

TEEN GRIEF GROUPS

AN EIGHT-WEEK CURRICULUM

**COMPILED AND INTRODUCED BY
SCOTT JOHNSON, MA**

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1. No part of it is sold.
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For more information, contact me at:

scottnsd@gmail.com
<http://griefed.wordpress.com/>

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INTRODUCTION

This curriculum is presented as a work manual for the counselor facilitating adolescent grief groups in a school setting. It is a compilation of activities and handouts that are meant to be used, copied, added to or discarded according to the preferences of the user.

Most simply it is a sample eight-week teen grief group with suggestions for organization of each group meeting. There are introductory sections on setting up and running a group followed by the eight-week curriculum completed by the appendices of activities and handouts.

NEED AND EXPECTATIONS FOR A TEEN GRIEF GROUP

The need for a teen grief group is not always apparent. It is my experience that for about every thousand students at a school 50 of them are actively grieving a loss by death. About one half of those students will be known to school personnel once a group has been up and running for about a semester. About ten to fifteen of those students will attend a robust group. Therefore, although a group will be helpful to some students, it will not be the answer to all.

In addition, some students will be benefited in a dramatic way by such a group the benefit to others may not be so apparent. Their classroom conduct and performance may not improve for several semesters. These students, after all, have gone through major life events at a crucial time in their development. Anyone who is grieving intensely is focusing their learning on understanding questions like “how the world can be put together to allow for whatever has happened” and “what are these feelings that have torn this world apart?”

ROLE OF GROUP FACILITATOR

I understand the role of facilitator to be the provider of a safe place for the grief work to occur. It is based on the premise that each person has an innate understanding of the work he or she needs to do. Students will become expert on their grief. When they feel safe, the work that needs to be done is done. All the group rules – which I like to let the group generate – are rooted in the idea of safety: confidentiality, not interrupting, listening, etc.

You, as facilitator, start and end the group. You also help the group to regulate discussion – keeping strong members from dominating and bringing out quieter ones – with their permission. I urge you to give members permission to not share before they are ready. These structural components are an important part of the members feeling safe.

SETTING UP THE GROUP

This manual grew out of a suggestion that it might be more comfortable for counselors venturing into doing a teen grief group to have it be a structured, didactic, closed group of a set number of weeks. The length of eight weeks was somewhat arbitrary. We found at Grossmont Hospice that ten weeks was ideal. We did not have to deal with school schedules. The more successful groups have the support of teachers and administrative personnel. One of the ways they retain this support is to work around their school exam schedules. This leaves them with fewer weeks to do their groups in. For example at Granite Hill High School in El Cajon, the groups are seven weeks.

Factors to consider before starting a group:

- The number of weeks for the group including start and end dates. It is important to allow for time before the start of group to screen students and build relationships with them.
- Weekly rotation schedule.

- Co-facilitator.
- Schedule meeting each week with co-facilitator or another counselor to debrief and plan
- Location of group: privacy, same room for all groups, table for activities.
- Materials available. Consider having a folder for each student to keep any activities in. At the last group these 'memory books' would be returned to the students.
- Recruiting faculty support to find appropriate students and in letting them out of class.
- Create a way to get students to group quickly. Some schools have a system where students and teachers are notified the previous day and student reports directly to group.
- Become familiar with the clinical themes students are likely to bring to group and individual meetings. Expect that students will begin to drop by your office during the week and long after the groups are completed.

SCREENING STUDENTS

Although the screening of each potential attendee ensures that students inappropriate for group membership are kept out, it serves at least two other important purposes:

1. It educates about the group rules and purposes.
2. Building the relationship with each student upon which the strength of the group is built.

Some group criteria to consider:

- Do not mix students with primarily pre-death or divorce issues with students who are survivors of loss by death. Either the non-'death' students will feel threatened and will not attend or will distract or the 'death' students will not share.
- The death should be at least two to three months before group start. The student will often be too numb to get much from group and his or her defenses may be overwhelmed by the group experience. Instead, offer individual support until another group is available. Consider introducing a student to another whose grief is more mature.
- Group needs take precedence over the individual's.

Other considerations:

- Screenings can be awkward. Have a focal point for discussions.
- Ask them to fill out the 'Teen Grief questionnaire' or similar instrument. You will get the basic information you need, screen for suicidal ideation, structure your interview, and make sure you have covered the bases. It will also begin to help the student normalize her or his grief experience.
- Have a 'distracter' such as modeling clay or Sculpee available for them to work with during the meeting. This may lessen anxiety and free up conversation. Sculpee works well during talking portions of the group as well.

GROUP STRUCTURE/AGENDA

Caveat: An agenda with activities is helpful but the best groups are often those where, when we are following what is hot for the group, we forget about the agenda.

Each group in this curriculum will have the following components:

1. A theme with tools to be learned.
2. An opening ritual. This may be only your way of starting the group, which becomes expected and therefore ritual.
3. One or more activities.
4. Handouts.
5. Closing ritual.

Based on the experience of clinical themes in other groups the major themes will be covered over the eight weeks. Expect that students will introduce themes on a given week that will

either be related to the major theme of that week or may supersede that week's theme in importance. It is a judgment call on the part of the facilitators whether to stay with a given theme.

The major themes are:

1. Introduction and Ice-breaking
2. Memory building
3. Family changes
4. Feelings of grief
5. Coping tools
6. Good-byes and memorials

There are also activities that are a part of nearly every group. These may include the memory mural, question basket, in-depth sharing of momentos and stories of the loved one.

Openings

Everyone has their own style for opening a group. It is important to have a phrase like; "Looks like most of us are here, let's start now." This makes a transition from whatever chatter or cross talk is going on to a focus on the purpose of the group. Other matters to include in the opening are the reinforcement of group norms/rules, introduction of theme and activities, reminder that each student can have ten minutes or so to share about the loved one (encouraging them to bring music and momentos). Ask if anyone has brought something to share today. Follow up on any assignments or suggestions students took home from end of previous group.

Closings

It is important to prepare for the end of each group. While most high school students will be thinking about the next class and start modulating their interior life accordingly, younger students are not so good at this.

I spend about the last 10 minutes of a group first checking in with students who have been quiet, giving them a place to share if they wish. After that, I try to help the students change to a different part of the brain to help ground them. Very often, this is accomplished by going over one of the handouts or engaging them in a discussion of tools that have helped them in the past. Everyone shares one or two. A list is kept. Then each person chooses one to commit to trying this coming week (be sure to write down and follow-up the next week).

Another way to disengage is to ask them how this group was for them. This gets them to reflect back and therefore distance themselves from what has been happening.

It is important to end promptly (another example of that structure thing that adds to sense of safety). Most schools have provisions for students to go to nurses' office and lie down for a short while if necessary. Occasionally a student may want to debrief for a short while. It is not uncommon to write some late passes from time to time.

EIGHT – WEEK CURRICULUM

Week One:

- Theme(s): Ice-breaking, introductions, group norm building.
- Opening: brief intros, develop rules, invitation to share.
- Activity1: ‘Move’; Talking stick.
- Activity2: “What got me here”; Question basket.
- Handout: ‘Normal Grieving’, ‘Physical Effects’.
- Closing: re-invite sharing, review handout, ask about what helps (see introduction).

Week Two:

- Theme(s): Getting to know each other, memory building.
- Opening: Review ‘what helps’ from last week, Invitation to share, ‘memory mural’.
- Activity: Choose from ‘My Story’, ‘What do You Need?’ &/or Question Basket.
- Handout: ‘Bill of Rights for Teens Experiencing Grief’, ‘Common Myths About Grief’.
- Closing: Review handouts, remind to bring sharing, ‘ what are you going to do to take care of you?’

Week Three:

- Theme: Family and other changes since the death.
- Opening: Review ‘what you did to help’, Memory Mural, and Invitation to share.
- Activity: Choose from ‘What do you need’ (if not done last week)? ‘Timeline’, Writing letters to Parents, ‘What has changed in your life’, ‘Rough Mountain Smooth Mountain’.
- Handout: ‘Conquering Depression’.
- Closing: As above.

Week Four:

- Theme: Follow-up on Family changes, ‘Feelings’.
- Opening: Review ‘homework’, memory mural.
- Activity: Choose from ‘Four Feelings’, ‘Anger Circle’, ‘I miss you most...’&/or Collage.
- Handout: ‘Words of Feelings’.
- Closing: As above.

Week Five:

- Theme: This is a transitional group: either continue with last week (Feelings) or begin ‘Coping’.
- Opening: As above.
- Activity: Continue with feeling activities &/or ‘Faces’, ‘Garbage in... Garbage out...’, ‘Light Hearted Personality Profile’, ‘Unpack grief Bundle’.
- Handout: ‘How to help grieving people’.
- Closing: as above, remind how many meetings left.

Week Six:

- Theme: Tools.
- Opening: As above; remind number of week's left.
- Activity: Choose from 'Question Basket', 'Shield', 'Dear Aunt Blabby', &/or 'Future Fears'.
- Handout: 'Strategies for Coping', 'Good-bye Letter' (from Activity List).
- Closing: as above.

Week Seven:

- Theme: Good-byes.
- Opening: As above.
- Activity: 'Forgiveness Circle', 'Memorial Activity'.
- Handout: 'Establishing realistic expectations for your grief'.
- Closing: Discuss favorite snack (if doing this).

Week Eight:

- Theme: Good-byes.
- Opening: As above, review.
- Activity: 'Memorial Activity', Favorite snack, Momentos to share.
- Handout: Memory books.
- Closing: Rose Petals.

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- 1.2 CLAY ACTIVITY
- 1.3 COLLAGE
- 1.4 COLOR YOUR HEART
- 1.5 DEAR AUNT BLABBY
- 1.6 FACES
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- 1.9 FOUR FEELINGS
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- 1.34 TOMBSTONE ACTIVITY
- 1.35 THE UNGAME
- 1.36 UNPACK YOUR GRIEF BUNDLE
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- 1.40 WHAT HAS CHANGED IN YOUR LIFE?
- 1.41 WHERE ARE YOU?
- 1.42 WRITING LETTERS TO PARENTS

CHAIN OF EVENTS

Age Level: All

Time Required: Flexible

Materials Needed: Scissors, tape, staples or glue sticks
Construction paper cut into 8 x 1" strips
Crayons or markers

Goal:

1. To reconstruct a series of events around a certain aspect of the death. For example, the events leading up to the disclosure of an illness, or the events of the funeral and its preparation.
2. As a variation, to link group participants names with their names of deceased loved ones and each other. Our heart connection is made symbolically visible.

Description of Activity:

1. Each child cuts number of strips of construction paper.
2. On each strip they write an event and/or its corresponding feeling. For example, the first strip might say: Daddy never feels well anymore. The second strip might be: Mom took daddy to the doctor, everyone is telling secrets, etc.
3. Strips are then glued, taped or stapled into rings to form a "chain of events".
4. Discussion should then center on feelings that happened during that time frame.

CLAY ACTIVITY

Age Level: All

Time Required: 45 minutes

Materials Needed:

- ◆ Soft clay
- ◆ Plastic table cloths
- ◆ Small objects to put into clay (i.e., pencils, buttons, straws, etc.)

Description of Activity:

Frequently, our actions speak louder than our words. Grief is difficult to express at times, especially when dealing with anger and frustration.

Tell the group they don't have to "make" anything 0 we are just experimenting with the feel and shapes of the clay. Ask them to think of thoughts such as anger, frustration or sadness. Give the group time to get into their feelings quietly. As they think, encourage them to work with the clay – squeezing, shaping or pounding.

Have each person share his/her thoughts. As they share, be aware of their body language, especially their hands. See if their body language matches their words. If the two are different, share your observations and explore them with the individual. Example: Participant is pounding pencil into clay as he or she says they are experiencing no frustration or anger.

Some people make letters out of their clay. As an example, one girl spelled the word "AIDS" and then smashed it with the remainder of her clay. Others may make an object like a bottle and then destroy it, symbolizing their hatred of alcohol. Some may simply play with a ball of clay as they speak and feel no desire to create anything. Have them tell you how the clay feels – texture, temperature, etc. This helps the individual to really pay attention to what he/she is doing so that they are fully present in the moment.

This exercise is not meant to be analyzed in depth. It is simply an experiment in exploring new ways to get in touch with feelings. It is a very popular activity.

COLLAGE

Age Level: All

Time Required: 45 minutes – Flexible

Materials Needed: Markers
Glue
Magazines
Scissors
Construction paper (good size is 11" x 17")

Goal: To share feelings

Description of Activity:

- ◆ Provide plenty of magazines and have each participant cut out pictures that represent memories of the deceased.
- ◆ Ask each member to share their collage and the feelings that are brought to the surface as a result.

COLOR YOUR HEART

Age Level: 10 - Teen

Time Required: 45 – 60 minutes

Materials Needed: Concentric heart picture, color code sheet, crayons or marking pens
(black, green, red, purple and gold)

Goals:

1. Explore feelings.
2. Explore / recognize changes in feelings brought by healing.
3. Embrace contradictory feelings.
4. Understand sameness / differentness with other's feelings.

Description of Activity:

1. Concentric heart picture is distributed as a "picture of our grieving heart". The suggested meanings for each color are also passed out.
2. Group members are invited to read the suggested meanings for colors and then color their own heart in a way that is meaningful to them.
3. They will be invited to share their hearts after 15 minutes (or whatever) of working on them. Coloring may continue during sharing.
4. The hearts may be dated and blank pages distributed for future use as a healing assessment.

BLACK

Usually lasts from a few days to a few months after I learn of the death. At times, I may experience a lack of feeling or numbness; other times there may be feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, depression, abandonment or disbelief. Sometimes I can't cry; other times I can't stop crying. The death is so painful and shocking to consider that I may put it out of my mind as much as possible. I may want to have fun all the time, or else withdraw from my friends and become a loner.

