feelings in age-appropriate ways may help children open up about what they are experiencing.

For many, the grieving process includes intense feelings of anger, guilt, and shame. The very senselessness of overdose death makes survivors perplexed and filled with doubt. Surviving family members or friends who had been caring for or financially supporting a person with addiction or persistent mental illness who dies by overdose might feel relieved that their responsibility has ended, and subsequently feel guilty for feeling relief. Survivors may experience some or all of these complicated thoughts and emotions, and great care is needed to address them.

CHAPTER 11: GRIEF IN THE HOLIDAYS

The holidays are expected to be a time of joy and laughter, sparkle and glitter, sharing and gift giving. But when you are grieving, the holidays may seem inappropriate, jarring, and painful.

The holidays are a time of remembrance of past celebrations, of present get-togethers, and of future opportunities to break away from everyday stress. But this year, the holidays may be a time of mixed emotions, feelings of being overwhelmed, and the pain of loves lost.

As the holidays approach, think about how you take care of yourself during this vulnerable time.

HELPFUL HINTS FOR MANAGING HOLIDAYS

ACKNOWLEDGE GRIEF WORK AS REAL WORK

Accommodate your plans to your new limits: Most grieving people have significantly lowered physical and emotional energy. Perhaps you don't feel like you can get into the "holiday spirit" this year. Accept these limits as temporary. Choose to put your energy into the things that matter most to you.

Adjustment to the death of someone close to you does not simply come with time. The work of grief demands that you deal with all of the feelings that come with loss. This work takes emotional and physical energy that can leave you unable to deal with the extra demands of the holiday season.

PLAN AHEAD

The first step in planning is to listen to yourself: What will help you most at this time? You may have strong memories and powerful feelings. Accept this as normal but prepare for it. If there are activities or events that you are worried about, talk to a parent or caregiver about your concerns. Maybe you can make a new plan for this year. If you expect to be lonely, see if you can make plans with a friend or set aside some time to talk.

It might be a good idea to sit down with your family and friends ahead of time to discuss and decide on those activities, experiences, and people that make the holidays special for you.

It's okay to decide to do a few special things with a few special people, not everything with everybody.

ACCEPT THAT THE HOLIDAYS WILL BE DIFFERENT THIS YEAR

The holidays are often filled with unrealistic expectations that may overwhelm you. You may need to revisit your goals and find a balance between how you "have always done things" and the changes that have come with this loss. Many people find a special comfort in establishing a new holiday tradition that honors the memory of the person who died.

Avoid expectations of perfection during the holidays. Let some things slide. Maybe you won't have a big holiday party this year, but you can still make time for some activities you enjoy and find restorative – like watching a holiday film or baking cookies with a close friend. It's okay to lean on others, even during the holiday season.

You do not have to do it all yourself throughout this time.

SET LIMITS

Tell your family, friends, and yourself now and continue to remind them that you are in stress-reduction mode this holiday season.

Of course, sometimes your boundaries will not be honored by others—remember that other people can have a hard time understanding where we are at or how to support us in our grief. Think about some self-care activities you can make time for if you are feeling stressed or overwhelmed.

CHANGE "SHOULDS" TO "WANTS"

Be aware of your own statements to yourself. Are you saying, "I should do this or that?"

Decide which of your "shoulds" you really want to do and make those your priorities. Remember: You need not "should" yourself; there are enough other people doing that already.

STRIVE FOR A BALANCED LIFESTYLE

With all of the parties and demands of the holidays, it is difficult for anyone to get enough rest and exercise. It is easy to overindulge and overdo.

Set exercise as a priority: It is an antidote to depression.

Practice mindfulness and self-care techniques: They can be an antidote to stress.

RECOGNIZE THAT OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS OR FRIENDS MAY HAVE STRUGGLES, TOO

Look for opportunities to discuss your feelings and wishes with others who may also be grieving this person. Try to respect their choices if they are different from yours. You all may need to make compromises.

TELL OTHERS CLEARLY WHAT YOU WANT AND NEED FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Do not be shy or embarrassed to let others know what you want from them in terms of emotional support, help, or sharing.

Unknown expectations generally go unfulfilled and lead to disappointment and bad feelings.

HONOR THE OLD, CREATE THE NEW

If this is the first holiday time without your family member or friend, include intentional remembrances of the person who died to the extent that you are comfortable; the memory of him or her will be with you this holiday season no matter what you do.

Consider giving gifts in acknowledgment of this person; consider giving love to others in honor of the love you had and of the love you have received.

BE GENEROUS WITH YOURSELF

The holidays are a time of real and symbolic gift giving. What are you giving yourself this season?

When the new year rolls in, what will be your answer to the question, “What supportive and caring thing did I do for myself this holiday season?”

CELEBRATE LIFE

It can seem impossible for someone in grief to find joy and peace at any time, but especially during the season of joy and peace.

Life is worth living only to the extent that we make it so. Surviving grief means more than merely surviving: It means fully living once again.

CHAPTER 12: UNIQUE LOSSES (FACILITATOR MANUAL)

Every loss by death is unique and is uniquely experienced by those who survive. Yet, there are some commonalities in certain types of loss. While the words that follow are generalizations and may not apply to your circumstances or experience, it may be helpful to learn what many people have reported in the losses described in the pages that follow.

LOSS OF A PARENT

When a child loses a parent, it may feel like they have lost their fundamental support person, like they no longer have the same level of emotional and physical security, and stability. The child's identity is forever transformed by this loss. We have addressed the unique developmental needs of children in Chapter 10. In the case of parent loss, children will need additional support to supplement the care that would have been provided by the deceased parent. Other family members, friends, and teachers become essential elements of grief support for a child following the death of a parent.

