



CTRI
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RESOURCE INSTITUTE

WALKING WITH GRIEF

Helping Others Deal with Loss

**We envision a world where
everyone is trauma-informed.**

WALKING WITH GRIEF – HELPING OTHERS DEAL WITH LOSS

Every person will experience grief and loss – a profound sense of final separation from something or someone important. Grief is a normal and appropriate reaction to the death of a loved one, the experience of separation/divorce, intergenerational loss, or the loss of opportunity. While there are similarities in how individuals work through loss, grief is a complicated and unique experience that requires helpers to be sensitive to the needs and experiences of those they are supporting. This workshop is designed to give helpers an increased awareness of the dynamics of grief, and to provide tools and strategies to best support someone who is grieving. Cultural and popular understandings of grief and loss, and the influences these have on how we experience and work with grief will be explored.

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OVERVIEW OF GRIEF AND LOSS

Grief and loss are normal and natural aspects of life. The very act of living and loving is a vulnerable process. We cannot know love without loss. One of the constants in life is change. When there is a change to a valued relationship, there is a loss, which includes grief.

Common Terms

Loss

A change in a valued relationship. Examples may include:

- Death, illness, or injury
- Divorce, separation, breakup of a relationship
- Loss of a job
- Loss of financial security
- Loss of ability or potential
- Theft of property
- Selling of a family home
- Culture
- Language
- Privacy
- Dignity

The notion of loss is not confined to the physical, but includes the psychological as it can be about change or absence. Examples may include: infertility, brain injury, dementia, mental illness, memory loss, etc.

Grief

The normal and natural package of emotions (sadness, anger, fear, guilt, etc.) that accompany the loss of something or someone valued. Grief is a complicated process. Common subtypes of grief include:

- **Normal Grief**
What is deemed normal is culturally influenced and changes with time.
- **Complicated Grief**
Where the grieving steps outside what is considered “normal.” Dynamics can include traumatic reactions, preoccupation with the loss event, issues of isolation and self-blame, and persistent distress. There have been further attempts to break down complicated grief into: traumatic grief, morbid grief, unanticipated grief, prolonged grief, inhibited grief, and masked grief.
- **Anticipatory Grief**
When the expectation of a loss is experienced over a period of time (e.g., terminal illness).

Mourning

The process in which we express the complex emotions related to loss and grief.

Reflection

What does grief mean to you?

What words, images, or songs come to mind with grief?

Practice Note

Beware of the “grief expert”. Grief is a complicated and individually defined experience. There is no “right way” to grieve. We need to explore the factors that shape grief and what gets in its way. Opening doors to individual expression is key, rather than a set linear program of working through grief.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN YOUR CONTEXT?

What types of losses are most common in your experience?

How is grief expressed in your community?

What types of loss and grief do you find most difficult to work with?

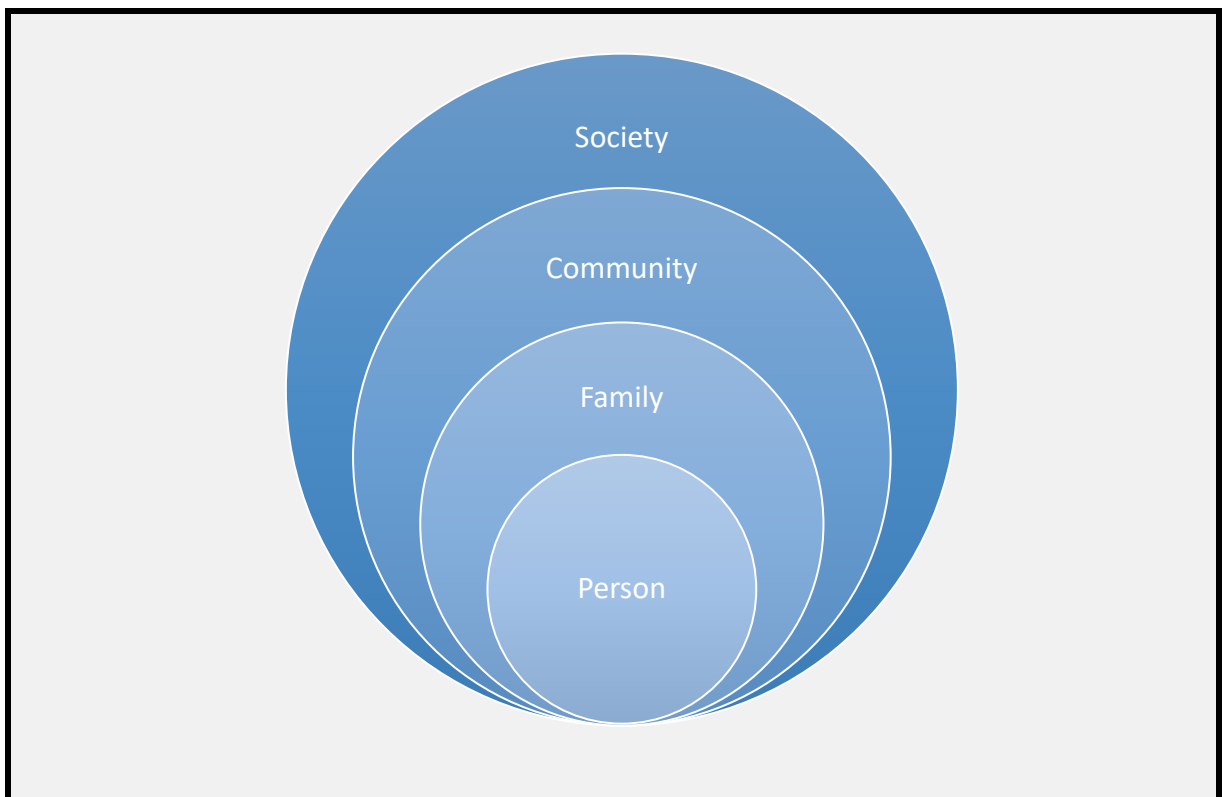
What have you learned from working with loss and grief?