GREEN

The reality of the death begins to sink in. I can name what it is that upsets or bothers me so much about the death. I want to talk about what happened. I feel an urge to ask questions about it. I can share some of my thoughts and feelings with those whom I trust. I can admit that I feel (finish the sentence)

RED

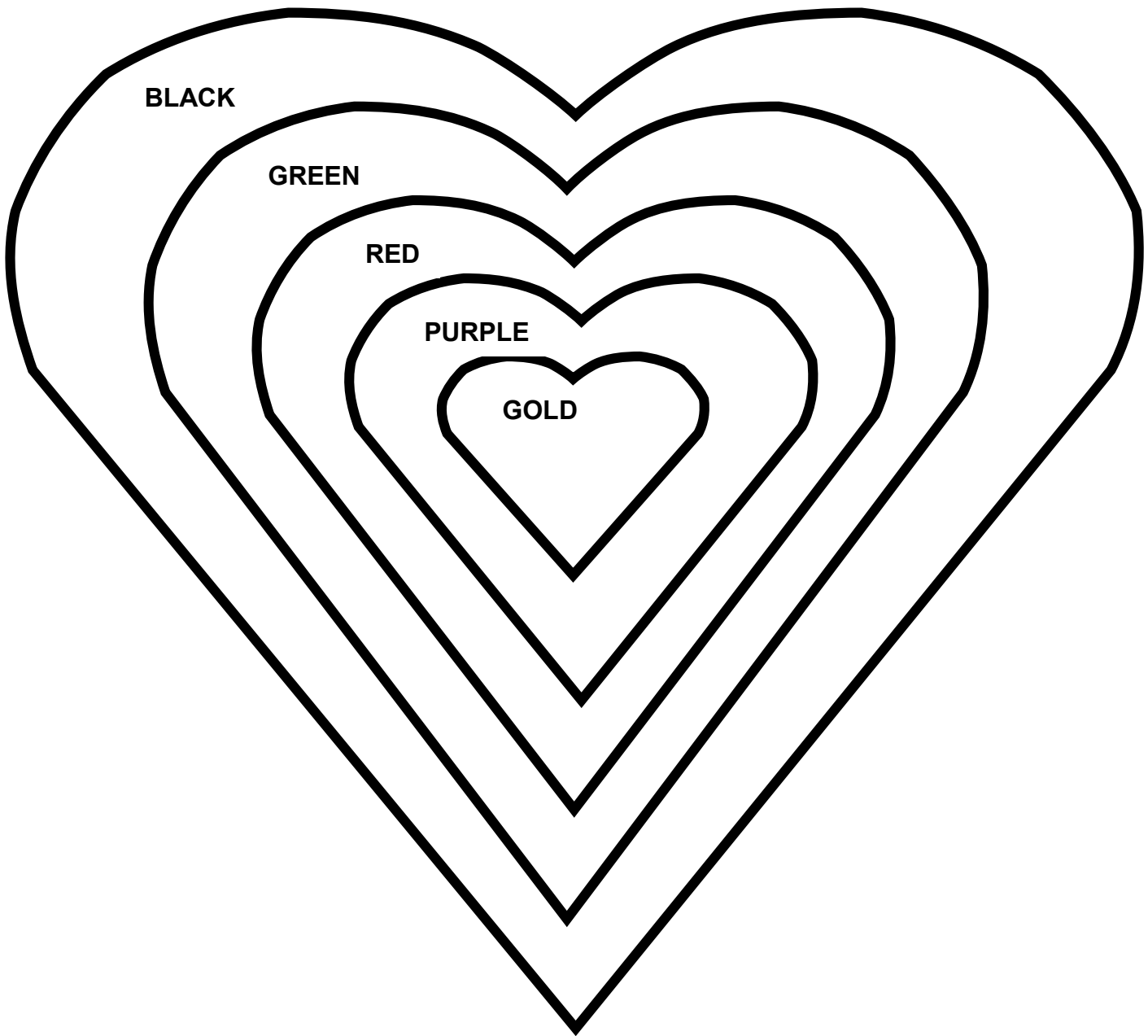
Thoughts and feelings I could not look at before begin to surface. (I didn't even know some of these were there!) Again, I sometimes cry uncontrollably. I wonder if I am getting worse instead of better. I may lose my temper over practically nothing. It may not be unusual for me to feel like fighting. A grief support group can be very helpful now because I am ready to share and process.

PURPLE

I can get my feelings out in better ways now. Instead of picking fights with my friends or family members, I can talk about what bugs me most about the death in my family. I don't have to change the subject when someone starts talking about the one who died. I know it's okay if I cry when I feel like it. I like to talk to others who've had similar experiences in their family. I don't feel the death was my fault (if I did before). If I blamed others, I can now work on forgiveness. No one is perfect; it is human to make mistakes. I understand that life is different without the one who died; it will never be exactly the same. Memory of the death does not constantly haunt me. I've made some new friends. I enjoy life; there are lots of things fun to do. I like to recall happy times or funny things that I shared with the one who died.

GOLD

I feel better about everything now. I know I will never forget the one who died, and I can talk about that one without feeling despondent or intensely sad. I understand that death, suffering, loving and losing are natural parts of life. I don't worry about things that I used to worry about (like what if someone else dies?). Even though life is different now without the one who died, things seem normal. I have dreams, hopes and plans for the future. Sure, death happens; but life is cool!



Taken from Bereavement Magazine, Nov/Dec 1994

COPING AND SHARING

Age Level: All

Time Required: 15 minutes (flexible)

Materials Needed: Letters written to “Aunt Blabby” are printed on index cards.

Goal: To encourage sharing, problem-solving and coping skills.

Description of Activity:

1. Group members sit in a circle.
2. Each participant takes a turn reading a “letter” aloud.
3. The group acts as “Aunt Blabby”. As each letter is read, they discuss:
 - What would you do?
 - Has this ever happened to you?
 - What was it like?

Note:

1. The point is to encourage sharing, problem-solving, and coping. Often the participants get so involved in sharing that they never get to the “advice”. This is fine.
2. We use some pre-printed cards and address common situations kids and/or teens face, but we also make up cards (changing ages, family roles, gender, etc.) that reflect specific questions on problems group members are facing. Beware of writing “yes/no” questions!
3. With young children, we have stuffed animals available to cuddle while doing this activity. A facilitator can model this.

Facilitator Exercise

FACES

All of us wear different masks or faces with different people, depending on our immediate circumstances. A mask does not mean you are being a phony, it is merely an expression of what you feel comfortable in letting others see in you at the time. When we are grieving, we often try to present a positive face as not to burden others.

Have your participants draw a picture of a face that represents what they allow most people to see in themselves. Ask them to explain why they are comfortable exposing that part of themselves. As an example: "My face is happy. I feel safe wearing this mask because people are more comfortable around a happy person. A happy person is also more popular."

On the reverse side of the paper, ask your teens to draw the face (that part of themselves) they do not show to others. Ask them what keeps them from sharing that face with others. As an example: "If I let others see my tears or anger, they will not want to be around me or they may judge me as being weak." The face or mask we tend to keep to ourselves is very often the face that represents a very honest part of who we are. Encourage the teens to think about taking the risk of sharing this important part of themselves with another. When we have lost a loved one, many of our friends and family already sense the pain and anger that is within us, but are frequently afraid to say anything for fear of making things worse for the bereaved. Letting others know what we need and who we **really** are is a key ingredient to having quality friendships – friendships that are intimate, long lasting and secure. Many people complain of an emptiness inside, feeling that no one really understands them. This emptiness or lonely feeling is something most of us, without realizing it, create for ourselves by not sharing the honesty of who we are. By presenting what we feel people want to see, we risk not being known by others. Instead, others are left knowing our performance rather than our essence.

The beauty of this exercise is that, once again, participants realize that they are not alone in the ways they deal with others as they grieve. It is an opportunity to look at their behavior and search for healthier ways to communicate.

FEELINGS AND COLORS

Age Level: All

Time Required: 30 minutes

Materials Needed: Paper, crayons and felt pens
Black letters for children to trace (optional)

Goals:

1. To learn names within the group in a fun way.
2. To acknowledge that different feelings make people think of different colors and that we all have lots of different feelings at the same time.

Description of Activity:

Identify and discuss six to eight feelings: happiness, sadness, anger, jealousy, guilt, silliness, pride, love fear, etc.

Ask for experiences that illustrate these feelings along with a color for each feeling (i.e., happy/yellow, sad/brown)

Each child then colors the letters of his/her name using different colors to represent the many feelings they have. Facilitators should explain that different children will use different colors to represent the same feelings (i.e., red may be a mad color for one child and a love children for another).

Invite each child to share his/her drawings.

THIS ACTIVITY IS VERY POPULAR FOR ALL AGES.

The Dougy Center – Children Grieve, Too

Facilitator Exercise

FORGIVENESS CIRCLE

(This exercise should be used toward the end of your group series)

Begin the exercise by reading:

- ◆ *Grief is often accompanied by feelings of remorse or regret. It is not uncommon to have thoughts such as:*
- ◆ *"If I hadn't had that fight with my dad, he wouldn't have had the heart attack."*
- ◆ *"If I had only paid more attention, maybe I could have said or done something that would have kept my friend from taking her life."*
- ◆ *"If I hadn't asked my brother to go to the ATM machine to loan me money, he would never have been shot and killed."*
- ◆ *"I was always jealous of my brother for getting all that attention while he was sick for so many years. Not he's dead! Am I an awful person for feeling that way?"*
- ◆ *"We talked about drinking and driving, but we did it anyway. If I had just been brave enough to say 'no', she would still be alive."*

It seems that we find ourselves thinking of everything we should or shouldn't have said to do. Somehow, we want to take it all back and start over again, but we can't. These feelings of guilt are very natural. You might even feel guilty for being alive - that is called survivor's guilt. Sometimes we may feel "darned if we do - darned if we don't". Here are some examples of confused feelings of guilt:

- ◆ *"I know I need to cry, but I feel so weak and foolish when I do."*
- ◆ *"I want to feel better, but when I started laughing with my friends, I suddenly felt guilty for having a good time."*
- ◆ *"I hate it that my brother died in a car accident, but I'm glad it wasn't me!"*

Sometimes it is helpful to share our regrets with others who have lost a loved one. When we share these thoughts, we quickly learn that we are not alone with these uncomfortable feelings.

EXERCISE: Invite the group now to share. Going in a circle, start out by saying, “I need to forgive myself for . . . “Make it clear you understand that at this time they may not feel ready to let go of the guilt, but expressing their hopes for self-forgiveness can be an important beginning.

It is also important before starting the circle to ask each participant, “When you share your feelings of guilt, would you like a response from the group or would you simply like to move on to the next person?” So often, people with the best intentions try to help “fix” a person who is feeling guilty when all a person really needs to do is let the individual express the feeling. This gives the members of the group an opportunity to make their own decision as to whether or not they want or need a response.

The sharing can go around the circle as many times as needed. Remember, anyone can “pass”.

AS CLOSURE: Have each person write their name and who died on a slip of paper. Put the slips of paper in a basket. Have each person pick a name and write down a strength that they see in that person. Examples:

Joe	<i>You are a wonderful listener.</i>
Mary	<i>You are very courageous.</i>
Jim	<i>I love your sense of humor. It helps me a lot.</i>

At the end of the meeting, have them exchange notes as they leave. In most cases, times does not permit the sharing of their notes and many prefer to keep it private. If you would like, at your next meeting, you can ask how the group felt about the positive notes they received.

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TAG TEEN AGE GRIEF, INC. / P.O. Box 220034 / Newhall, California 91322-0034 (805) 253-1932

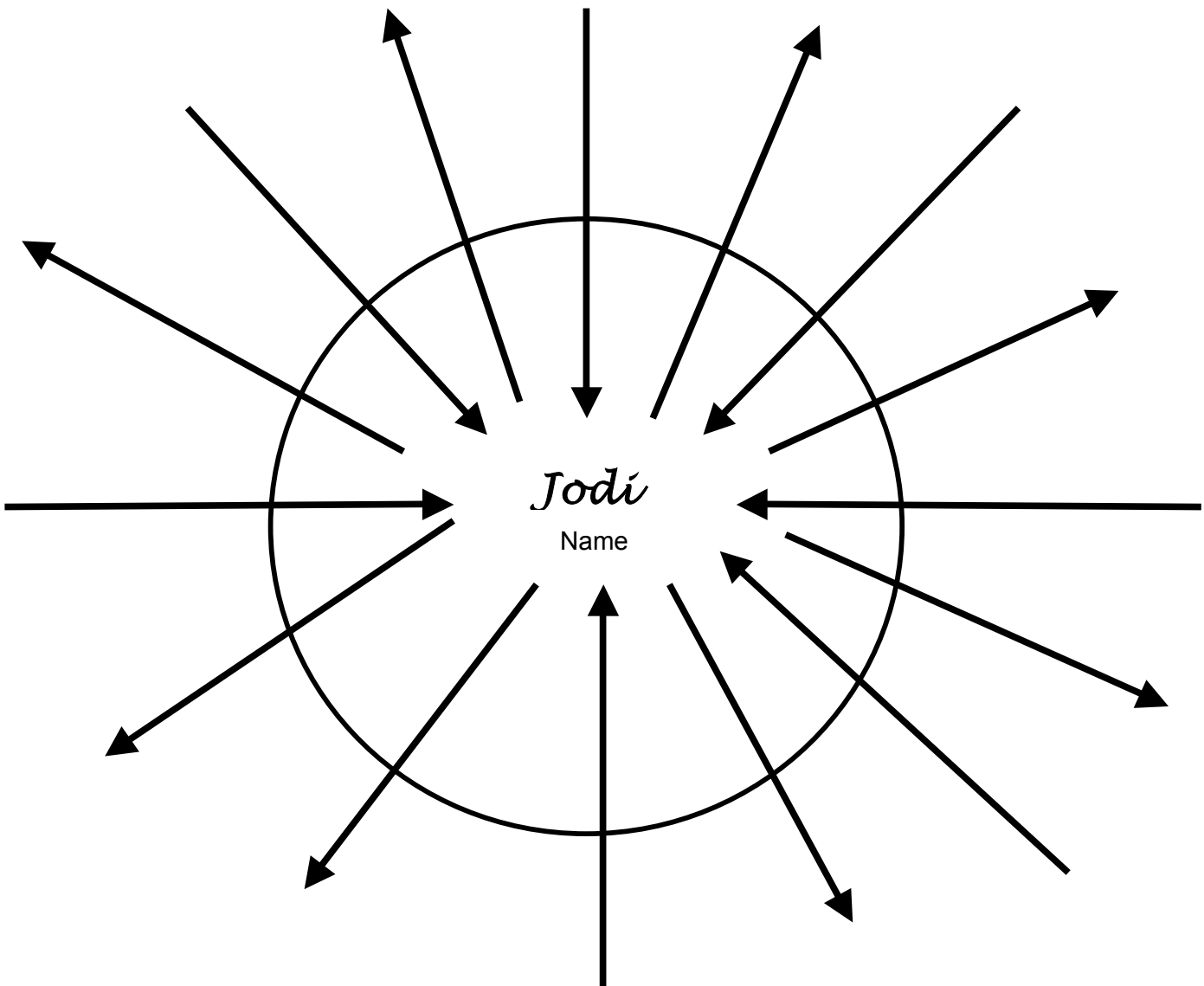
FULL OR EMPTY? THAT IS THE QUESTION!

Goal: To search nurturing and depleting influences in our lives in order to put the positive and negative into perspective.

Instructions:

Give each teen a full or empty handout. Teens can write on the “out” arrows all the activities, experiences, circumstances or feelings that deplete their energy.