When an adult child loses a parent, part of the connection to their own history is lost. Regardless of the nature of the relationship between parent and child, the attachment to a primary shaping force is severed. When a loving and healthy parent–child relationship ends in the death of a parent, the adult child loses the unconditional regard and esteem the parent invested in the now-grown self. In fractured or tenuous parent–child relationships, unfinished business may be prominent and the grieving child struggles with "what might have been," often needing to accept that the necessary parental support will now never come. Adult children frequently must attend to the emotional and physical support of the surviving parent, the needs and varying grief reactions of siblings, and the support of their own children as they grieve the loss of a grandparent.

LOSS OF A SIBLING

The particular challenge of sibling grief is that it tends to be minimized in our society. You may notice that society tends to emphasize other kinds of grief more freely—such as a parent who has lost a child, rather than discussing how difficult it is to lose a sibling. This is tragic, as the sibling bond is the longest attachment of life; the relationship with our parents is likely to end in our middle age, and relationships with our future spouse or partner, and our potential children and grandchildren, will not begin until adulthood. The sibling bond is our only relationship, excepting childhood friendship, that can possibly span our entire lifetime.

When a brother or sister dies, the sudden reality of a death may be too much for the family to accept all at once, and it may feel like the griever's needs are being overshadowed by the needs of others in the family. They may also feel like they aren't able to really share how they feel with their overburdened family, which in turn can lead to feelings of frustration and abandonment.

Siblings have different needs in grief. The griever might experience a loss of identity, as it's very likely that their own idea of themselves is closely intertwined with the sibling they lost. They may be

coping not only with the loss of your sibling, but also with the loss of functional parents and of the routines and structures that existed in their home.

Here are some tips for parents or others that may be caring for children and teens after a loss:

- Accept your child(ren)'s feelings. Allow them to grieve in their own way and encourage the expression of feelings.
- Work on your own grief. Express any sadness, anger, and frustration. Parents and children may be drawn together by sharing each other's grief.
- Spend time regularly with each child. This will offer assurance that they are loved. Show them that they are as important as the lost sibling is.
- Help the surviving children find healthy ways to remember the deceased child. In age-appropriate ways, have the siblings write down memories in a journal, organize photos in a special album, and/or draw pictures of memories and shared activities.
- Each child needs individual acceptance and time to experience grief in their own way.
- Take special care with changes in the deceased child's room and with their possessions, involving siblings in discussion and decisions.

LOSS BY SUICIDE

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) WISQARS Leading Causes of Death Reports, in 2020; Suicide was the twelfth leading cause of death overall in the United States, claiming the lives of over 45,900 people. Suicide was the second leading cause of death among individuals between the ages of 10-14 and 25-34, the third leading cause of death among individuals between the ages of 15-24, and the fourth leading cause of death among individuals between the ages of 35 and 44.

For every completed suicide, 135 persons—family members or friends—are impacted (Cerel et al., 2018). By way of clarification, family and close friends of people who have died by suicide are referred to as suicide-loss survivors. Language matters, and we support efforts to refer to "death by suicide", "died by suicide" and "suicide."

The grief that suicide survivors experience is unique. For most survivors of suicide, the grieving process includes intense feelings of anger, guilt, and shame. The very senselessness of suicide makes survivors perplexed and filled with doubt. Surviving family members or friends who had been caring for or financially supporting a person with serious mental health issues who dies by suicide might feel relieved that their responsibility has ended, and subsequently feel guilty for feeling relief. Loss survivors may experience some or all of these complicated thoughts and emotions, and great care is needed to address them.

The death of someone close to suicide can create distance between the loss survivors and those who would have been supportive in other forms of loss. Acquaintances "don't know what to say" and their discomfort in a situation without social norms can lead to withdrawal when support is most needed. Similarly, loss survivors may feel disenfranchised and shamed by this loss, and avoid seeking support.

Friends and family struggle to make sense of the act of suicide in someone dearly loved. Experts in suicide and suicide survivorship caution that loss survivors may never be able to fully understand the event. Edwin Schneidman, a psychologist who participated in pioneering work in suicide

prevention and survivorship, described the suicidal person as having a "perturbed mind," so unsettled that death is perceived as the only solution to life's distresses.

FOR SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE

From *Beyond Surviving* by Jinny Tisek, MA:

It's okay to grieve.

The death of a 'loved one' is a reluctant and drastic amputation, without any anesthesia. The pain cannot be described, and no scale can measure the loss. We despise the truth that the death cannot be reversed, and our dear one returned. Such hurt!! It's okay to grieve.

It's okay to cry.

Tears release the flood of sorrow, of missing and of love. Tears relieve the brute force of hurting, enabling us to 'level off' and continue our cruise along the stream of life. It's okay to cry.

It's okay to heal.

We do not need to 'prove' we loved him or her. As the months pass, we are slowly able to move around with less outward grieving each day. We need not feel 'guilty,' for this is not an indication that we love less. It means that, although we don't like it, we are learning to accept death. It's a healthy sign of healing. It's okay to heal.

It's okay to laugh.

Laughter is not a sign of 'less' grief. Laughter is not a sign of 'less' love. It's a sign that many of our thoughts and memories are happy ones. It's a sign that we know our dear one would have us laugh again. It's okay to laugh.

> ***"Remember, no one is the sole influence in another's life."***
>
> ***—Iris Bolton***

SUGGESTIONS FOR SURVIVORS

From *Beyond Surviving: Suggestions for Survivors* by Iris Bolton:

1. Know you can survive. You may not think so, but you can.
2. Struggle with "why" it happened until you no longer need to know "why" or until you are satisfied with partial answers.
3. Know you may feel overwhelmed by the intensity of your feelings but all your feelings are normal.
4. Anger, guilt, confusion, forgetfulness are common responses. You are not crazy; you are in mourning.
5. Be aware you may feel appropriate anger at the person, at the world, at God, at yourself. It's okay to express it.
6. You may feel guilty for what you think you did or did not do. Guilt can turn into regret, through forgiveness.