MAKING SENSE OF GRIEF

We are all individuals – we are all meaning makers. As such, people can experience the same loss and yet experience grief in very different ways. In order to understand the personal meaning of the loss, it is helpful to understand the various influences that will shape grief and its meaning.

What Factors Might Shape How Grief Is Experienced?

One helpful way to understand the numerous influences on how a person experiences grief is in context of the family, community, and society. This is referred to as an ecological perspective.



Individual Influences

- Age
 - Gender expectations and assumptions
 - Role (e.g., personal, professional)
 - Type of loss
 - Relationship to the loss
 - Current stressors
 - Mental health
 - Supports
 - Coping
 - Previous losses
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Family Influences

- History of grief and loss
 - Intergenerational trauma (see page 38 for more information)
 - Communication
 - Belief system
 - Functioning
 - Routines and rituals
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Community Influences

- Previous losses and stresses
 - Type(s) of losses
 - Access to resources
 - The “isms” (racism, sexism, etc.)
 - Community health
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Societal Influences

- Cultural and religious beliefs
 - Beliefs about grief
 - History of colonialism
 - Cultural genocide
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Exploring Meaning

As meaning is influenced by many factors, we need to explore the person's experience of grief rather than make assumptions regarding its impact and what *we think* is needed. In fact, the person's meaning may have more impact than the actual loss. A sensitive and curious helper-stance can be the most significant way to help the individual explore their unique experience.

Questions to Explore Meaning

- What did you value most about _____?
- What influence did _____ have on you?
- What parts of this relationship do you want to hold on to? To remember?
- What parts of this relationship do you wish to let go of?
- What was the worst part of _____?
- What do you need now? What might you need next week? Next month? Etc.
- How can I be a support with this?

Such a curious stance needs to be balanced with silent support, which can be just as valuable.

As helpers, it can be important to explore the influence of other life experiences and how these affect their current experience of loss.

Possible Questions

- What influences in your life (e.g., previous losses, culture, assumptions, etc.) may affect your experience of this loss?
- What have you learned about loss that may be helpful now?
- What do you wish others understood about your experience?

CONSIDERATIONS OF CULTURE

Our culture and traditions shape how we understand and experience grief. There is no “correct” way of grieving. Most cultures and faiths have their own unique beliefs, rituals, and traditions that can provide predictability and normalcy during difficult times. For some, these traditions can be helpful. For others, they may want to create their own individual rituals and customs regarding grief. Regardless, it is important to understand these influences.

Personal Reflection

- What are some of your own culture’s beliefs, values, and traditions regarding grief?
- What has been your experience of these?
- How are your ideas, beliefs, and traditions similar to and different from those of others?

Practice Note

When supporting others from a culture or tradition different from your own, it is important to be curious and respectful of their beliefs, ideas, and rituals. Given cultural differences, it may be difficult to understand how best to be of support and to do so appropriately. Consulting with others of a similar background or researching cultural traditions may be helpful. It is important to note that there are many variations within any given culture. When in doubt, be curious and inquire into their assumptions, experiences, and beliefs.