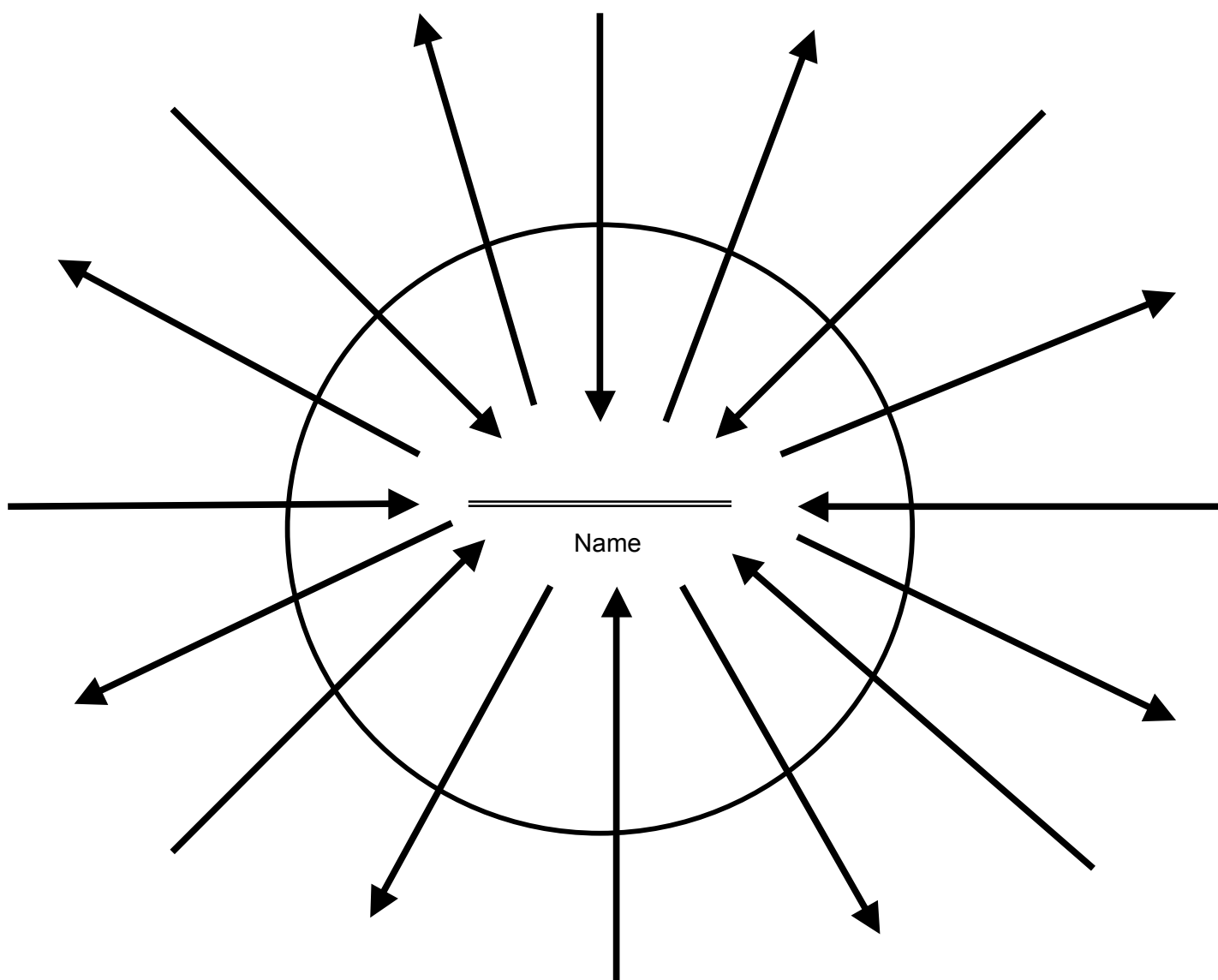
Arrows “in” are for that which nurtures, enriches or gives us joy. More arrows may be added or not all arrows need to be used. For visual emphasis, use contrasting colors. When finished, count the “ins” and “outs”. Discuss what the ratio means in terms of our energy levels and self-care.



FULL OR EMPTY? THAT IS THE QUESTION!

Instructions:

1. Put your name in the center of the circle.
2. Using a colored pen, write on arrows going “out” the activities, experiences, circumstances or feelings that deplete you.
3. Using a different colored pen, write on arrows going “in” what nurtures, energizes, enriches or just feels good to you. You may add more arrows or not use them all.
4. Count the number of arrows in and the arrows out: IN _____ OUT _____
5. What does this tell you about your life?



FOUR FEELINGS

Age Level: 10 years – Adult

Time Required: Minimum 45 minutes – Flexible

Materials Needed: Paper divided into four sections or pre-printed page
Pencils, crayons and/or felt tip pens

Goals:

1. Identify and express feelings we may have never recognized or understood.
2. Increased understanding of ourselves and others, especially related to grief.
3. Build self-esteem by validation.

Description of Activity:

1. Distribute sheets of paper and give directions. Participants go to tables to work.
2. Paper is divided into four parts. Each part is labeled:
 - I feel guilty when . . .
 - I feel scared when . . .
 - I feel lonely when . . .
 - I feel better when . . .
3. They can write or draw their response on the paper.
4. Share while still at the table.

Kid Talk, Good Samaritan Hospice

FUTURE FEARS

When someone important in our life dies, we not only lose that person, but we lose the expectation of those things we would be doing with them in the future. As an example: If I am a 16 year old girl and my father dies, the expectation of having my father walk me down the aisle when I get married is not shattered. If I am a boy who loved to go fishing with my dad all the time, his death makes it impossible for me to fish with him ever again. If I am a girl who really enjoyed cooking with my mom, cooking now, without her, could be very painful. If I used to double-date with my brother or sister a lot, dating may feel very different now. If my grandmother was the safest person in my life to talk to, I may have trouble trusting anyone else with my private thoughts and feel like I have to now keep them all to myself.

With these thoughts in mind, please respond to the following:

Now that _____ is no longer alive, I am afraid I will have to experience _____

without him/her.

Now that _____ is no longer alive, I know I will be expected to _____

After responding to the above, please share what options you might have to make the experiences described above less painful.

GARBAGE IN . . . GARBAGE OUT

Picture yourself walking into a room and there, in the middle of the room, you find a large container of garbage. This garbage looks bad and smells bad. What do you think you would do? If you had a need to be in the room, my guess is that you would get rid of the garbage before you did anything else. The sight and smell of the garbage would be a real distraction, and it could keep you from getting things done. Isn't it interesting . . . most of us would have very little tolerance for staying in a room full of garbage; but the garbage we hold onto in our mind is something we often hold on to with a vengeance . . . as though it had great value. Let me give you some examples of garbage thoughts:

"I hate my teacher. She is ugly and boring. I wish I didn't have to be in her class."

"I had a fight with my friend and now she is dead. I'll never forgive myself."

"I know I'll never be good in math, so why bother."

"I hate my body. I'll never get a date looking like this."

"If I had just insisted that my sister not drive home with her drunk boyfriend, she would be alive today."

"I'll never be anything in this life. Life's just too hard."

"I'll never forgive Jim for taking my girlfriend away from me . . . never!"

Now, take a few minutes to list those negative thoughts that you tend to hold onto. These thoughts can be about anything. Try to think of those negative thoughts that come to your mind most frequently.

Garbage Thoughts:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Look at your list. After giving it some thought, ask yourself "What benefit do I get out of holding onto this negative thought? Believe it or not, there is a reason why we hold onto these thoughts or we wouldn't bother with them. Let me give you some examples:

"I hate my teacher. She is ugly and boring. I wish I didn't have to be in her class."

Benefit: If I am not doing well in this class, it is easier to blame my teacher's appearance and personality on my performance than it is to find ways to have a better experience in her classroom. Granted, there are some boring teachers, but in the future, you are bound to run across boring supervisors and/or co-workers as well. Why give them the power to determine your experience? Take control and be responsible for a more positive outcome,

"I had a fight with my friend and now she is dead. I'll never forgive myself."

Benefit: Sometimes, when someone dies, we feel guilty for being alive or for experiencing any feelings of happiness. By never forgiving ourselves, we have found a way to punish ourselves for being alive and for having had a fight with a good friend. Another question you might ask yourself, "Do I need to punish myself because of my friend's death, or is there something else going on? Punishing ourselves will not bring him/her back or erase the past, but it can get in the way of our healing process.

"I know I'll never be good in math, so why bother."

Benefit: If I have decided that I will never be good in math, it relieves me of the responsibility of finding ways to improve. This statement says that I am helpless, which is not true. We all have choices in the way we perceive any situation.

"I hate my body. I'll never get a date looking like this."

Benefit: Choosing to hate your body suggests that you have no control over your appearance. By seeing ourselves as having no control, we have put ourselves in the "victim" role and victims never feel responsible for what happens in their life. Something else to think about . . . our appearance does not make up the sum total of a relationship. How we communicate with others in a relationship is just as important. You might ask yourself, do I feel worthy of a dating relationship?

The above examples may not refer to you at all. These examples are here to help you think about your own situation. No matter what happens to us in life, we always have a choice as to how we perceive those things that come along our path. As an example:

Jane **loves** shopping at the mall. When she gets to the mall, she feels her energy rising. She loves the crowds, the music in the stores and deciding what to buy.

Mary hates shopping at the mall. When she gets to the mall, she starts to feel tired. She hates the crowds, the music irritates her and she has a hard time deciding what to buy.

It is important to know that Jane and Mary went to the same mall. Nothing in the mall changed. The only thing that was different was their perception of the mall experience.

Making changes in our life can be very difficult, even when we want to make a positive change. The reason change is difficult is because we are having to say goodbye to a behavior that is very familiar to us. We may not like our present behavior, but we have a pretty good idea of the outcome. Because the outcome is familiar, it feels safe, whereas change may feel risky because we are not sure that to expect as a result.

*Linda Cunningham
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I FEEL SCARED WHEN

I FEEL GUILTY WHEN

I FEEL LONELY WHEN

I FEEL BETTER WHEN

Kid Talk, Good

Samaritan Hospice

1-12d

HOW DO YOU FEEL TODAY?

Age Level: Kids and Teens

Time Required: Adaptable

Materials Needed: Age appropriate copy of “How Do You Feel?”,
Crayons or markers

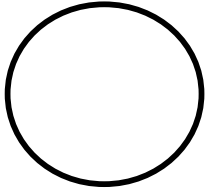
Goals:

1. Understand that each of us may have different feelings at the same time.
2. Validate our feelings
3. Teach words for feelings.

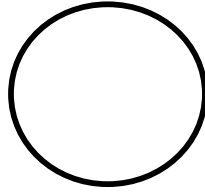
Description of Activity:

Distribute age appropriate copy of “How Do You Feel?” Discuss feelings of grief and feelings we’d have anyway – that we had before the death. Color the faces that fit you at this moment. Use a different color for your feelings the day of the funeral, the day _____ died, the day you went back to school, etc.

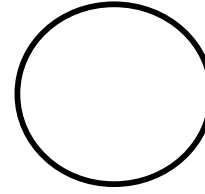
HOW DO YOU FEEL?



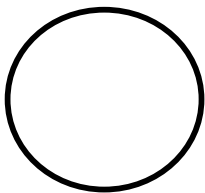
AGGRESSIVE



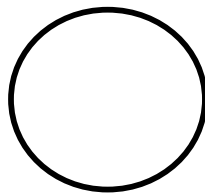
ANXIOUS



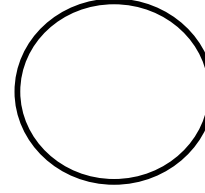
APOLOGETIC



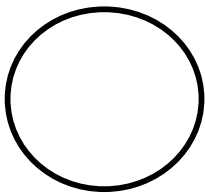
BORED



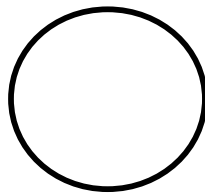
CONFIDENT



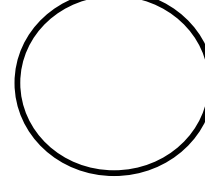
CURIOUS



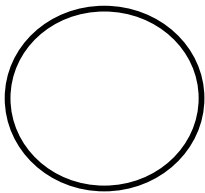
DISAPPOINTED



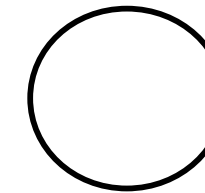
ENRAGED



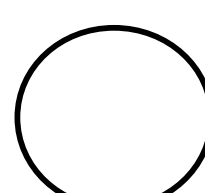
FRIGHTENED



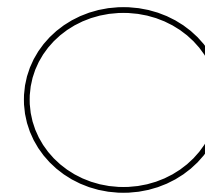
HAPPY



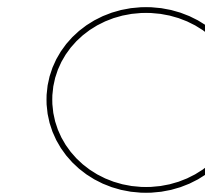
HURT



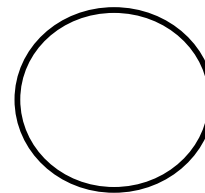
LONELY



SAD



SATISFIED



SHOCKED

SHY

HAPPY

SILLY

COOL

Draw a Face how

WORRIED

YOU feel today

ANGRY

RELIEVED

SLEEPY

LOVED

WEEPY

JEALOUS

TICKLED

CONFUSED

SMART

JOURNAL FOR THE WEEK

Each day of the week, please answer the following three questions:

1. **How do I feel about myself today?**
2. **Did I punish myself in any way today? If so, how?**
3. **Did I nurture myself today in any way? If so, how?**

At the end of the week, look to see if you have a pattern of behavior. Are you good about taking care of yourself or are you hard on yourself? What was the most constant feeling you had about yourself this week?

MONDAY _____

TUESDAY _____

WEDNESDAY _____

THURSDAY _____

FRIDAY _____

KLEENEX TOSS

Give a box of kleenex to each group member. Form a circle and sit on the floor. With a kleenex box in front of each person, let the group verbally express feelings of anger or frustration as they quickly pull and toss kleenex from their box. Have the group continue until all the kleenex is out of every box.

Ask the group how they felt when they entered the-room and how they feel after tossing the kleenex. Most people seem to experience an increase in energy and a lighter, happier feeling. After this brief discussion, have each person gather up his/her kleenex.

Now ask one person to sit in the center of the circle. On the count of three, all people in the circle shower the person in the center with kleenex. As they toss the kleenex they express all their good wishes for this person. For many young people, this is the first experience they have had where they are the center of attention in a very positive way.

Participants often comment on the softness of the tissue as it touches them and the tenderness that that evokes along with the good wishes. This is a very popular activity.

Note: Other suggested activities for encouraging the expression of frustration and anger are -- throwing ice cubes or raw eggs at a tree, or screaming in a pillow.



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LETTER TO THE DECEASED

When someone dies, we do not always have the opportunity to say "goodbye" Perhaps we are left feeling as though we should have said what was in our hearts and didn't, or we are feeling guilty for things we wish we had not said. Writing a letter to the person who died can be helpful in expressing unresolved feelings. Below is a letter written by grandson to his grandmother after her death.

After reading this letter to your teens, it is important to let them know that this letter was written by a 50 year-old man who was saying goodbye to his grandmother for the first time. This is a man who finds it extremely difficult visiting friends in hospitals or attending funerals. He has suffered from insomnia most of his life. His grandmother died when he was eight years old and he went on to share that, when he was 17, his girlfriend was "mysteriously killed" in a hunting accident. Writing this letter was his first opportunity to acknowledge painful feelings he had carried with him for a lifetime. The point to this is that grief does not just go away in time. If we do not actively acknowledge our feelings of loss and take care of ourselves in the process, our unresolved and confused feelings will continue to enter into other areas of our life without our realizing it. This man experienced tremendous relief after writing this letter. He had only wished that someone had been there for him years ago!

Dear Grandma,

I always liked going to see you. I felt so at home there. It just seemed you and Grandpa were the way grandparents should be. Your death confused me, Grandma. Now you're my Grandma and now you're gone. You didn't even say good-bye. AU of a sudden, you get pneumonia and then we get a call telling us you're dead. I felt an 'immediate loss. I felt empty. I felt betrayed and abandoned. I needed to talk to someone, but I had no listeners. I was on my own to figure this out myself. Aunt Ruth helped me the most when she told me your spirit would be with me forever. That helped.

The funeral was the topper. I remember sitting there watching you lie 'in that coffin. The smell of the flowers remains with me. I would sit and stare at you, so frail, so peaked, so peaceful, so dead and gone. Then I would swear I could see you move. Morn shook her head "no" when I would tell her I saw you move. Then the soft organ music. Why that tear-jerking music? Did you really want that Grandma? That just made it worse. I really felt crummy and empty. Is that normal? Did that have to be? I still see you there, gone! This confuses me. I never said good-bye to you. I never knew how.