7. Having thoughts of death is common. It does not mean that you will act on those thoughts.
8. Remember to take one moment or one day at a time.
9. Find a good listener with whom to share. Call someone if you need to talk.
10. Don't be afraid to cry. Tears are healing.
11. Give yourself time to heal.
12. Remember, the choice was not yours. No one is the sole influence in another's life.
13. Expect setbacks. If emotions return like a tidal wave, you may only be experiencing a remnant of grief, an unfinished piece.
14. Try to put off major decisions.
15. Give yourself permission to get professional help.
16. Be aware of the pain of your family and friends.
17. Be patient with yourself and others who may not understand.
18. Set your own limits and learn to say no.
19. Steer clear of people who want to tell you what or how to feel.
20. Know that there are support groups that can be helpful, such as Compassionate Friends or Survivors of Suicide groups. If not, ask a professional to start one.
21. Call on your personal faith to help you through.
22. It is common to experience physical reactions to your grief, e.g., headaches, loss of appetite, and an inability to sleep.
23. The willingness to laugh with others and at yourself is healing.
24. Talk out your questions, anger, guilt, or other feelings until you can let them go. Letting go doesn't mean forgetting.
25. Know that you will never be the same again, but you can survive and even go beyond just surviving.

SPECIAL RESOURCES FOR SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE

- The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (https://afsp.org/find-support/ive-lost-someone/resources-loss-survivors/) provides excellent educational resources.
- The National Alliance on Mental Illness (www.nami.org) supports and educates those whose lives have been affected by mental illness.
- Alliance of Hope (https://allianceofhope.org/) is a supportive website for survivors.

LOSS BY DRUG OVERDOSE

Nearly 125,000 people in the United States died from opioid overdose in 2022,. This tragic surge arose from the adulteration of illicit drugs with highly potent fentanyl, and the stressors associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Death by overdose may be caused by a one-time overuse event, an accidental combination of legally prescribed medications and/or alcohol, or may be the culmination of a long pattern of problematic substance use.

Preliminary medical examiner data for 2022 indicates 531 Utahns died from drug overdoses. This represents a 9% decrease from 2021 (585) to 2022 (531).

The crude rate per 100,000 in 2022 decreased compared with 2021 (17.5 to 15.6, respectively. Continued prevention and treatment efforts are especially important as Utah reached the highest number of overdoses recorded in a single year in 2021. There were 394 fatal overdoses involving an opioid in 2022. This count represents a 5.5% de-crease in fatal overdoses involving an opioid compared with 2021. The crude rate of opioid-involved fatal overdoses is 11.6 per 100,000, which is consistent with the previous four years. In 2022, 73% of fatal drug overdose deaths involved more than one drug, highlighting the need to expand prevention efforts beyond opioids.

Consistent with bereavement impact on those affected by suicide death, we approximate 25 affected survivors for each death by opioid overdose. This type of death and the resulting grief are fraught with pain and uncertainty, guilt and shame. Families bereaved by drug-overdose death face social stigma and many of the personal doubts that survivors of suicide must address and frequently lack support from family, friends, and the community. If the person who died had a long struggle with addiction disorder, surviving family members may feel bitterness at failed substance and mental health treatment and bitterness toward the criminal-justice system. Society conveys the message that the one who died was in some way a failure, and therefore, the person who died may have a devalued life. Addiction is a powerful and little-understood situation. Avoid blaming the one who died and avoid self-blame, if and when it is possible.

Friends and family members struggle to make sense of the overdose death in someone dearly loved. Given the lethality of illicit drugs adulterated with fentanyl, it can be difficult to distinguish between intentional overdose, death that occurs at a singular relapse event, or accidental overdose. Experts in bereavement caution that those who have lost someone to overdose death may never fully understand the circumstances of the final event. For many, the grieving process includes intense feelings of anger, guilt, and shame. The very senselessness of overdose death makes survivors perplexed and filled with doubt. Surviving family members or friends who had been caring for or financially supporting a person with addiction or persistent mental illness who dies by overdose might feel relieved that their responsibility has ended, and subsequently feel guilty for feeling relief. Survivors may experience some or all of these complicated thoughts and emotions, and great care is needed to address them.

SPECIAL RESOURCES FOR THOSE GRIEVING AN OVERDOSE DEATH

- Grief Recovery After a Substance Passing (GRASP) (http://grasphelp.org/) was formed by parents who lost an adult child to drug overdose to assist other families coping with overdose grief.

LOSS BY HOMICIDE

According to the CDC, over 26,000 persons were victims of criminal homicide in the United States every year.

Those surviving the loss of someone close to them by homicide are initially met with traumatic crisis; they experience initial shock, turmoil, and numbness followed by elements of grief unique to death by homicide. The survivors face a stressful notification process, a possible need to identify the body, immediate role changes, unpredictable reactions from friends and family members, dealings with the criminal-justice system and legal counsel, and potential interactions with the media.

Several factors can affect the ability of survivors to cope with the homicide of a family member or friend. These include the relationship of the survivor to the murder victim; the survivor's experience of personal vulnerability, anxiety, and compromised safety; the nature and circumstances of the murder, including whether the survivor witnessed the event; and the relationship of the survivors to the murderer.