When supporting another of a culture or background different from your own, the following questions for reflection may be helpful:

- How does the bereaved family understand the loss?
- What is expected in the mourning ceremonies (e.g., behaviour, dress, etc.)?
- What emotions are considered normal within the culture?
- Are there different expectations based on gender?
- Are gifts, flowers, or offerings expected?
- What dates and anniversaries will be important to the family?
- What types of condolences are considered appropriate?

MODELS OF UNDERSTANDING GRIEF

Stages of Grief

There are numerous models of understanding grief. The most popular of these are based on the work of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross's (1973) ideas around dying. Kubler-Ross described that, in coming to grips with dying, people go through stages:

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

This model has often been utilized in understanding grief as well as dying.

Another popular stage model of grief can be found in the work of William Worden (1983) who describes "tasks of mourning" that need to be accomplished in working with grief around the death of a loved one. These tasks include:

- Acceptance of the reality of the loss
- Embrace of the pain of the loss
- Adjustment to the newness
- Withdrawal from the loss and reinvestment in life

Consideration/Caution

Although such models can be helpful for some in understanding the process of grief, significant caution has been raised on the universality of such models, as not everyone will experience grief in such ways. Other critiques of these models note that they give a false sense of sequence and a move towards an ending of grief. Instead, many understand grief as a spiral that includes themes of anger, sadness, acceptance, loss, etc.

The Drive for Closure

An influential belief around grief includes the need for closure in order to heal. This notion of closure can be seen in ideas such as “time heals all wounds,” the need to say goodbye, etc. In the idea of closure, there is a drive for acceptance and moving on, often within a specific time period. Some find comfort knowing that grief will come to an end. For others, this notion of closure becomes problematic. Those that challenge the notion of closure as healing see that loss is not necessarily an end to the relationship, but rather a change. Nancy Berns (2011) notes “‘closure’ is not some naturally occurring emotion that we can simply ‘find’ with the right advice. Rather, ‘closure’ is a made up concept: a frame used to explain how we should respond to loss.”

Closure does not fit for everyone:

- The pain of the loss never really goes away
- Closure offers false hope
- Some people do not want closure
- Closure is not needed to find hope and healing

Questions for Further Consideration

- What does closure mean to you?
- How does the idea of closure fit your experience of grief?
- What influence do notions of stages of grief and closure play in your work?
- How do these influence those who are grieving?