The procession to the cemetery was a real gem, too. I remember the long, winding road. It seemed we were never going to get there. I did feel privileged though, riding in the family car. I never saw Dad cry before. That left an 'impression on me. I remember sniffing and he looked at me with disapproval. When we finally reached the cemetery, they opened the coffin again. Why? Why more torture?

Grandma, I needed to talk to someone. I needed to talk to someone that understood these things. So much confusion. Grandma! I'm angry still, Grandma. I still feel the tears, Grandma. I would love to know where you are with all this. Do you approve? There has to be a better way.

Linda Cunningham Copyright 1997

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E-mail = tag@smartlink.net

Home Page = <http://www.srnartlink.net/~Tag/>

HANDOUT

If you are finding it difficult to write your letter to the person who has died, feel free to use this outline to help you.

Dear...

I remember when you...

The hardest part about your death for me is...

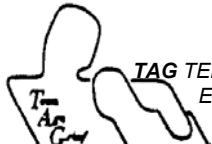
It would have been nice if...

I'm really sorry for...

My best time with you was...

If you were here right now, I would...

Thank you for...



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E-mail = tag@smartlink.net

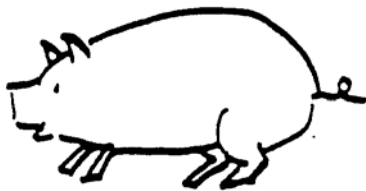
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LIGHT-HEARTED PERSONALITY PROFILE

This exercise may be used to illustrate the different personality traits that all of us possess. It is not based on psychology or fact. The intent is to have a good time exploring who we are. We may be a person who tends to be stubborn. This trait can be seen in both a positive and negative light. Sometimes, it is important to be stubborn in holding on to the beliefs that make us whole or in being determined to do a good job. On the other hand, we may be stubborn in our willingness to listen to others when they have something important to say. The idea is to look at our traits and see how they can help or hinder us in living a more meaningful life.

Instructions: On a blank piece of paper, ask your teens to draw their interpretation of a pig. Encourage them not to look at one another's drawings but to simply "do their own thing". Provide no additional instructions. There is no right or wrong way to do this exercise. What we do want them to do is have fun looking at themselves after the drawings are interpreted. When they complete their drawings, encourage them to share them with the group. Now you can suggest that their drawing could be interpreted as follows if their pig is drawn:



- ◆ Toward the top of the paper, you are a positive, optimistic person.
- ◆ Toward the middle of the page (top to bottom), you may be a realist.
- ◆ Toward the bottom of the page, you may be pessimistic in your thoughts and attitude.
- ◆ Pig facing left, you may believe in tradition, tend to be friendly, and remember dates (including birthdays).
- ◆ Facing forward, (looking toward you) you may tend to be direct in your interactions with people, neither fearing nor avoiding discussions.
- ◆ Facing right, you may be innovative and active but have difficulty remembering dates.
- ◆ With many details, you may be analytical, cautious, and a bit distrustful.
- ◆ With few details, you may tend to be emotional and care little for details and also be a risk-taker.
- ◆ With four legs showing, you tend to be secure, stubborn and stick to your ideals.
- ◆ With less than four legs showing, you may feel less secure or are living through a period of major change.
- ◆ The size of the pig's ears indicate how good a listener you are.
- ◆ The length of the tail (more is better) indicates the quality of your social life.

Adapted with permission from Gordon Cotton, Marine Atlantic, Inc. Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada

1-17

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(805) 253-1932

MEMORIAL ACTIVITY

Several weeks prior to your last session, encourage your teens to think of ways they can memorialize their loved one. In the past, participants have brought guitars and sung songs that were meaningful, such as "Time in a Bottle". Some have brought recorded music and others have read poems or shared their letter written to the deceased. Picture albums are frequently brought in as well.

If time permits, focus on one teenager and have each member of the group share the strengths they see in that individual. Now, rotate to the next teen and repeat until each person has had a turn. This exercise is difficult for most because it is so emotional. It is important for two reasons:

1. Each teenager has his or her strengths acknowledged. When we are grieving, we are very vulnerable and in special need of validation.
2. This exercise is a form of closure for the group. Saying good-bye to people who understand and support you is difficult but essential.

Facilitators are encouraged to participate both as receivers and senders of good wishes.

Encourage your group to exchange phone numbers, if comfortable, so they have continued support available to them. At this time, you can invite them to repeat the TAG experience, if interested. Many teens find that participating a second time works very well . . . it brings up new issues for them personally and also gives them the experience of reaching out to new participants.

MEMORIAL QUILT

Age Level:

Time Required:

Materials Needed: White cotton fabric 9' X 9" square
Fabric paints
Markers
Applique items
Decorative glitter

Goals:

- Memorialize.
- Facilitate talking about the person who died while working on their square.
- Unify group and sense of belonging

Description of Activity:

1. Each child is given a blank square of fabric to decorate with the name of the sibling or parent who died. The squares don't have to be washable so there is a lot of leeway in how they are decorated.
2. A seam allowance of 1/2" should be allowed all around the square so it can be seamed or sashed together.
3. The group can vote on a favorite fabric to sash together.
4. A sleeve can be sewn on the back so the piece can be hung.

Variation: Using squares or circles of colored paper, design a block to represent the deceased family member. Hole punch corners or circle quadrants and tie them together with colored yarn.

Submitted by: BRIDGES: A Center for Grieving Children

MEMORY BASKET

Age Level:

All

Time Required:

Flexible

Materials Needed:

Basket, shells, rocks, soft things
Clothing, potpourri, toys, pins, etc.
Seasonal items like fall leaves or pine cones are useful.

Goals:

Opener / discussion-starter for all ages.
Evokes feelings and memories through our senses.

Description of Activity:

1. Fill a basket with all different items (shells, rocks, stuffed animals, clothes, pins, toys, potpourri, using anything that might bring some special meaning or memory.
2. The basket is passed from person to person around the group during "check-in." Each participant has the opportunity to share the significance of the object he/she chose.
3. The object is returned to the basket when the group member is finished speaking.

Variation: The object may be retained for the duration of the group and then replaced in the basket as a part of the group closing ritual.

MEMORIES

Please draw one of your favorite memories with the person who died.
(Consider taking this memory and thinking back on it when you need strength and comfort.)

Please draw one of your more difficult memories.
(Think about what you can learn from this experience and consider ways you can release the pain without hurting yourself or others.)

Facilitator Exercise:

MEMORY MURAL

When you know who is going to be in your group, purchase a roll of banner or butcher paper and divide it into sections with a marker - one section for each teen in the group. Place the name of the teen at the top of each section and invite the teens to write or draw anything they would like about the person who has died in their life. Roll out this mural and have it available at every meeting so that teens can add to their section each week. At the last meeting, cut out each section of the mural and give them to the teens to take home. Make it clear that no one but group members will see this mural, as these group meetings are confidential.

This mural is much like a journal. By the time you end your series, the teens will be able to view their recovery progress while creating something tangible in memory of their loved one.

Activity Check List:

- Roll of mural paper
- Colored pens, markers and/or crayons
- Tape to display banner
- Rubber band to keep banner rolled up between meetings

Our thanks to Faith Lemke of The Life Transition Center in Buffalo, New York for sharing this idea. She has been providing grief support groups for teens for the last two years.



MOVE

Goal: Ice breaker. Shows commonly shared interests, similar to musical chairs

Description of Activity:

- ◆ Have chairs in a circle with one extra chair than number of people.
- ◆ Facilitator reads statements and if you can answer "yes" to the statement, then you must move to an empty chair.
- ◆ About 20 statements are read, beginning with very general statements and getting more personal.

- ◆ "Everyone who likes burgers and fries better than pizza, MOVE"
- ◆ "Everyone who has a vegetarian in your family, MOVE"
- ◆ "Everyone who is wearing blue jeans right now, MOVE"
- ◆ "Everyone who went out to the movies within the last month, MOVE"
- ◆ "Everyone who was born out of state, MOVE"
- ◆ "Everyone who plays tennis or racquetball or ping pong, MOVE"
- ◆ "Everyone who has played baseball or basketball, MOVE"
- ◆ "Everyone who has played football or wrestling, MOVE"
- ◆ "Everyone who has done swimming, skiing, or snow boarding, MOVE"
- ◆ "Everyone who has changed schools within the last year, MOVE"
- ◆ "Everyone who has pierced ears, MOVE"
- ◆ "Everyone who has had a disagreement with parents about pierced ears, MOVE"
- ◆ "Everyone who has had a pet die, MOVE"
- ◆ "Everyone who has had a funeral for a pet, MOVE"
- ◆ "Everyone who has visited a sick person in the hospital, MOVE"
- ◆ "Everyone who has been to a cemetery, MOVE"
- ◆ "Everyone who has listens to music when you are sad, MOVE"
- ◆ "Everyone who has felt like crying while listening to music, MOVE"
- ◆ "Everyone who has had a disagreement with a friend in the last 2 weeks, MOVE"
- ◆ "Everyone who has made peace with that friend after the argument, MOVE"
- ◆ "Everyone who has had an argument with your parents within the last 2 weeks, MOVE"
- ◆ "Everyone who has made peace with their parents after the argument, MOVE"

- ◆ "Everyone who feels like it is harder to talk to your parents now, than it was when you were a little kid, MOVE"

End with: "Everyone who thinks life is unfair, MOVE."

NOW AND THEN

Age Level: Kids and teens

Time Required: 1 hour

Materials Needed: Markers
Cut up magazine
Glue and paper

Goals:

1. Identify and express changes that have occurred because of death.
2. Stimulate dialogue about our feeling responses to change.

Description of Activity:

1. Draw a line down the middle of the page.
2. Have participants draw/paste pictures of their family before and after death.
3. What has changed? What is the same?

QUESTION BASKET

Age Level: Teen to adult

Time Required: 30 min. - 1 hr

Materials Needed: Pre-made cards and basket

Goals:

1. To provide a chance to share and become aware of changes in themselves and their families.
2. Explore the negative and positive aspects of these changes.
3. Discover commonality/universality of feelings/experiences with peer group.

Description of Activity:

A basket holding the pre-written cards is passed around the group.

A card is picked and read out loud. Each person may respond to the question. When everyone has had their say, the basket is passed to the next person and the process continues.

See sample questions.

Variation: Participants are asked to write "I used to be....but now...." as many times as they choose. These are read without comment and followed by discussion of common threads.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

For Question Basket

1. Before the death, my biggest responsibility was _____. Today it's _____.
2. Before the death, my most loved possession was _____. Today my most loved possession is _____.
3. Before the death, my biggest fear was _____. Today my biggest fear is _____.
4. What about you has changed lately without your permission?
5. If you could change how you were told of the death, what would you do differently?
6. How do other members of your family express their grief?
7. How do you feel when someone says, "I know just what you're going through?"
8. How has your success in school been influenced by this death?
9. If you could change parts of the funeral, what would you do differently?
10. Describe one of the most special sympathy cards or letters you received?
11. When you feel like expressing your grief, who do you choose to be with and why?
12. What advice have you received that was helpful for you in coping with your grief?
13. Anger is a common response to loss and grief. Give a recent example of such anger in your life.
14. In what ways have your hopes and plans for the future changed as a result of the death?
15. Describe what it is like for you to visit the cemetery.
16. Complete this statement: "When I feel like crying, I . . ."
17. What advice would you give a funeral director or minister in terms of helping grieving people, especially young people?

ROSE PETALS: CLOSING RITUAL

2
4

- Age Level:** All
- Time Required:** 10-15 minutes
- Materials Needed:** One or two fresh roses
- Objective:**
1. Memorialize
 2. Validate loss/healing process

Description of Activity:

1. When this ritual is introduced, the person explaining it may refer to the rose symbolizing love and beauty, the thorns and challenge, etc.
2. A rose is passed around.
3. As each person receives the rose, she/he takes a petal in honor of the person who died and/or his/her healing journey.

ROUGH MOUNTAIN / SMOOTH MOUNTAIN

Age Level: All

Time Required: Flexible

Materials Needed: Paper, water colors markers

Goals:

1. To identify rough spots when someone dies.
2. What are danger places, changes, relationships, location, physical differences that happen in our lives when someone dies.

Description of Activity:

1. Draw a picture of a mountain with one side having crevices that are dangerous spots and the other side being smooth.
2. Have them explain how the crevices represent the tough times in their lives and how they got there. And explain to them that the smooth side of the mountain means they still have work to do but it's much easier.
3. They can share while they are drawing, or after they are done.

SHIELD

<u>Age Level:</u>	All (Adaptable)
<u>Time Required:</u>	30-45 minutes
<u>Materials Needed:</u>	Paper with shield drawn and divided into fourths, felt pens, crayons, yarn or anything used to decorate.

Goals:

1. To discuss safety and who or what feels safe to the child after a trauma like death.
- 2.
3. To allow for discussions regarding safety in the group.

Description of Activity:

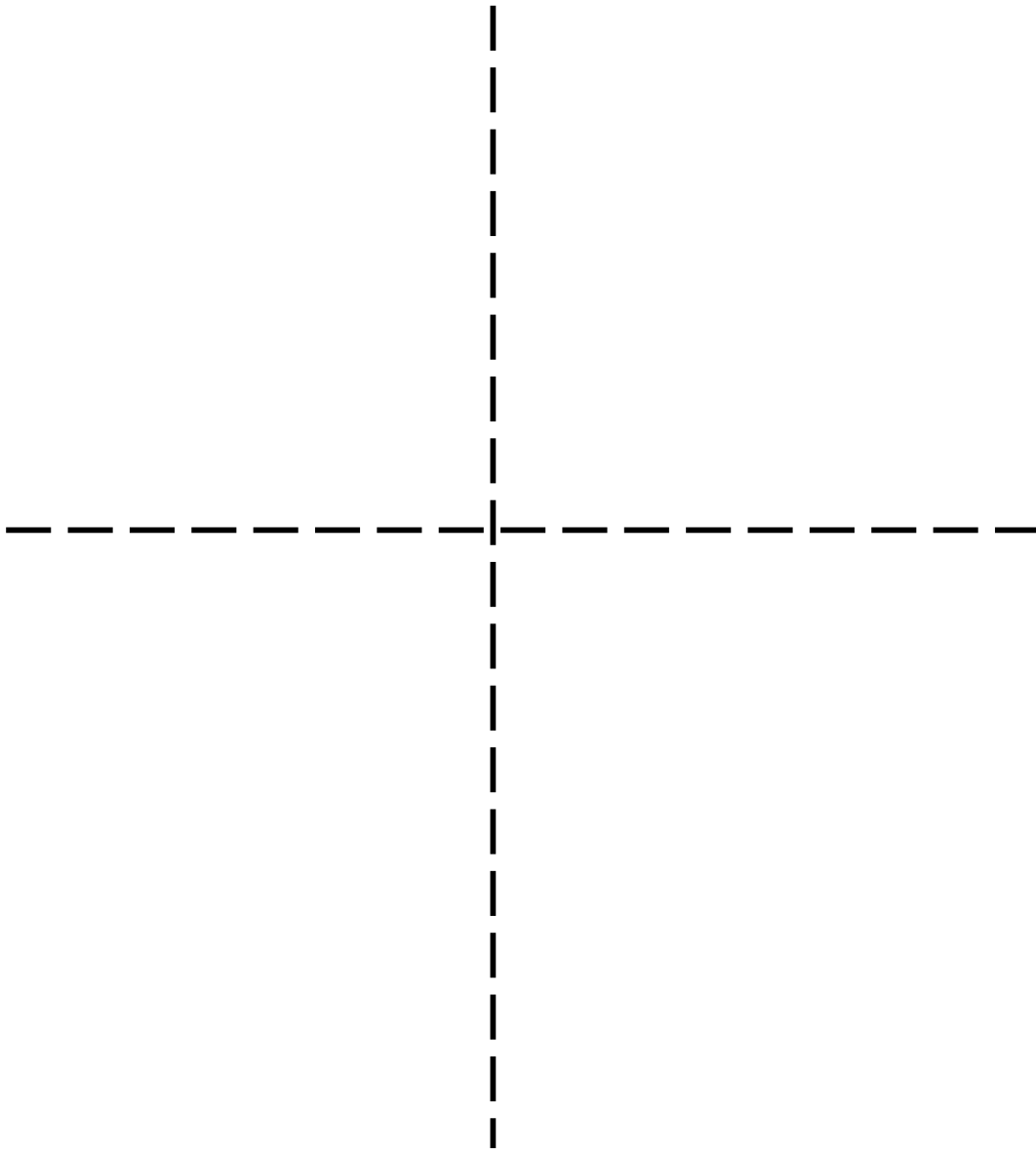
Initial discussion is around how people protect themselves – How the Greeks and Romans used shields in war and how shields provided ways to avoid arrows.