Becoming involved with a victim-advocate organization is essential for survivors. Victim advocates can explore legal guidance and financial support on your behalf. In addition, connection with others who have had this experience can be provided. Those who have survived this trauma are frequently the most comforting source of support the survivors can receive. They have felt similar grief, intense anger, overwhelming loss, and have faced the unanswered question raised by what appears to be senseless violence.

CHAPTER 13: SOME TIPS FOR A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

Insomnia and sleep difficulties are common but distressing aspects of grief. It is difficult to do the hard work of grieving when your energy and stamina are depleted. If sleep is challenging, try to find time for rest breaks during the day while your ability to sleep readjusts.

If you are struggling with life issues, are anxious, cannot fall asleep, or wake with worrisome thoughts, your sleeplessness may be part of the grief or it may be a symptom of depression or anxiety. We expect sleeplessness with grieving, especially new grief, but if your sleep loss is impairing your ability to manage in your daily life, you never achieve restorative sleep, and you cannot obtain sufficient rest with naps, it is advisable to confer with a physician to get an accurate diagnosis and perhaps short-term medication.

If you had been worried about the person who died before the death, you may be experiencing "nighttime vigilance" and have gotten in the habit of remaining somewhat alert during sleep. If this is the case, expect your recovery of normal sleep to be delayed.

TRY TO REMEMBER WHAT WORKED WHEN YOU WERE SLEEPING WELL

You are experiencing grief, but are there other issues keeping you awake? Health changes, school worries, changes with friends? Address those issues first. If your previous sleep routine was working, try to get back on that schedule.

MAKING A COMFORTABLE SLEEP ENVIRONMENT

It may be helpful to have a parent or guardian help you make some of these changes:

- Do a mattress check.
  - An old, saggy mattress works against you.
- Do a temperature check.
  - Do you prefer a cool, warm, or combination room?
  - Watch out for electric blankets; they'll get you cozy at the start of sleep but wake many people in the middle of the night.
    - Use the electric blanket to warm up the bed and then switch it off before you fall asleep.
- Do a lighting check.
  - Most people experience semi-vigilance if there is light in the room.
  - Consider a self-dimming light in the bathroom.
  - If you have a lit clock face, consider turning the face away from the bedside.
- Do a noise check.
  - Most people acclimate to normal sounds, but if you find yourself waking to noise, consider sound barriers or a white-noise machine.
- Do a distraction check.
  - Avoid having TV, cell phones, computers, or tablets in the bedroom.
  - Relaxing music may be helpful.

PREPARE YOURSELF FOR SLEEP

- Do not try to sleep more than you NEED.
  - Seek as much sleep as it takes to feel rested the next day.
  - Overstaying in bed will only produce low-quality sleep.
- Keep a regular schedule.
- Eat a light snack before bedtime.
  - Dairy foods are particularly effective sleep enhancers for many people.
- Lead an active life in the daytime.

- Exercise every day, but not within 2 hours of bedtime.
- Have a cup of herbal tea.
  - Chamomile is very effective for some people.
- Think through your worries before dinner, then set them aside.
  - Consider writing your worries down so they can get out of your brain before bed.
- Listen to relaxing instrumental music.
- Have a warm (not hot) bath or shower.
  - Follow that with a lotion rub; foot or back rubs can be soothing.
- Don't consume caffeine (either in coffee, soda, chocolate, or tea) within 5 hours of bedtime.
- Avoid habitual use of sleeping medications.
  - Particularly avoid over-the-counter preparations.
- Avoid napping for more than 1 hour during the day.
  - If you do nap, elevate your feet above your heart to better rest your body.
- Turn off, put away, or set to "Night Mode" any electronics (phones, TVs, tablets) at least one hour before bedtime.
  - Actively scrolling on your phone or watching a show on TV right up until we try to go to sleep can keep our minds alert, preventing us from falling asleep and getting good quality sleep.
  - As recommended above, it is best to keep these kinds of distractions out of your room if possible.

SELF-CARE APPROACH TO CALM YOURSELF BEFORE SLEEP

When we prepare ourselves for sleep, the worries of today and the dread of tomorrow can feel overwhelming. The past can be experienced in the body as literally back there, behind us. The future can be experienced as in front of us, this dark unknown stretched infinitely in the direction we are facing. Both past and future can weigh heavily on us: regrets, shame, unresolved issues and grief from the past; anxious anticipation and dread of an unknowable and ultimately uncontrollable future. We can never fully set aside the past and the future, but bringing awareness to our now—to the prospect of restorative sleep—invites us to relinquish yesterday and tomorrow.

To do this:

- Settle awareness into the body as fully as possible, beginning with the breath, moving to the touch points and pressure points of the body while seated on the edge of your bed.
- Feel the mattress, connect to the earth.
- Relax and simply open to the experience of embodiment.
- Now bring awareness to the back—back of the head, neck, shoulders, spine, hips—the muscles and nerves in the back.