1. Children sit in a circle to discuss places and people that feel safe for them.
2. Discuss how things have changed since the death.
3. Discuss how this group, room and these people will also provide safety.
4. Suggest that the children use the four quadrants of the shield to draw things that represent four areas of their lives.
 - The safest person in their world
 - The safest place (home, school, someplace outside)
 - An “alternative” way to feel safe – reading, drawing listening too music, playing Nintendo, etc.
 - A belief that helps you feel safe: God or Jesus, heaven, the ocean, whatever
5. Bring the shields back to the group. Invite kids to talk about things that help kids feel safe. Talk about safety.

Variation: Some children (especially the boys) like to create armor for their arms and legs. Follow with the discussion about how people were safe in “olden days”. Allow some time for this to happen.

SAFE PERSON

SAFEPLACE IN NATURE



ALTERNATIVE WAY TO FEEL SAFE

SAFE BELIEF

TIMELINE

<u>Age Level:</u>	6-18 (Adaptable)
<u>Time Required:</u>	20 minutes
<u>Materials Needed:</u>	Paper, pencils and crayons
<u>Goals:</u>	To provide the child with an opportunity to see all the important events in his/her life.
<u>Note:</u>	<i>Attention should be placed on happy events as well as losses.</i>

Description of Activity:

Have the children draw a horizontal line on a piece of paper and fill in the last birthday they had.

Have them choose the next most recent event in his/her life that feels important. They can draw pictures. Fill that in with corresponding age. Continue to have them fill in the important events in their life (example attached).

Provide time for each child to share his/her work. Suggest that they may see very different kinds of events as important.

Note: *An additional concept of a graph can be added to this activity for older children. High, medium and low graph lines allow the event to reflect the feelings of the time.*

TIME LINE

GREAT

OKAY

NOT SO GOOD

SYMBOL

YEAR

The Times of My Life

Draw pictures that show special happenings in your life from birth to today.

The form consists of 15 empty square boxes arranged in a descending staircase pattern from top-left to bottom-right. The top-most box is labeled "Birth" and the bottom-most box is labeled "Today".

TALKING STICK

Age Level: All

Time Required: 3-4 minutes for introduction

Materials Needed: We have a talking stick made by Native Americans with beads, fur and eagle feathers.

For an economy version, wrap a wire hanger's cardboard with yarn, adding beads, fake fur and feathers.

Goals:

1. Explain that beads represent earth and people.
2. Fur represents God's creatures.
3. Eagle represents truth.

Description of Activity:

When holding the talking stick, we always tell the truth and others listen to our words.

ASSIGNMENT FOR THE WEEK:

TOMBSTONE ACTIVITY

THANKFUL ALPHABET THOUGHTS

This is what I would write on your tombstone so that anyone who would read it would have an idea of the person you were.

When we are grieving, it is easy to see only what we have *lost* and little or nothing of what we *have*. During the week, using the alphabet as a guide, list those things that you are happy about having in your life. All the things you think about do not have to be serious or profound. As an example, when you start with the letter "A" you can list something as simple as "Apples", if apples bring you pleasure. Listed below are some examples to help you get started:

- A - Apples _____
- B - Butter _____
- C - Cookies _____
- D - Dogs _____
- E - Eggs _____
- F - Flowers _____
- G - Gum _____
- H - House _____
- I - Ideas _____
- J - Jam _____
- K - Kleenex _____
- L - Lemons _____
- M - Money _____
- N - Nuts _____
- O - Ohio _____
- P - Plants _____
- Q - Quilts _____
- R - Red (color) _____
- S - Stamps _____
- T - Trains _____
- U - Umbrella _____
- V - Vision _____
- W - Walks _____
- X - X-rays _____
- Y - Yellow (color) _____
- Z - Zebras _____



Directions: Type each question on a 3X5 card. Put all cards together, face down, in a pile. Have participants draw a card and share their response.

2. At the time of the death,' who in your family was most helpful? Why?

6. If you could change the funeral, what would you do differently?

Taken from FIRE IN MY HEART-ICE IN MY VEINS with permission from author, Enid Samuel Traisman, M.S.W. Centering Corporation, 1531 N. Saddle Creek Rd., Omaha, NE 68104
Phone: 402-553-1200 Fax: 402-553-0507.

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THE UNGAME

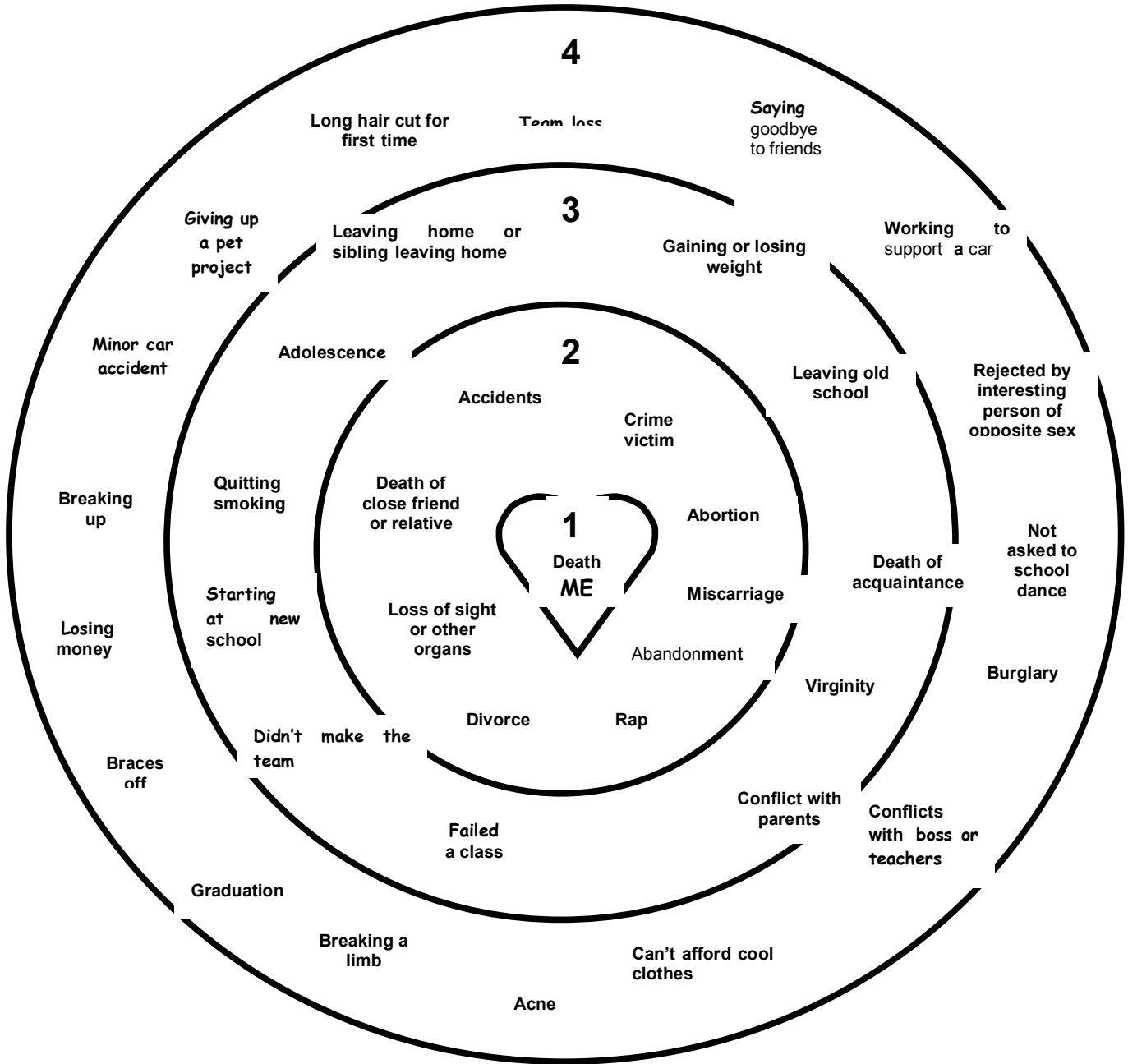
1. If you could change how you were told of the death, what would you have done differently?
2. Comment on people who tell a grieving friend, "Call me if you need anything."
4. How meaningful were cards and flowers from friends at the time of the death and funeral?
5. Did you feel included in all the funeral arrangements at the time, or were you left out?
7. Describe how your attitude and/or success in school have been affected by the death of someone close to you.
8. How do you feel when someone says to you, "I know just what you're going through." or "I know just how you feel. "
9. What advice would you give a minister, priest, doctor, or funeral director in terms of helping a grieving person - what would be most helpful for them to do?
10. In what ways has this death either strengthened or weakened your religious beliefs?
11. Do you feel that your relationships with friends have changed because the death occurred? If so, describe the changes.
12. How did the other members of your family express grief?
13. What was the most difficult thing for you to handle *about* the funeral?
14. What was the most positive thing you remember about the funeral?
15. Describe how the death has influenced communication between members of your family.

16. Share how the stage of denial affected you shortly after you learned of the death. How does it still affect you?
17. When you feel like expressing your grief now, who do you choose to be with and why?
18. What advice have you received that was most helpful for you in coping with your grief?
19. What positive ways have you grown as a person as a result of this death?
20. In what ways have your plans or hopes for the future changed as a result of the death?
21. How do you cope with holidays, special occasions, like the dead person's birth - day, the anniversary of their death, etc.?
22. Anger is a common response to loss and grief. Describe how that applies to your situation.
23. Which feelings surrounding the death are the most difficult for you to deal with now . . . anger, guilt, loneliness, or what?
24. Have your attitudes toward what is most important in life been influenced by the recent death or loss?
25. If you could see your loved one who died one more time, what would you say to him/her?

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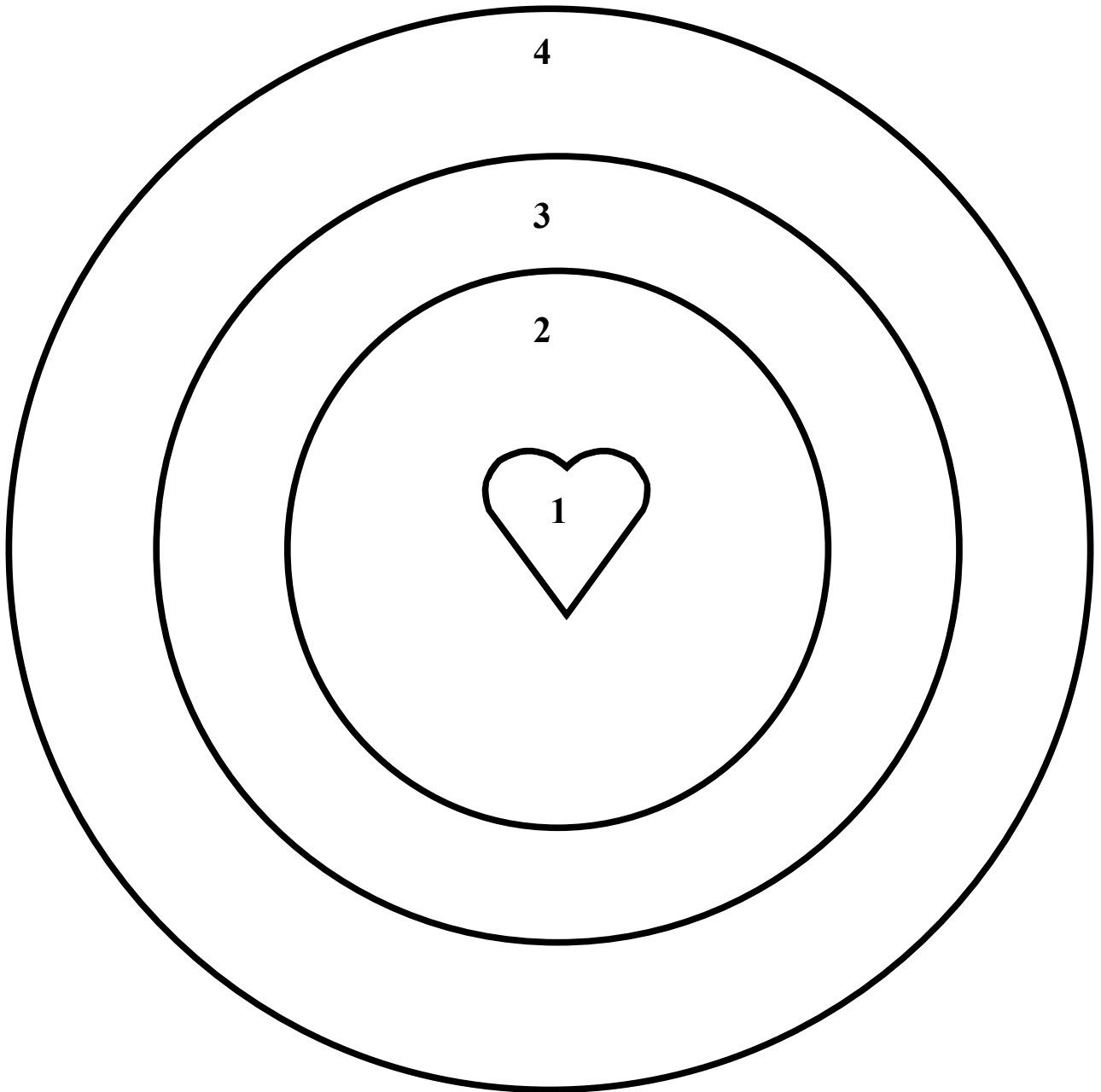


UNPACK YOUR GRIEF BUNDLE



Adapted for teenagers from
 O'Connor, Nancy, *Letting Go With Love: The Grieving Process*,
 1989, Bantam, New York, "Relative positions of loss to self" Good Smaaritan Hospice, Puyallup, WA

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VICTIMS DON'T HEAL!

When someone special in our lives dies, it is easy to think that everything that goes wrong in our life thereafter is a direct result of our loss. There is no question that the death of someone will bring about changes in our life, but how we perceive these changes will make the difference as to whether you see yourself empowered in what you do or victimized in what you do. The empowered person will heal, the victimized person will not. By seeking support as you have, you have chosen to heal. Please list those things that you can do or those thoughts or beliefs systems that you can hold onto to avoid being a victim.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

WHAT DO YOU NEED?