- Close your eyes and gently breathe in and out.
- It may help to count your in-breaths and out-breaths to quiet your mind.
- Visualize all the past moments in memory receding behind you. Just feel the weight and burden of the entire narrative.
- Imagine that this is gathered in one heavy backpack you carry around continually without being aware of it.
- Just picture releasing the straps of the backpack and setting it down behind you.
- You won't lose anything by this.
- You won't disappear from existence.
- You can always pick up the backpack later—and of course you will tomorrow.
- No one wants to take your backpack: Everyone has their own backpack to bear.
- Just see if you can sense a release and ease throughout the back of your body as you let go of the pull and burden of the past and be in the present moment, in the center and core of your body.
- Just rest and relax at this center for a few moments, breathing in with a sense of completion of this day.
- Breathe in and breathe out with a sense of release and letting go.
- And now allow your awareness to shift gently toward the front of the body.
- Take special care here because the entire front of your body carries your sense of yourself.
- Most of your emotional armor is here—in the face, eyes, forehead, over the throat and upper chest, the vulnerable heart center and soft belly, the entire pelvic region.
- This is the part of yourself that "faces" tomorrow.
- Gently, become aware of how the front of your body leans into tomorrow—or recoils from tomorrow, in an unsettled mixture of anticipation, of hope and dread.
- We go through each day with this breastplate of armor to protect us from what is heading our way.
- For tonight, surrender that breastplate with intention.
- Visualize releasing this breastplate and setting it aside.
- Set it down next to the backpack.
- As you lay that burden down, deeply exhale.
- Continue to breathe, with each exhale becoming slightly deeper and longer.
- Allow the whole front of the body to relax.
- Feel the coolness of your front and back.
- Quietly swing your legs into bed and adjust your body in a comfortable position.

If you are struggling with sleep due to distressing memories or visual images of the person who died, please discuss this with your group facilitator for additional support and resources.

CHAPTER 13: HELPING THOSE IN GRIEF

"Strange how people who suffer together have stronger connections than those who are most content."

—Bob Dylan, "Brownsville Girl"

"Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world."

—Desmond Tutu

TAKING CARE OF OURSELVES AS WE TAKE CARE OF OTHERS

We have emphasized the importance of self-care throughout this group and in this manual. Many grieving teens are also trying to support other family members or friends in their grief, and this can be a true obligation.

Some people seem to naturally be "helpers." Most of us know these good people; some of us are these good people. Often, we begin helping with the best of intentions but soon find ourselves overwhelmed with burdens larger than we imagined, or problems we are ill-equipped to address.

If you've ever flown on an airplane, you've heard the flight attendants' instructions before the plane takes off, but few travelers listen closely to it. Those instructions have application for us as helpers. The flight attendant says, "In the event the plane loses cabin pressure, oxygen masks will drop from the ceiling. . . . Before assisting another passenger, place your own oxygen mask firmly in place." Rarely do helpers take care of themselves before reaching out to others; sometimes it seems selfish to do so. The most effective helpers will tell you that careful attention to self-care is the only way they can be effective in helping others over the duration. Refueling ourselves emotionally, physically, and spiritually not only helps us care effectively, it prevents the resentment and frustration that comes with compassion fatigue, and permits us to continue to listen to and support others with a heart of gratitude.

WHAT GRIEVING PEOPLE FIND HELPFUL

BE PRESENT FOR GRIEVING PEOPLE

When people reflect back on a time of loss, they frequently express gratitude to those who were "there" for them in time of sorrow. It is important to note that grieving people don't say, "She had all the answers for me," or "He gave me great advice." Often, the grieving person remembers no spoken words at all, just the faithful presence of a friend when others were unavailable. Many grieving persons recall this experience as a friend being willing to journey with them through their loss,

or remain a companion to them when they had little to offer in return. The author James E. Miller described this as being "prepared to wait with them in that dark place."

In a society such as ours that values quick fixes, it can be challenging to remain present in the face of a long season of sadness, yet that may be what is most essential. Suffering people often feel abandoned, and the presence of a caring person can mitigate that sensation. Suffering people often feel hopeless, and the faithful attention of a patient friend is a profound conviction of hope.

LISTEN TO PAINFUL FEELINGS AND THOUGHTS

One of the great challenges of grieving is the realization that others grow impatient with grief. Grieving people are told to "get over it" or "get on with life" and have few avenues to express their feelings and memories. In particular, when the feelings are of anger, guilt, blame, fear, or sadness, even close friends can grow weary and avoid those in grief.

Grieving people need compassionate listeners to help them make sense of the myriad of confusing feelings and thoughts. This need is best addressed by listening and not by giving advice.

The most effective listeners offer their time and attention in a quiet place. They allow the telling and retelling of experiences. They attend to the jumble of feelings without judgment. They are comfortable with tears and expressions of anger and frustration. They dare to cry and laugh. They are generous with time and acceptance.

This gift of listening can require enormous emotional stamina. As the compassionate listener allows this relationship of trust to develop, he or she must be aware of their own limits of time and energy and honestly address this with the grieving person. It is an important principle of caring to not become the only support in another's life. But in our hurried world, the gift of unpressured and judgment-free attention may be the most significant contribution in the grieving person's journey of mourning.

USE YOUR OWN LOSS EXPERIENCES BY SETTING THEM ASIDE

Those who have suffered the loss of a close friend or family member are among the best equipped to help other grievers—or the least helpful. When one has accommodated to a tragedy and successfully navigated into a new life, it can be easy to gravitate toward an advice-giving approach to the newly bereaved. In the early days and weeks of grief, very few people benefit from being told what to do or what to feel. Many recall the advice they were offered as an additional painful burden. But those who have grieved, or are still grieving, especially if the loss was similar, have a gift to share like no other. This is the gift of companionate survivorship. Though at a different place on the road of grief, the newly bereaved can benefit from an experienced griever's guidance on this shared journey.

The difference between welcome and unwelcome suggestions is often simply a matter of how and when such comments are offered. For example, a statement such as, "I don't know if this will help you, but this is what worked for me when my dad died," feels very different from, "I think you should…" More important, perhaps, is to listen, listen, listen, waiting patiently until the story is told and the grieving person asks for your input. The balance is found in gently recalling your own pain and using it to increase your own sensitivity.

The tenderness that grows in the healing heart of a suffering person creates the compassionate salve for the wounds of others. If empathy is "the ability to feel your pain in my heart," that gift can only emerge when the experienced griever puts their own story aside for a bit, to embrace the newly bereaved's experience of loss.