When grieving, many people do not let others know what they need, because they feel they will be burdening them with their pain or they make the assumption that people should already know what they need *without* telling them. These two assumptions relieve the bereaved of the responsibility of letting others know what they need. When we make assumptions for others and see lack of communication as being “their” fault, we put ourselves in the role of “victim” and “victims” do not heal. A victim always assumes that someone else should know what to do or say or assumes that others just do not want to be bothered. The contrary is often more the reality. When we have a friend or family member who is grieving, sometimes we may not say or do anything simply because we are afraid of saying or doing the wrong thing. This is not done to *hurt* the bereaved, but instead, the intentions are to *protect* the bereaved. This is why it is so important, as the bereaved person, to let others know what you need.

IN THE GROUP SETTING, discuss the typical feelings that come up as we grieve, such as anger, sadness and confusion. After defining various feelings, focus on two, such as anger and sadness. Go around the group in a circle with each feeling and ask, as an example, “What is it you need from this group when you are feeling sad and tearful?” Each person will then answer. Sample responses might be, “When I am tearful, I really need people to let me alone – I probably would want to *pass*”, or “When I am tearful, I need others to ask me questions to help me get in touch with what I am feeling.” If a person says they want to be left alone, a question the facilitator might ask is, “Is it all right to ask you later on, after the sadness is more in control, what is happening?” This is an important question as many people cannot verbalize their feelings when they are intense but do have a need to talk about them later.

Telling the group what they need is an important exercise to do by the second or third meeting. This establishes respect for others and also enforces the importance of being responsible for our needs and how we communicate.

WHAT GOT ME HERE

Age Level: All

Time Required: 20-30 minutes (flexible)

Materials Needed:

1. Three pieces of tag board, 6 x 12 with holes punched in two corners of two pieces
2. Sand four corners of one piece (which becomes the middle piece)
3. Yarn and markers

Goal:

Establish commonality and connectedness with sharing first session of a series.

Description of Activity:

- a. Label first piece "Who Are You?" Child puts his/her name.
- b. Label second piece "Who Died?" Name person who died.
- c. Label third piece "Circumstances or Cause". Write the circumstance or the cause of death here.
- d. Then have kids share with the group.
- e. After sharing, children can hang them on the wall.

WHAT HAS CHANGED IN YOUR LIFE?

Please put a check mark next to any of the changes that have taken place in your life:

HOME AND FAMILY:

- A family member died
- Had a change in residence
- Parents got a divorce
- Family member moved away
- Added a new family member (birth, adoption, step parent, other person moved in)
- Got a new family pet
- Family pet died
- Family feuding with relatives
- Family income increased/decreased
- Other _____

PERSONAL/SOCIAL:

- Have a new boyfriend / girlfriend
- Broke up with my boyfriend/girlfriend
- Started or stopped school or college
- A friend died
- Experienced loss, theft or damage of personal property
- Had problems with law enforcement
- Had a change in religious beliefs
- Had a change in personal finances
- Got a new job/lost my job
- Having problems at school
- Other _____

HEALTH:

- Experienced illness or injury
- Had a change in eating habits
- Had a change in sleeping habits
- Had become more active / less active physically
- Other _____

Take a look at your list and think about where the majority of change is taking place in your life. It is important to respect the impact that change has had on your life. Whenever a significant change takes place, whether it be positive or negative, you will experience grief reactions. You will grieve because you are having to say goodbye to what was once familiar to you.

Some examples would be:

- A) Your sister gets married and moves away. Now that your sister is gone, the family routine may change and the daily physical and emotional interaction with her will no longer be possible. You may be very happy for her, and perhaps you might even get to move into her old bedroom, but things will not be the same.
- B) You get a new family pet. A pet can be a lot of fun, but it also carries with it new responsibilities. It may now be your job to walk the dog or clean up its mess. You may not even mind doing this because you really want the dog, but your routine is no longer just as it was before.
- C) You break up with your boy/girlfriend. Saying goodbye to a relationship, even if it is by your choice, can be difficult simply because your routine... where you go, what you will do, and who you will see, will change. Moving into a new relationship can be fun, but it, too, will bring about changes in your life.
- D) If you have been physically abused in anyway, you have lost the innocence and safety of your body. This abuse brings with it the loss of physical boundaries that are vital to our sense of well being.

Change usually involves a *readjustment period* that can include feelings of shock, inadequacy, fear, anger, depression, confusion and possible changes in physical habits. Change may even bring about frequent dreams and a feeling of being on an emotional roller-coaster. It is important to know that if you are experiencing these feelings as a result of change in your life, these responses are very normal. When someone in your life dies, it is important to look at what is going on in all parts of your life. Some of the grief you are feeling may be connected to other changes that have taken place. What you do with these feelings will be your choice. Some people choose to feel helpless while others seek to learn from their experience and grow. What will *be your choice*?

WHERE ARE YOU?

Some people believe that when a person dies they go to heaven. Other people believe that the person changes into energy or takes another form. And yet others may fear that their loved one is in a painful place, a place where they are paying for any of their wrong doings. Please draw a picture of where you see the person who has died as being.

*Linda Cunningham
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WRITING LETTERS TO PARENTS

Age Level: All

Time Required: Flexible

Materials Needed: Paper and pens

Goals:

1. Externalize / make peace with unfinished business, regrets, continued love, etc.
2. To increase communication among family members.
3. To decrease confusion about the family story.

Description of Activity:

1. Parents write a letter to their child/children, especially about feelings they want/need to share about the loss and death. Children keep their letter and write their response at home then bring it to the next session. (Facilitator may need to phone each child regarding progress and as a reminder.)
2. Each child writes a letter to his/her parent asking questions about death circumstances or events that are unclear. Parents keep the letters, write their own response at home and bring it to the next session.

Variation: Group letters may be written combining questions children have with a combined parent response. Entire exercise may be done in one group session.

SECTION 2: HANDOUTS FOR TEENS

- 2.1 APPROPRIATE EXPECTATIONS YOU CAN HAVE FOR YOURSELF IN GRIEF
- 2.1 BEREAVED PEOPLE ARE LIKE DUCKS
- 2.2 BILL OF RIGHTS FOR TEENS EXPERIENCING GRIEF
- 2.3 COMMENTS BY TEENAGERS IN MOURNING
- 2.4 COMMON MYTHS ABOUT GRIEF
- 2.5 ESTABLISHING REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS FOR YOUR GRIEF
- 2.6 HOW CAN I HELP MYSELF?
- 2.7 IF YOU GIVE SOMETHING A NAME . . .
- 2.8 I GET ANGRY BECAUSE . . .
- 2.9 PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH DEATH
- 2.10 PHYSICAL EFFECTS
- 2.11 RISK
- 2.12 STRATEGIES FOR COPING
- 2.13 SUGGESTIONS FOR CONQUERING DEPRESSION
- 2.14 SUPPRESSION LEADS TO . . .
- 2.15 UNDERSTANDING GRIEF
- 2.16 WORDS OF GRIEF

APPROPRIATE EXPECTATIONS YOU CAN HAVE FOR YOURSELF IN GRIEF

- ◆ Your grief will take longer than most people think.
- ◆ Your grief will take more energy than you would have ever imagined.
- ◆ Your grief will involve many changes and be continually developing.
- ◆ Your grief will show itself in all spheres of your life – psychological, social and physical.
- ◆ Your grief will depend upon how you perceive the loss.
- ◆ You will grieve for what you have lost already and for what you have lost for the future.
- ◆ Your grief will entail mourning not only for the actual person you lost but also for all the hopes, dreams and unfulfilled expectations you held for and with that person, and for the needs that will go unmet because of the death.
- ◆ Your grief will involve a wide variety of feelings and reactions, not solely those that are generally thought of as grief, such as depression and sadness.
- ◆ The loss will resurrect old issues, feelings and unresolved conflicts from the past.
- ◆ You will have some identity confusion as a result of this major loss and the fact that you are experiencing reactions that may be quite different for you.
- ◆ You may have a combination of anger and depression, such as irritability, frustration, annoyance or intolerance.
- ◆ You will feel some anger and guilt, or at least some manifestation of these emotions.
- ◆ You may have a lack of self-concern.

Bereaved People Are Like Ducks:

Above the surface . . . looking
composed and unruffled,

Below the surface . . .
Paddling like Crazy !

2-2

BILL OF RIGHTS FOR TEENS EXPERIENCING GRIEF

- Although many people will give you advice, always keep in mind that you have basic rights as you experience your grief.
- You have the right to your own feelings. Your feelings are neither right nor wrong. But they are your feelings.
- You have the right to express your grief and be comforted. If you do not get comfort, you have the right to request additional support.
- You have the right to continued loving care, but you must understand that it may sometimes be difficult for those who love you to provide that care.
- You have the right to help plan and participate in the funeral ceremony, as much or as little as you wish.
- You have the right to ask any questions and expect thoughtful, honest answers.
- You have the right to be treated as an interested and important individual, not as someone's "kid."
- If you are a surviving sibling, you have the right to maintain your own identity. You are yourself, and you cannot take the place of your dead sister or brother.
- You have the right to grieve for days or years, however long it takes you to feel good again. There is no set time to feel better.
- You have the right to **be free from guilt** or continued grief, and you have the right to counseling if you need or want it.
- You have the right to be a comforter to others who are grieving, and to share your grief with them.

COMMENTS BY TEENAGERS IN MOURNING

"No one at school understands anything."

"I feel very strange. Sometimes I feel like a totally different person since my Dad died and other times, I feel like nothing has happened."

I hate it when people say, "I'm sorry."

"Will I ever feel better?"

"I always feel like crying, but I hold it back, and then I just shut down."

"I'm jealous of friends who have a relationship with their parent."

"It's so quiet around my house now. I hate it."

"When Mom died, a part of me died too. I was being torn apart."

"I don't think I could ever walk into another hospital."

"I thought I was doing just fine after Grandpa died, but now I'm not too sure. I miss him more now than I did last year. I think about him all the time and I just want to talk to him again."

"I just don't belong anymore – anywhere – home or at school."

"The funeral seemed so stupid to me. All these people were saying things, but none of it helped. No amount of words will ever bring him back. And no one can give me any good reason as to why he had to die. It's just all unfair."

"Christmas last year without Sam was really sad. I don't know what to expect this Christmas."

"I feel as if Dad is still here. I can't believe he is really gone."

"People call the house and ask me how my Mom's doing, not how I'm doing."

"I hate the way my family has changed."

COMMON MYTHS ABOUT GRIEF

- ◆ All losses are the same.
- ◆ All bereaved people grieve in the same way.
- ◆ It takes two weeks to three months to get over your grief.
- ◆ When grief is resolved, it never comes up again.
- ◆ It is better to put painful thoughts out of your mind.
- ◆ Anger should not be a part of your grief.
- ◆ Children need to be protected from grief and death.
- ◆ You will have no relationship with your loved one after death.
- ◆ The intensity and length of your grief are a testimony to your love for the deceased.
- ◆ Only sick people have physical problems in their grief.
- ◆ Funerals and rituals are unimportant in helping us heal.
- ◆ It is best to stay “in control” and keep “a stiff upper lip”.
- ◆ It is best to put the memories of your loved one in the past and go on with your life.
- ◆ It is best to get involved and stay busy.
- ◆ Crying doesn’t solve anything.

It is not an easy process to change traditions and long-held beliefs or expectations. However, we can re-learn and make changes when we have strong beliefs that it is in our best interest to do so. Some of the difficulties lie in the fact that we are impacted by the beliefs and feelings of those around us. While we may have a desire to change, others around us may not. It may take preparation and family discussion to do things differently, often with very beneficial results for the whole family.

ESTABLISHING REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS FOR YOUR GRIEF

Holding on to myths about grief can hinder your healing process and set you up for unnecessary frustration. Conversely, establishing more realistic expectations for yourself in grief can facilitate your healing and ease the burden. The following is a list of appropriate expectations you can have for yourself in grief.

- Your healing will take longer than most people think.
- Your grief work will require more energy than you might have imagined.
- Your grief will not remain static over time. Grief evolves and unfolds and is, therefore, continually changing and developing.
- Your grief will have an impact on all areas of your life; social, physical, and emotional.
- Your grief will not follow a *logical progression* of decreasing intensity. The grief process is much more like a roller coaster, with dramatic ups and downs, than it is a logical, step-by-step progression.
- How you grieve will depend on how you perceive the loss.
- You will grieve not only for the person who has died, but also for all of the hopes and dreams you held for the future and all of your needs that can no longer be fulfilled by the person who has died.
- Your grief will involve a wider range of feelings than those typically recognized as *grief* such as sadness or depression. You may also experience guilt, anger, frustration, resentment, intolerance and irritability. There is no one, all-inclusive list of appropriate grief feelings. Remember, feelings are not *good* or *bad*, *right* or *wrong*, they just are. Give yourself permission to feel and express whatever emotions you are currently experiencing.
- This loss may trigger feelings of grief for earlier losses that were not resolved or recognized at the time of the loss. Coming to terms with earlier unresolved losses may be part of dealing with your current loss. Look at this as an opportunity to heal old wounds and to free yourself of burdens that you may have been carrying for a long time.
- Grief usually involves an *identity crisis*. You will have to figure out who you are now without the person who has died.
- At times you may doubt your sanity and fear that you are going crazy.

HOW CAN I HELP MYSELF

Give yourself permission to grieve. Some days you can handle the feelings that surface, and some days you may "fall apart." These "ups and downs" are a natural reaction to loss.

- Go ahead and cry. Tears are a natural and necessary part of grieving. They are not a sign of weakness; they are a sign that you have loved.
- Express feelings of anger with someone you trust. Suppressed anger can lead to prolonged depression and poor physical health.
- Tell people what you need. People may avoid you because they are afraid that they will say the wrong thing. When you let others know what you need, they are usually grateful and relieved.
- Be good to yourself. Get the rest you need, balanced with regular exercise and a good diet. You may not feel motivated to do these things now, but they are crucial to your physical and mental well-being.
- Give in ways that you can. Giving to others will assist you in your own healing. Consider joining a grief support group. As you benefit from the love and courage of group members, your presence and personal story will also be helpful to them.
- Write in a journal. Record your thoughts and feelings. Get them "out of your system."
- Do not make major decisions too quickly. Change requires lots of energy. Put that energy into taking good care of yourself.
- Maintain a support system. Whether they are family or friends, make sure you have someone to talk to.
- Believe in yourself. Think of all the reasons your loved one cared for you. These qualities are still present and will help you find strength and meaning in the future.

— Linda Cunningham

IF YOU CAN GIVE
SOMETHING A NAME AND
A SHAPE, YOU HAVE
POWER OVER IT.
BUT IF YOU CAN'T GIVE IT
A NAME AND A SHAPE,
THEN IT HAS POWER OVER
YOU.

Native American Proverb

I GET ANGRY BECAUSE . . .

When I think of the way my _____ died, I get angry because . . .

When I think about the way I was told about the death of my _____
I get angry because . . .

When I think about how my life is different now or how my life might have been if
my _____ hadn't died, I get angry because . . .

When I think about how my friends treat me differently because there has been
a death in my family, I get angry because . . .

When other members of the family don't seem to share my feelings, I get angry
because . . .

When others don't seem to accept my need to grieve in my own way, I get angry
because . . .