PRACTICAL WAYS OF HELPING

As many persons who have experienced the loss of someone close can tell you, it is the days well after the funeral, when the family members have returned to their homes and the sympathy cards have been tucked away, that the loneliness and real need for support begins. This is the time when loving caregivers recognize that offering support is not a sprint, but rather a long-distance marathon. Once the shock of the death passes and the bitter reality sets in, grievers truly need care and support.

Practical help is also vital. Does the grieving person need help with classwork, or social situations? The offer of tangible service is often given during the immediate mourning phase—"Call me if there is anything I can do"—but the griever is often not aware of those needs until weeks or months have passed.

Revisit your offer of help. Observe the griever's situation, and without judgment offer your time or skills. Press gently beyond the "I'm fine" response you may hear and suggest something specific to the person's situation. When the grieving person looks back on those painful first months, the practical gifts are often the most valuable supports received.

HELPING PEOPLE REMEMBER

Frequently, people retreat from grieving people, uncertain of what to say or do, often apprehensive that asking about their grief will bring unwelcome tears and memories. While not all grieving people want to discuss the circumstances of the death, most do want to remember the person who died, maintaining a connection with one deeply loved. It is important to respect the story of the griever, but also a generous gift to share your own thoughtful memories of the one who died with grieving family and friends.

For more information about grief and how to help those who are grieving, consider following @griefliteracy on Instagram or use the QR code below:

WHEN TO REFER FOR PROFESSIONAL HELP

Friends, family members, teachers, coaches, clergy, and neighbors give nearly all of the support offered to grieving people. Even the best of helpers can become overwhelmed in caregiving and may become aware that more help is needed than they can provide.

While informal grief support can be beneficial for many, it is essential that persons experiencing severely unresolved grief, feelings of depression, hopelessness and worthlessness, unrelenting insomnia, thoughts of suicide, or tendencies to abuse alcohol and medication obtain professional support. Similarly, those who have experienced traumatic or multiple losses, or those without sufficient social supports, have exceptional needs that grief counselors can address.

INSPIRATION FOR HELPERS

"You have been my friend. That in itself is a tremendous thing."

—E. B. White

"One friend, one person who is truly understanding, who takes the trouble to listen to us as we consider a problem, can change our whole outlook on the world. "

—E. H. Mayo

"I felt it shelter to speak with you."

—Emily Dickinson

"At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person.

Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us."

—Albert Schweitzer

"The capacity to give one's attention to a sufferer is a very rare and difficult thing; it is almost a miracle; it is a miracle."

—Simone Weil

"We must not, in trying to think about how we can make a big difference, ignore the small daily differences we can make which, over time, add up to big differences that we often cannot foresee."

—Marian Wright Edelman

AFFIRMATIONS

Grief can be isolating, and because no one has experienced your unique loss before, it is easy to feel alone. Others have experienced loss and death, have suffered, and survived. It may be helpful to read the thoughts of others who have walked the journey of grief. Perhaps the inspirational quotes below may resonate with you, perhaps not. Perhaps today and not another day. They are not in a particular order but are for your reflection.

"What we have once enjoyed and deeply loved, we can never lose, for all that we love deeply becomes a part of us."

—Helen Keller

"Say what you have to say, and not what you ought."

—Henry David Thoreau

"Within each of us is the capacity to heal, and in any given moment, we do the best that we can."

—Russell Friedman

"When you are sorrowful, look again in your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight."

—Kahil Gibran

"We want people to feel with us more than to act for us."

—George Eliot

"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

"In grief nothing 'stays put.' One keeps on emerging from a phase, but it always recurs. Round and round. Everything repeats. Am I going in circles, or dare I hope I am on a spiral?"

—C. S. Lewis

"Hope does not lie in a way out, but in a way through."

—Robert Frost

"The question is not: why did this happen, or where is it going to lead you, or what price you will have to pay? It is simply: how are you making use of it?"

—Dag Hammarskjold

"Have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves… Don't search for the answers, which could not be given now, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer."

—Ranier Maria Rilke

"Grieving allows us to heal, to remember with love rather than pain. It is a sorting process. One by one you let go of things that are gone and you mourn for them. One by one you take hold of the things that have become a part of who you are and build again."

—Rachael Naomi Remen

"To live in the hearts we leave behind is not to die."

—Thomas Campbell

"Grief shared is grief diminished."

—Rabbi Grollman

"The pleasure of remembering had been taken from me, because there was no longer anyone to remember with. It felt like losing your co-rememberer meant losing the memory itself, as if the things we'd done were less real and important than they had been hours before."

—John Green

"Strange how people who suffer together have stronger connections than those who are most content."

—Bob Dylan

"It isn't for the moment you are struck that you need courage, but for the long uphill battle to faith, sanity and security."

—Anne Morrow Lindbergh

"You can clutch the past so tightly to your chest that it leaves your arms too full to embrace the present."

—Jan Glidwell

"I will continue my path, but I will keep a memory always."

—Rosie Thomas

"The risk of love is loss, and the price of loss is grief—But the pain of grief is only a shadow when compared with the pain of never risking love."

—Hilary Stanton Zunin

"Deep grief sometimes is almost like a specific location, a coordinate on a map of time. When you are standing in that forest of sorrow, you cannot imagine that you could ever find your way to a better place. But if someone can assure you that they themselves have stood in that same place, and now have moved on, sometimes this will bring hope."

—Elizabeth Gilbert

"Simply touching a difficult memory with some slight willingness to heal begins to soften the holding and tension around it."

—Stephen Levine

"We bereaved are not alone. We belong to the largest company in all the world—the company of those who have known suffering."