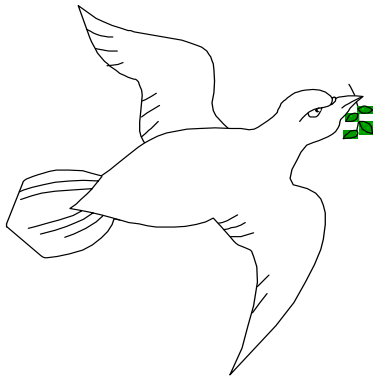
PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WITH DEATH

1. When I think about death, I wonder . . .
2. When I think about my _____'s death, I wonder . . .
3. One thing that makes it difficult to talk about death is . . .
4. One way that my life has changed because of the death is . . .
5. One of my favorite memories of being with my _____ is . . .
6. At the funeral, I wish . . .
7. One thing I wish my teachers understood is . . .
8. I wish my friends . . .
9. One thing I would like my mom/dad to know is . . .
10. When I'm feeling really sad, it helps to . . .

PHYSICAL EFFECTS OF GRIEF

1. Loss of pleasure
2. Anorexia and other gastrointestinal disturbances
3. Apathy
4. Decreased energy
5. Decreased initiative
6. Decreased motivation
7. Decreased sexual desire or hypersexuality
8. Lethargy or agitation
9. Sleep difficulties (too much or too little, interrupted sleep)
10. Tearfulness and crying
11. Tension and anxiety
12. Weight loss or weight gain
13. The tendency to sign
14. A lack of strength
15. Physical exhaustion
16. Feelings of emptiness and heaviness
17. Feeling that something is stuck in your throat
18. Heart palpitations and other indications of anxiety
19. Nervousness and tension
20. Restlessness and searching for something to do
21. Shortness of breath

Theresa A. Rando, Ph.D.



Risk

To laugh is to risk appearing the fool.

To weep is to risk being called sentimental.

To reach out to another is to risk involvement.

To expose feelings is to risk showing your true self.

To place your ideas and dreams before the crowd is to risk being called naïve.

To love is to risk not being loved in return.

To live is to risk dying.

To hope is to risk despair.

To try is to risk failure.

But risks must be taken because the greatest risk in life is to ask nothing.

*The people who risk nothing do nothing, have nothing, are nothing and become nothing.
They may avoid suffering and sorrow, but they simply cannot seem to feel, and change, and
grow, and love and live.*

Chained by their servitude, they are slaves; they've forfeited their freedom.

Only the people who risk are truly free.

Anonymous

STRATEGIES FOR COPING

(Developed by participants of Grossmont Hospice Grief Group)

Working (absorbing work)
Watching home movies or looking at pictures of the person who died
Going for a walk
Reading
Reaching out to another person
Writing letters
Talking to a friend
Journaling
Playing with a pet
Taking a bubble bath
Pampering yourself
Listening to music
Talking to a counselor
Asking for help
Reading the Bible or another spiritual book
Going fishing
Doing an activity you used to enjoy
Crying (letting yourself feel what you feel)
Going to a movie
Being with family
Going shopping
Talking to the wind (crying into the wind)
Looking at scenic beauty
Having a massage
Watching TV
Sleeping
Looking at things that the person who died cared about
Doing volunteer or charity work
Laughing (humor)
Exploring spiritual beliefs / faith
Writing a letter to the person who died
Talking to the person who died
Doing any art / crafts project
Attending a grief support group

An, still in process.....

SUGGESTIONS FOR CONQUERING DEPRESSION

1. Think of something you want that is available; then make a plan to get it.
2. Go for a long walk.
3. Think of people who bring you up. Call one of them.
4. Listen to your favorite music.
5. Sing or chant.
6. Do something creative.
7. Take a shower or a long, warm bath.
8. Make a list of your strengths. Spend at least 15 to 30 minutes appreciating who you are.
9. Love a pet excessively.
10. Think of something you would enjoy doing for someone. Then do it!
11. Read a good book.
12. Dance.
13. Forgive someone.
14. Find out what you might eat to give you pep and vitality.
15. Plan a trip or event that you think you would enjoy.
16. Think about enjoyable ways of relaxing. Choose one and do it!
17. Make an appointment for a massage.
18. Begin something you have been putting off for a long time.
19. Start your own humor book. Write down the funniest jokes you can remember.
20. Consider ways to make yourself more enjoyable to live with.
21. Stop doing everything and just BE for awhile.
22. Make a list of things you are grateful for.
23. Scream (warn others beforehand).
24. Think of a goal that will bring you joy.
25. Arrange a meeting with your favorite person.
26. Give something away.
27. Tell someone you love him or her.
28. Make a list of things you feel guilty about. Consider where you can make amends – then destroy your list.
29. Plan a surprise for someone.
30. Do breathing exercises for energy and calmness.
31. Clean up something.
32. Plan and anticipate the pleasure of eating your favorite food.
33. Relive, with vivid imagination, an experience in your life which made you feel extremely loved.
34. Become, in your imagination, the person who has approved of you the most. See yourself through their eyes. Feel for yourself the feelings this person has for you. . . . *Source unknown.*



Suppression

leads to

momentary relief and

permanent pain.

Feeling

leads to

momentary pain and

permanent relief.

UNDERSTANDING GRIEF

Grieving is a natural healing process that leads slowly from the pain of loss to hope for the future. Although grieving has been studied, no one can understand your grief as well as you. You are the expert on your own grief.

You may find it helpful to know about experiences other people have and how they cope with grief. One bereaved father said of his loss, "You don't get over it, you just learn to live with it."

Crying is one way of coping with grief. Tears express the sense of loss and release guilt-up tensions. Crying is not a sign of weakness but a way of cooperating with the natural healing process.

You may react physically to the death of a loved one. You may experience a loss of appetite, overeating, sleeplessness, sexual difficulties, lack of energy, difficulty concentration, or some other physical problem.

Drugs and alcohol can stop or delay the healing process and should be avoided. Medication should be used sparingly and only under a doctor's care. Good food, fresh air, rest and physical activity can help your body to heal.

After your loss, you may feel you have nothing to live for. You may long for release from the intense pain. Be assured that others have faced despair and that in time their pain has lessened and a sense of meaning and purpose has returned to their lives.

Your thoughts may linger on past mistakes – real or imagined. Many people cope with such thoughts by expressing and discussing their regrets with others. Eventually they are able to forgive themselves and to release the troubling memories.

You may feel intensely angry, at times, at the person who died, or at family members, health professionals, people who have been spared a similar loss or even God. Bottling up the anger seldom helps. On the other hand, expressing the anger in healthy ways can hasten the healing process.

A loved one's death can challenge your faith or philosophy of life. Questioning your beliefs can be frightening, but questioning can also deepen and enrich your faith or philosophy.

WORDS OF GRIEF

	HAPPY	CARING	DEPRESSED	HURT	INADEQUATE
INTENSE	Thrilled Terrific Turned on Overjoyed Enthusiastic	Loving Cherished Affectionate Devoted to Captivated by	Desolate Dejected Empty Despair Hopeless	Crushed Destroyed Pained Rejected Devastated	Worthless Powerless Helpless Inferior Like a failure
MODERATE	Cheerful Up Glowing Jovial Delighted	Admiration Close to Trust Respectful Regard	Distressed Miserable Weepy Horrible Melancholy	Hurt Abused Criticized Belittled Used	Inadequate Incomplete Incapable Small unimportant
MILD	Glad Good Content Fine Pleased	Friendly Like Warm toward Concern for Fond of	Unhappy Down Blah Sad Disappointed	Put down Neglected Unappreciated Taken for granted	Unsure Uncertain Lacking No confidence weak
	FEARFUL	CONFUSED	ANGRY	LONELY	GUILTY
INTENSE	Terrified Frightened Horried Vulnerable Desperate	Bewildered Perplexed Puzzled Confused Baffled	Furious Enraged Outraged Pissed off Bitter	Forsaken Abandoned Isolated Cut off All alone	Unforgivable Disgraced Horrible Humiliated Degraded
MODERATE	Scared Afraid Shaky Defensive Butterflies	Mixed up Lost Frustrated Foggy Disorganized	Mad Resentful Annoyed Aggravated Hostile	Lonely Remote Alone Estranged Alienated	Ashamed Guilty To blame Lost face Remorseful
MILD	Nervous Anxious Unsure Shy Jittery	Uncertain Bothered Unsure Uncomfortable Undecided	Disgusted Turned off Cross Dismayed Impatient	Left out Lonesome Distant Aloof Excluded	Regretful Wrong Responsible Embarrassed Blew it

Teen Talk – Grief Support Group

Good Samaritan Hospice, Puyallup, WA

SECTION 3: HANDOUTS FOR COUNSELORS AND PARENTS

- 3.1 CLINICAL THEMES
- 3.2 FACTORS INFLUENCING THE GRIEF OF CHILDREN
- 3.3 FUNERALS AND OTHER RITUALS
- 3.4 HOW TO HELP GRIEVING PEOPLE
- 3.5 JOURNALING
- 3.6 POSSIBLE FUNCTIONS OF ACTING-OUT BEHAVIOR
- 3.7 SIGN-IN SHEET
- 3.8 SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR DEALING WITH TEENS WHO
ARE GRIEVING
- 3.9 A SPECIAL NOTE FOR TEACHERS
- 3.10 TEEN GRIEF QUESTIONNAIRE
- 3.11 TEEN TALK SUPPORT GROUP EVALUATION
- 3.12 TEENS AND MOURNING
- 3.13 READING LIST

CLINICAL THEMES

1. Child's and parent's experience of the death and perceptions and understand of the cause
2. Child's involvement during dying process
3. Involvement with/knowledge of funeral/memorial service/cremation/burial
4. Loss history
5. Myths about grief and permission and modeling from parent to grieve
6. Guilt, Anger, Depression issues
7. Fear, anxieties, security, nightmares
8. Psychic experiences/Magical thinking
9. Perception vs. reality
10. Family, Role restructuring, Control issues
11. New parental relationships, dating, remarriages, parenting issues
12. New responsibilities
13. Physical symptoms
14. Desire to be reunited with parent/spouse/loved one
15. Religious viewpoints about afterlife
16. Suicidal issues
17. Goodbyes
18. Other

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE GRIEF OF CHILDREN

1. Relationship with the person who died
For example, an ambivalent relationship will lead to more complicated grieving).
2. Nature of death
Expected, unexpected, sudden, natural, suicide.
3. Availability of Support Systems
The more stigma surrounding the death, the more help they will need with mourning. They will need social context; cannot reconcile loss by themselves.
 - a. Do they have a support system?
 - b. Is there permission in that support system to mourn?
 - c. Do they have the capacity to seek out support? The younger ones are better at this than the older ones.
4. Child's unique personality
5. Unique characteristics of the person who died
Affects the nature of the relationship.
6. Cultural, ethnic, religious backgrounds
Be respectful and learn from them.
7. Prior experiences with death
8. Other crises, stresses in life of family
9. Social expectations based on gender
i.e., girls and boys mourn differently; adolescent males won't ask for a counselor as easily as a female adolescent.
10. Rituals, funeral experiences
Four ingredients of a successful ritual:
 - ◆ Acknowledges reality
 - ◆ Recalls life of person
 - ◆ Gives support for the emotions of those involved
 - ◆ Provides an environment for expression

People, children especially, are more at risk for long-term effects if they hold it together early on.

FUNERALS AND OTHER RITUALS

Rituals can be found in every culture throughout history and with good reason – they enhance the meaning and significance of events. The rituals surrounding a death increase group cohesion and provide a socially acceptable statement of communal support. For adults and children alike, a ritual also provides a platform for emotional and physical ventilation; a way to act out feelings too deep for words. Funerals and Memorials are our most common rituals but often these are not enough. Additional rituals performed during the holidays or important anniversary dates, serve to celebrate the loved ones life and help ease the increased pain of these periods. Below are rituals, which are most helpful to children, but may be helpful to adults as well.

Funerals

Funerals are rituals for “saying goodbye”. As such, they help the child (and adult) in accomplishing the first task of mourning: Accepting the reality of the loss.

- ◆ Ask the child to participate in planning the funeral. Active participation increases personal meaning for the child.
- ◆ Offer to take the child to the visitation. Viewing the physical body will help the child accept the death.
- ◆ Select different pieces of music and ask the child which one they might like to have played.
- ◆ Ask the child what words they would like to be included in the Eulogy.
- ◆ Ask the child if he or she would like to write a note, draw a picture, or pick a toy to be placed in the casket.
- ◆ Go for a walk with the child and, together, select and pick a special flower for the casket.
- ◆ Keep a record, diary or tape recording of the events surrounding the funeral for a child who may be too young to remember.

HOW TO HELP GRIEVING PEOPLE

- ◆ All that is necessary is a squeeze of the hand, a kiss, a hug, your presence. If you want to say something, say “I’m sorry” or “I care.”
- ◆ Do not inhibit the expression of feelings and appropriate grief.
- ◆ Offer to help with practical matters, i.e. fixing food, caring for children. Say, “I’m going to the store. Do you need bread, milk, etc.? I’ll get them.” It is not helpful to say, “Call if there is anything I can do.”
- ◆ It is not necessary to ask questions about how the death happened. Let the bereaved tell you as much as they want when they are ready. Helpful questions might be, “Would you like to talk? I’ll listen.”
- ◆ Don’t say, “I know just how you feel.” Express sympathy from the heart or not at all. Pity is strictly forbidden.
- ◆ The bereaved may ask “Why?” It is often a cry of pain rather than a question. It is not necessary to answer, but if you do, you may reply, “I don’t know why.”
- ◆ Don’t use platitudes like “Life is for the living.” or “It’s God’s will.” Explanations rarely console. It is better to say nothing. Formulated statements sound trite and can be alienating.
- ◆ Recognize that the bereaved may be angry. They may be angry at God, the person who died, the clergy, doctors, rescue team, other family members, etc. Encourage them to acknowledge their anger and to find healthy ways of handling it.
- ◆ Be available to LISTEN frequently. Most bereaved want to talk about the person who has died. Encourage them to talk about the deceased. Do not change the conversation or avoid mentioning the person’s name.
- ◆ Be PATIENT. Don’t say, “You will get over it in time.” Mourning may take a long time. The bereaved need you to stand by them for as long as necessary. Encourage them to be patient with themselves as there is not timetable for grief.
- ◆ Accept whatever feelings are expressed. Don’t say, “You shouldn’t feel like that.” This attitude puts pressure on the bereaved to push down their feelings. Encourage them to express their feelings – cry, hit a pillow, scream, etc.
- ◆ Be aware that a bereaved person’s self-esteem may be very low.

JOURNALING

Writing in a journal or diary is cost effective, convenient, private, illuminating, clarifying, and most importantly, healing. It is a continuing conversation with yourself, your God, the deceased, or an imaginary pen pal. It can become a legacy of memories and a record of healing. All that's required is a spiral notebook, a pen, and commitment to honesty and a daily block of time for writing.

Beginning is the hardest part of journaling. It can easily take place within the context of a support group writing assignment such as:

- Write a favorite memory
- Write about what your deceased loved one means to you
- Write about what you miss most
- Describe the person who died
- Rewrite a "goodbye"
- Write an apology or your regrets

To put ongoing love for the deceased into words promotes the continuous healing of grief from the inside out. Sometimes it is possible to write when we are not ready to talk. Other times, writing can help us know that we are thinking. It is a constructive way to discharge anger that you might otherwise direct toward members of your family. It is also a way of diminishing guilt feelings. Many people who journal find they have developed a "silent listening friend".