—Helen Keller

"The reality is that you will grieve forever. You will not 'get over' the loss of a loved one; you will learn to live with it. You will heal and you will rebuild yourself around the loss you have suffered. You will be whole again but you will never be the same. Nor should you be the same nor would you want to."

—Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

"Without you in my arms, I feel an emptiness in my soul. I find myself searching the crowds for your face—I know it's an impossibility, but I cannot help myself."

—Nicholas Sparks

"How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard."

—Winnie the Pooh

RESOURCE BOOKS

You may find some of these books helpful. They should be available at your local library or bookstore.

LOSS BY DRUG OVERDOSE

What's Your Grief? Surviving the Grief of an Overdose Death. Available from https://whatsyourgrief.com/

Wolfelt, A. (2017). *Helping Yourself Heal When Someone You Care About Dies of a Drug Overdose.* Center for Loss and Life Transition. Available from https://www.centerforloss.com/2017/01/helping-heal-someone-care-dies-drug-overdose/

GENERAL READINGS ON GRIEF

Aleshire, L. (2009). *101 Ways You Can Help: How to Comfort and Support Those Who are Grieving.* Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks.

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POEMS

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STUDENT ARTWORK

Allie Murray: Chapter One—Sadness, sorrow, broken-heartedness & tenderness, gratitude, kindness.

Artist Statement: Fish drawing: This piece is a representation of gratitude. The smooth waves of water and the coy fish show the calm, balanced mind. While the woman's smile brings the feeling of hopeful content and love.

Crow drawing: Throughout this piece the overall composition creates a contemplative atmosphere where beauty and sorrow co-exist. The feeling of emptiness and sadness can be interpreted through the crow and the stain glass pattern, as the element of nature brings a sense of beauty and life.

Artist Bio: Allie Murray is an American artist, who has grown up in the state of Utah. She will graduate from Hillcrest High School in 2025. She comes from a very creative and artistic family and has grown up loving and learning all different types of art. Over the years she has taught herself how to draw, sew, crochet, and craft. In school she has studied drawing, jewelry, sculpture, writing, ceramics, and painting. She loves to mix different mediums to create anything her heart desires. Allie's lifelong dream is to influence and inspire people by showing the world what she sees.

Ava Townsend: Chapter Six—Anger, frustration, rage

Artist Statement: Anger, rage, and frustration are loud, complicated, and messy emotions. Losing someone can create an overwhelming sense of confusion and chaos, leaving you with lots of

complex thoughts and feelings. Screaming, clenched fists, and crying all express how anger might feel to someone who is grieving.

Artist Bio: Ava Townsend has lived in Utah her whole life and has been drawing since she could remember. She frequently draws people digitally on her iPad or with graphite on some paper, but occasionally paints her subjects as well. Taking interest in human emotions and mannerisms, Ava loves to draw portraits of people with different expressions and poses to try and capture different stories about life as people here on earth.

Ava has entered many local art shows through her current high school and has won a couple prizes here and there for her works. She has also created several commissioned digital portraits for people and their loved ones. Ava is currently taking art classes at her high school and creating art every chance she gets.

Eric de Morias: Kintsugi Image, Page 114

Artist Bio: Eric de Morais (b. 2006, Minas Gerais, Brazil) is a mixed-media artist residing and working in Utah, United States. Eric's practice spans various mediums, including paints, paper, colored pencils, and yarn, incorporating both 2-dimensional and 3-dimensional forms. His work delves into the essence of human experience with memory, exploring its formation, fluidity, and significance. A punctual influence in his art comes from a childhood memory of encountering a guava tree wrapped in colorful yarn, an installation by Divino Sobral titled "Coral de Arvore," symbolizing the ephemeral nature of memory. As Eric reflects, "Memories are inherently personal, intertwined with individual experiences, perceptions, and emotions. Yet, despite its deeply personal nature, memory is a universal experience. Without it, we would be adrift in an endless present, with shapeless identities".

Artist Statement: Inspired by the Japanese art of Kintsugi, which repairs broken pottery with gold to highlight its cracks, my work reflects how the loss of someone leaves permanent marks. Change it how you want, just be sensitive to the fact that those going through this workshop will have very recently experienced loss and will not be through the grieving process.

Emily Dumas: Chapter Four—Fearful, anxious, worried, dread, apprehension

Artist Statement: I was drawn to this project after hearing what it would be used for. Mental health has recently gained the attention I think it deserves, particularly when it comes to teens. When I heard the term "Grieffiti" describing this project, I started thinking about the different styles that could be incorporated. The pop art style appeals to me because of the intense emotions we often see, typically depicted in the female faces. I drew a female face in the pop art style with a hand covering her face and a shocked expression. The speech bubbles in the background were left blank intentionally, with the hopes that the reader will feel free to express their own feelings of fear and anxiety.

Artist Bio: For Emily, art has been the most vulnerable, testing, freeing, and rewarding subject she has taken. She has taken Advanced Placement and concurrent enrollment classes through Salt Lake Community College, studying art and art history. Emily looks forward to taking advanced studio art as she enters her senior year. Art is something she looks for everywhere, and is excited to see where this adventure takes her.

Aida Simon: Chapter Seven—Connected, sharing, reaching out, communication

Artist Bio: Aida Simon is a 16 year old from Cottonwood Heights, Utah. She attends Hillcrest High School, where she's taken a variety of fine arts classes, including painting, drawing, and sculpture. She primarily works with oil paint which adds more texture and depth to her pieces. She focuses

on portraiture and her subject matter often includes feminine figures and outdoor scenery. She has won two awards of excellence in 2D Visual Design in the Reflections Contest and recently won the SSEP Mission Patch Design Contest. Her work has been shown in the school art show and she is currently entering her paintings to be shown at her local Harvest Days. Aida serves as Key Club Artist and is pursuing an IB Visual Art path.