Support Group Journaling

It is helpful for each group member to have a special notebook to serve as a journal for each meeting. Often it is easier to start a discussion by first writing responses to thought-provoking questions, such as those found in the Ungame or the Question Basket activities.

The journal then serves as a good record of what we have done, the topics we have covered and the progress that each has made. (Each entry should be dated so that at future dates, the teens can reflect back on their feelings at any given time and note their progress.)

If using spiral notebooks, keep them together in a safe place where confidentiality can be assured at all times. If that is not possible, it would be better to have each of them take their journals home and bring them back for each meeting.

When teens close with the group, the journal is their private property to keep.

Catherine Johnson

POSSIBLE FUNCTIONS OF ACTING OUT BEHAVIOR FOLLOWING A DEATH

(from Wolfelt, 1993)

1. Expressing insecurity.
2. Expressing feelings of abandonment in parental loss, leading to self-fulfilling
3. Provoking punishment (consistent discipline helps to feel more secure).
4. Alienating others to prevent further losses.
5. Countering their own personal death anxieties by proving, through hyperactivity, that they are still alive.
6. Externalizing internal feelings of grief, which build up and then explode.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR DEALING WITH TEENS WHO ARE GRIEVING

- ◆ Understand normal teen development issues and the grieving process in order not to be making situations more complicated than need be and to be aware of danger signs.
- ◆ Remember that our intense feelings don't go on forever and they won't destroy us. Teens often have not learned this yet and find it helpful to be reassured.
- ◆ Listen without judging. Teens need support and need to feel heard. This may allow them to be more in touch with their softer feelings and to express them – which will decrease their anger. In their battle for independence, teens will be sensitive to parental judgment and may rebel against your wishes for them.
- ◆ Be aware of the dangers of trying to control teens. The more they feel parents are trying to protect or control them, the more they will struggle for their freedom.
- ◆ By being aware of their own needs and losses, parents can avoid distorting their relationships with teens. Otherwise, parents risk either making teens into *mini adult / parent* figures by expecting too much of them or else trying to keep them young.
- ◆ Expect and accept a dip in academic performance. Ease expectations. For instance, be patient with your collegiate standards while the teen is properly more concerned with memories of the past and coping day to day. Be there for the teen; give permission to take a lighter load. To get help, see a school counselor.
- ◆ Respect their need for privacy. They need a place they can call their own. Disrespect of their privacy is seen as a major threat to their independence.
- ◆ Understand how teens think more abstractly in order to be available for their philosophical discussions should they occur. Avoid undue upset or harsh reactions to *weird* philosophies they may try on or explore.
- ◆ When you can, add perspective to the teen's urgent discussions.
- ◆ Give permission not to grieve all the time. Teens need to have good times with their friends and have respite from their grief.
- ◆ Acknowledge that there are many good ways to grieve. These include different styles and different timing. Much unnecessary trouble is avoided when our differences are accepted.
- ◆ Look for hopelessness, anger not constructively dealt with, impulsiveness, isolation or a sense of helplessness. These are cues that counseling would be recommended.

A SPECIAL NOTE FOR THE TEACHER

- Acknowledge the death quickly.
- Provide an environment where the children feel comfortable in discussing his or her thoughts and feelings about the death.
- Prepare the class for the return of the bereaved child by discussing what to say and what not to say.
- Have the class write and discuss a condolence note.
- Dedicate an issue of the school newspaper to the family.
- Help prepare your classes for deaths that may happen in the future by providing learning opportunities within the curriculum. Some possibilities are:
 1. In "Current Events", discuss a death currently in the news and talk about how that death might impact the family and friends of the deceased. This is a good opportunity to introduce concepts of grief and bereavement.
 2. Include words such as 'death', 'dying', 'grief', 'mourning', and 'bereavement' on vocabulary lists.
 3. In "Math", talk about the average life span of men and women and how they differ.
 4. In "Science", discuss the life cycle of plants and animals. Use the seasons as examples.
 5. Ask the school nurse to come and speak of the differences between terminal and non-terminal illness.
 6. Discuss cultural and religious differences in funerals and other rituals.
 7. If a class member attends a funeral, ask if he or she would mind describing the event and what went on to the class.

TEEN GRIEF QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME _____

AGE _____

GRADE _____

DATE _____

1. I was _____ years of age when I first experienced the loss of someone meaningful.
2. The person I lost was a _____ Parent _____ Friend _____ Brother _____ Sister
Other (Please specify) _____
3. This person died as a result of _____ Accident _____ Illness _____ Suicide
Other (Please specify) _____

4. The person who helped me most through this time was _____ Parent _____ Friend
_____ Brother _____ Sister
Other (Please specify) _____
5. Sometimes we don't always get support from the people we want. Who would have been the most helpful person to you during his loss? _____

Did you ask this person for support? Yes _____ No _____

Did the person respond? Yes _____ No _____

Why was this person most important to you? _____

6. When this loss took place, I experienced feelings of: (Make more than one, if appropriate)

_____ Anger

_____ Abandonment

_____ Confusion

_____ Fear

_____ Sadness

_____ Guilt

_____ Relief

_____ Peace

Other feelings experienced:

7. After experiencing this loss, I had thoughts and concerns about my own death.
 Often Sometimes Never
8. Did you ever think of taking your own life as a result of this loss?
 Often Sometimes Never
9. Did you feel isolated and as though no one understood what you were going through? Often Sometimes Never
10. After awhile, did you feel people were tired of hearing about your loss and so, consequently, you started keeping your thoughts and feelings to yourself?
 Often Sometimes Never
11. When you tried to share your pain with others, would they: hear you?
 change the subject? ignore you? Other (Please specify) _____

12. Did you ever feel a need to cry and/or be held by another person during this time?
 Often Sometimes Never
13. During school time, did you feel support from your friends?
 Often Sometimes Never
14. During school time, did you feel support from your teacher?
 Often Sometimes Never
15. Did your grades change as a result of this loss?
 Went up Went down Stayed same
16. Was the school notified of your loss?
 Yes No Don't know
17. If the school was notified of your loss, did any teachers or counselors ask how you were doing? No Yes
18. Was a support group made available to you? No Yes
19. If there were a support group led by one adult and two teenagers who had also suffered a loss, would you go to see what it was like? No Yes

20. What was the most difficult thing you experienced as a result of this loss?

21. What did you do that was helpful to you in getting through this difficult time?

COMMENTS:

SUPPORT GROUP EVALUATION

In an effort to determine how we can improve our groups, we would appreciate your help in completing this questionnaire. Answers will be held as confidential and the information will be used only to evaluate our services.

KEY: 1. Very Helpful 2. Helpful 3. Uncertain 4. Unhelpful 5. Very Unhelpful

QUESTIONS	1	2	3	4	5
1. Learning what is normal to the grief process					
2. Sharing my feelings with others					
3. Talking about the person who died					
4. Hearing others talk about their feelings and experiences					
5. Reaching out and helping others					
6. Learning ways to express and cope with feelings					
7. Being with teens who have gone through something similar					
8. Understanding how people grieve differently					
9. Being supported by other group members					
10. Handouts					
11. Topics discussed					
12. Activities					
13. Facilitators' knowledge					
14. Facilitator's leadership					
15. What about our group was most helpful for you?					
16. What about our group was least helpful?					
17. What would have made our group better for you?					

TEENS AND MOURNING

The teenage years are difficult for all concerned. A death in a teen's life is a serious challenge. If the challenge is well met, it is an opportunity for great growth; if not, there's the possibility of a troubled life or the very worst scenario could be suicide.

Teens in normal development have several conflicting pressures. They are between childhood and adulthood, torn between peer and parental influence, striving for independence while secretly wanting others to take care of them. They are going through momentous bodily changes that impact their self-image and, in this self-conscious time of their life, this leads to a lowered self-esteem. The hormone changes that occur lead them on an emotional roller coaster ride.

The teen's intense feelings threaten their sense of control that is so important for their sense of independence. They often do not yet understand that these feelings will pass and will not destroy them. They long for closeness with other people, yet that same intimacy requires them to be vulnerable and childlike. This vulnerability is difficult for them to accept so they shun intimacy at the very same time they pursue it.

Teens, especially boys, are afraid of their *softer* feelings like sadness, fear and loneliness. Anger is used both to cover their vulnerability to these feelings and, because of the power they feel, when they are angry. This sense of power is also a major bastion in their defense against death anxiety.

The normal development of independence in teens includes the devaluation of their parents and other adults. Parents are no longer the gods they were to them in elementary school. Their disappointment that we are only human may be intense. If we can't accept their sense of disappointment, their drive for independence may be frustrated and they may become rebellious.

Teens are more adult-like in their cognitive development than children. Children ask about death concretely, "What happens when we die?" Teens think about the meaning of life abstractly, "What is real? What's it all about?" Because of their abstract view of life, their volatile emotions, and their impulsivity, teens are accident prone and at a greater risk for suicide.

Because of difficulty concentration, school grades typically dip for a period when children of all ages are grieving. Teens, though, are preparing either for college or the work place. A dip in school grades is anxiety-provoking for the student and parent and a concern for the teachers.

READING LIST

BEREAVEMENT

- C.S. Lewis, A Grief Observed
Caline, Lynne, Widow
Carr, Dr. Arthur C., Grief: Selected Readings
Landorf, Joyce, Mourning Song
Rae, Lindsay, Alone and Surviving
Sarnoff-Schiff, Harriet, The Bereaved Parent
Tatelbaum, Judy, The Courage to Grieve
Tatelbaum, Judy, You Don't Need To Suffer

DEATH AND DYING

- Bertman, Sandra L., Facing Death: Images, Insights, and Interventions
Brim, The Dying Patient
Cicely Saunders, The Management of Terminal Disease
Glaser & Strauss, An Awareness of Dying
Glaser, Glaser & Strauss, Time for Dying
Grollman, Earl (ed.), Concerning Death: A Practical Guide for the Living
Hendin, David, Death as A Fact Of Life
Hinton, Dying
Kubler-Ross, Elizabeth, Death - The Final Stage Of Growth
Kubler-Ross, Elizabeth, On Death and Dying
Kubler-Ross, Elizabeth, Questions and Answers on Death and Dying
Kubler-Ross, Elizabeth. To Live until We Say Goodbye
Kutscher, Austin H., Caring For The Dying Patient And His Family
Lamerton, Care Of the Dying
Lamerton and Jack (eds.), The Hour of Our Death
Lamm, Maurice, The Jewish Way of Death and Dying
Lifton, Robert J., Living and Dying
Phipps, Death's Single Privacy
Rosenbaum, Ernst H., Living with Cancer
Schneidman, Edwin S., Deaths of Men
Silverstone, Barbara & Helen Kandel Hyman, You and Your Aging Parent

DEATH OF A PEER

Arnold, Caroline, What We Do When Someone Dies

Bunting, Eve, The Happy Funeral

Buck, Pearl, The Big Wave

Clardy, Andrea, Dusty Was My Friend

Coerr, Elaeonor, Sadako and The Thousand Paper Cranes

Cohn, Janice, I had A Friend Named Peter

Corley, Elizabeth Adam, Tell Me About Death, Tell Me About Funerals

Heegard, Marge, When Someone Very Special Dies

Hughs, Phyllis Rash, Dying Is Different

Johnson, Joy & Marv, Tell Me Papa: A Family Book for Children's Questions About Death and Funerals

Newman, Katherine S., Hospice Coloring Book

Prestine, Joan S., Someone Special Died

Simon, Norma, We Remember Philip

DEATH OF A PET

Carrick, Carol, The Accident

Wilhelm, Hans, I'll Always Love You

GENERAL

Agee, James, A Death in the Family

Craven, Margaret, I Heard the Owl Call My Name

Grollman, Earl A., Living When A Loved One Has Died

Gunther, John, A Death Be Not Proud Memoir

Jackson, Edgar N., When Someone Dies

Tolstoy, Leo, The Death of Ivan Ilych

Westbert, Granger E., Good Grief

CHILDREN'S BEREAVEMENT

Alexander, Sue, Nadia the Willful
Buseaglia, The Fall Of Freddie The Leaf
Miles, Miska, Annie and The Old One
Powell, Sandy, Geranium Morning
Simon, Norman, The Saddest Time
Varley, Susan, Badger's Parting Gifts
Viorst, Judith, The Tenth Good Thing about Barney

CHILDREN 3 TO 8 YEARS

Alex, Marlee, & Ben, Grandpa and Me
Barker, Peggy, What Happened When Grandpa Died
Borack, B., Someone Small
Brown, M., The Dead Bird
Coutant, H., The First Snow
De Paola, Tomie, Nana Upstairs, Nana Downstairs
Doleski, Teddi, The Hurt
Fassler, J., My Grandpa Died Today
Grollman, Earl, Talking About Death
Hammond, Janice M., When My Dad Died
Harris, A., Why Did He Die?
Krementz, Jill, How It Feels When A Parent Dies
LeShan, Eda, Learning To Say Goodbye
Pendleton, Edity, Too Old To Cry, To Young To Die
Sanford, Doris, It Must Hurt A Lot
Stein, S., About Dying
Warburg, S., Growing Time

CHILDREN 9 TO 12 YEARS

Barker, Peggy, What Happened When Grandma Died

Brooks, J., Uncle Mike's Boy

Cleaver, B. and V. Cleaver, Grover

Carrick, C., The Accident

Clifton, Lucille, Everett Anderson's Good-Bye

Coburn, J.B., Anne and The Sand Dobbies

Cohen, B., Thank You Jackie Robinson

Donnelly, Elfie, So Long Gandpa

Hoopes, Lyn L., Nana

Jampolsky, G., There's A Rainbow in Every Dark Cloud

Jampolsky, G., Straight From the Siblings: Another Look At the Rainbow

Johnson, Philip E., Goodbye, Mom, Goodbye

Kantrowitz, M., When Violet Died

Koch, Ron, Goodbye Grandpa

Lee, V., The Magic Moth

Lichtman, W., Blew and The Death of the Mag

Lovre, Cheri, When Someone Special Dies

Lowry, L., A Summer to Die

Ogel, D., The Mulberry Music

Smith, D., A Taste of Blackberries

White, E.B., Charlotte's Web

TEEN BEREAVEMENT

Alcott, L. Little Men

Alcott, L., Little Women

Arrick, Fran, Tunnel Vision

Blume, Judy, Tiger Eyes

Buck, Pearl, The Good Earth

Cleaver, B., and V. Cleaver, Where The Lilies Bloom

Crane, S., The Red Badge of Courage

Dixon, P., May I Cross Your Golden River?

Farley, Carol, The Garden Is Doing Fine

Frank, Anne, The Diary of A Young Woman

Geller, Norman, The LAST Teenage Suicide

Green, C., Beat the Turtle Drum

Grollman, Sharon, Shira: A Legacy of Courage

Grollman, Earl A., & Sharon H., Grollman, Talking About Suicide

Greenberg, Jan, A Season In-Between

Gunther, J., Death Be Not Proud

Hughes, Monica, Hunter In The Dark

LeTour, Kathy, For Those Who Live

Lee, Virginia, The Magic Moth

Lund, D., Eric

Mann, Peggy, There Are Two Kinds Of Terrible

Morris, J., A Short Season

Paterson, Katherine, Bridge to Tarabithia

Rawls, Wilson, Where the Red Fern Grows

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