Artist Statement: The soft, loose shapes at the top symbolize the safety and softness that this person is offering the other. The shards of glass falling downward symbolize a sharp resistance that a grieving individual might exhibit. As the hand breaks through the glass barrier, an emotional barrier is also overcome to connect with the other in a time of grief and isolation.

Erica Patterson: Chapter Two—Loneliness, yearning, longing, isolation

Artist Statement: This piece is meant to symbolize the isolation and confusion of loneliness. I chose to show this through a lone figure sitting hunched over on a sea stack that stands in the middle of the ocean with no other islands in sight. The figure is also surrounded by pictures of question marks and illustrations of shattered glass, which asks the question "Why am I alone?"

Artist Bio: Erica is a 16 year old from West Valley City, Utah. She has taken many art classes at her high school (Hillcrest) but specializes in both digital and traditional art, while also dabbling in painting and photography. Her art has won the art fair at challenger school three times, and she has been commissioned to draw things for church and for other people on multiple occasions.

Alex Campbell: Chapter Eight—Warmth, remembrance, growth, light

Artist Bio: I'm Alex Campbell! I love telling stories, or having meaning behind my art. I work to make everything feel calming but exciting and new at the same time when creating new projects. I've loved art ever since I could imagine and strive to always improve and find ways to stray from the crowd when I can.

Artist Statement: When making this piece I wanted to show that healing is something that you have control over with the light being held in the hands. I wanted to convey different meaning with the different flowers. The lotus representing rebirth and overcoming adversity, the poppy flowers to represent the value and fragility of life. I also think the flowers are a good fit because they die and bloom each season showing that a healing process might not be a straight line but even then, life can still be a beautiful thing. The figure at the top has a poppy in the center of the face, because even though we might be without a loved one they will always have a place in our heart that we will never forget.

Victoria Bush: Chapter Three—Guilt, shame, blame

Artist Statement: Thoughts of blame, shame, and guilt are common when experiencing grief. In this image, the hand holding the brain represents the self-blame one might feel. The thorns and vines wrapped around the hand and brain, almost like a cage, represent the guilt one might feel as a survivor, and the wilting roses represent the helplessness and the feeling of losing yourself figuratively.

Artist Bio: Victoria Bush is an Afro Latina born in Utah and attending Hillcrest High School. She is entering her senior year and is taking IB visual Art. She has learned how to work with various mediums but enjoys pastels and working in black and white the most. The way she expresses her art is with personal experiences and symbols that come with deep meanings.

Aeris Lau: Color Page for Beginning, Page 29

Artist Statement: Grief occurs on a spectrum and is unique for everyone. Navigating through grief at times may seem like a loop with an unclear start and end. The progression is often unpredictable, and one may find themself revisiting the same chapter or experiencing multiple in tandem with each other. One may experience sorrow, guilt, isolation, warmth, dread, rage, and outreach once, multiple times, or never; paths to grief vary, but what ultimately matters is the journey along the way.

Artist Bio: Aeris Lau was born in Utah and is a rising senior attending Hillcrest High interested in visual arts. In her participation in the 52nd Annual Utah All-State High School Show, she was chosen for the Artist Nosh Award, Sentient Academy Scholarship, and the Traveling Exhibition. In the 2024 Utah Mock Trial Courtroom Artist competition she won 1st in state and went on to compete in nationals in Wilmington, Delaware. Aeris values fostering creativity for all ages and is engaged with the local community as a part of the 2024 Utah Arts Festival Art Yard staff team.

Elena Parker: Two-Page Comic, Pages 72–73

Artist Statement: "Ask for forever when the end is in sight // … // I'm not asking for a miracle" *Miracle By CHVRCHES*

I lost my father to cancer during my senior year, it was a slow month-long battle where we had to watch him slowly lose his will to fight. It will always be hard without him here in my life, and the grief will always be there. I will always want more time with him, but all I have now is the memories with him that I cherish. One day, while the grief will be the same, it won't feel as heavy. That day will be slow coming, and there will be many steps back, but one day that time will come.

Artist Bio: Utah-based high school student, Len Parker, has been creating since she was old enough to hold a marker. Len is passionate about brightening the world around her through all kinds of creative expression. During the 2021 Unified Sports Soccer Championship, she presented one of her artworks to First Lady Abby Cox of Utah, which now hangs in the First Lady's office. Len was elected by her peers as Hillcrest High School's official Student Body Artist, creating huge murals, event marketing, and school spirit around the high school halls. As past president of the Careers Club, she invited many local artisans and business owners to share stories of their successes and failures. Staff at the high school have commissioned her to create custom portraits and a large wall mural to adorn their homes. Len has attended Pre-college in-residence summer programs at both Rhode Island School of Design, the top art school in the country, and California College of the Arts in San Francisco. Len also plays the accordion in her free time.

Tasman Raleigh: Thoughts and Jots Pages

Artist Bio: Tasman Raleigh has been making art since they knew how to write, but recently their art journey has led to the exploration of abstraction. Tasman loves all things art, music, nature, and science and is attending Westminster University to study art and physics.

Artist Statement: For this note page, I wanted to show the progression of healing, from a darker, lonelier place to one of joy, growth, and hope. I was inspired by stained glass windows, and their ability to beautifully display stories. The dark, filled in sections at the top represent a disjointed and broken reality. As we move down the window, the cracks become smaller and less frequent. This represents healing. The cracks still exist, but many have been mended. I've included intentional duality in my imagery, so growth and healing is shown both from top to bottom, and from left to right.