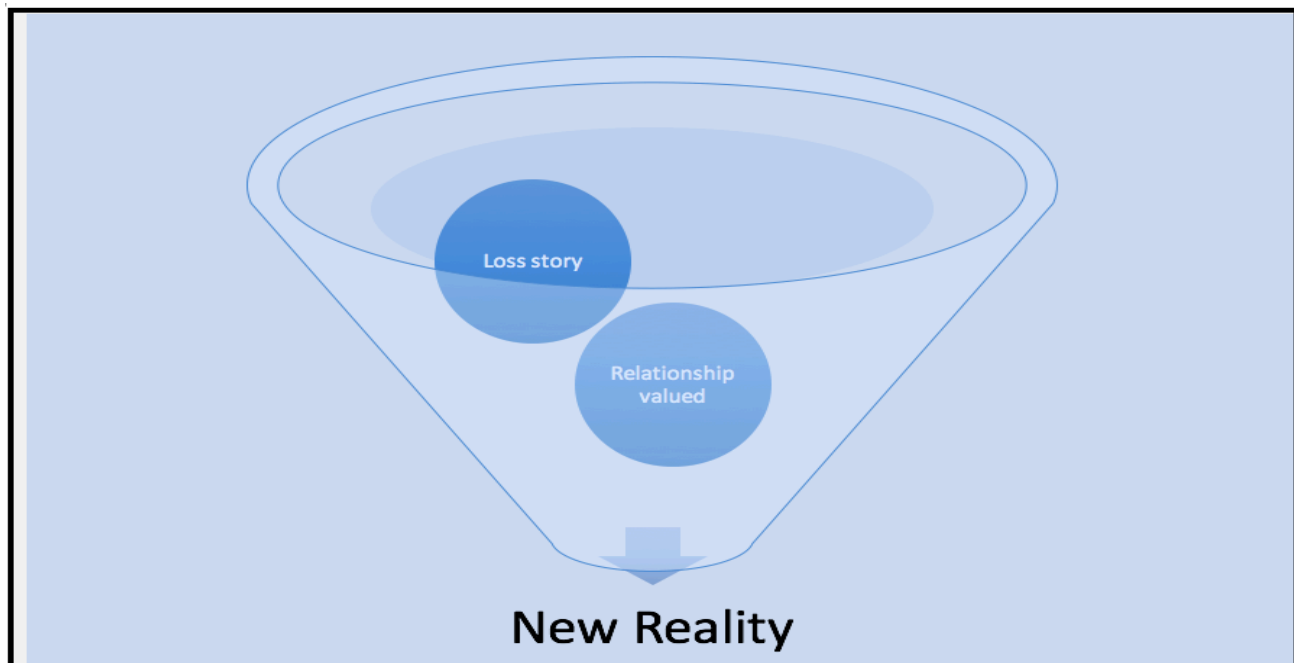
Practice Note

Such models can be a useful tool to understand and work with grief. It is also important to note that these do not fit for everyone. These narratives are fairly dominant in grief work. Rather than following them blindly, we as helpers need to reflect on their influence and fit with our work. It is also important to help those experiencing grief to explore such influences and promote choice in how they want to embrace their grief.

GRIEF AS A PROCESS – CREATING A NEW REALITY

Rather than seeing grief a series of stages to work through in order to achieve an end result (closure), it is more helpful to see grief as a process – it is a part of life and part of change. We are always in a state of “becoming.” Identity is not static but rather in a constant state of change. Loss is a part of this change. Integrating and learning from loss are important aspects of becoming the person we want to be.

Part of the grieving process is the creation of a new reality – one that has changed as a result of the loss. In moving towards this new normal, there is a back and forth dialogue between the event story (the loss) and the relational background story. Eventually these stories merge into something new.



Balance

As we continue on the journey of “becoming” and working with grief, consideration of balance is important.

- What does balance mean to you?
- Where and when do you see greater balance?
- What promotes balance?
- What gets in the way of balance?

Practice Note

For some people, identity becomes closely aligned with a certain role or activity (e.g., work, being a parent, being an athlete). When excessive emphasis is placed in one area, changes to this area can be devastating. Both in preparing for loss and working with grief, the greater the balance we have in our life the easier the transition.

EXPLORING THE IMPACTS OF GRIEF AND LOSS

Everyone will experience grief differently. For some, grief is sudden and unexpected, such as an accident or suicide. For others it is gradual, such as a chronic illness or dissolving of a relationship. Although everyone will experience some differences in grief and loss, common patterns do occur and may include:

Behavioural Impacts

- Isolating or needing to be with others
- Decreasing interests and activities
- Numbing
- Changes in sexual activity
- Loss of pleasure
- Changes in relationships

Cognitive Impacts

- Difficulty concentrating
- Preoccupation with the loss
- Trying to understand the “why’s”
- Questioning
- Becoming easily distracted
- Worries
- Sense of being overwhelmed
- Confusion
- Suicide ideation (see pp. 45-46 for more information)

Emotional Impacts

- Sadness
- Despair
- Anger
- Guilt
- Shame
- Fear
- Anxiousness
- Shock
- Disbelief
- Numbness
- Mood swings

Physical Impacts

- Lack of energy
- Difficulty sleeping (too much, broken, too little)
- Changes in eating and appetite
- Aches and pains (head, stomach, body in general, etc.)
- Restlessness
- Sense of slowness
- May affect the immune system

Spiritual Impacts

- Questioning belief system
- Change in values or priorities
- Search for understanding – the “why’s”
- Change in relationship with a higher power
- Sense of hopelessness
- Lack of meaning
- Disconnection from self and others

Questions to Explore the Impacts

- What does Grief look like for you?
- What has been lost? What has changed? What remains the same?
- When/where do you notice Grief the most? Are there times it is bigger or smaller?
 - How do you make sense of this?
- Have these impacts shifted and changed with time? If so, how?
- What do you think about Grief's role in your life?
- What does it want from you?
- What does your experience of Grief say about you? What is important/of value to you?
- How do others feel about Grief's role in your life?
- Does your experience of Grief impact/influence other relationships? (E.g., family, friends, work, etc.)
- What role might this Grief have in your life? (E.g., next month, 6 months, a year, 5 years...)
- How do you want to be with Grief?
 - Why is this important to you?
- Are there times when Grief is more welcomed? Other times when it is not?
- What parts of this relationship with Grief do you want to hold on to? What do you want to let go of?

Practice Note

Part of the grief process involves acknowledging the different and often complex, multi-layered aspects of loss. Common patterns of avoidance, minimization, and denial often create barriers to this. People may also have fear and anxiety about exploring the losses due to beliefs that this may increase their sense of despair. As helpers, being able to normalize reactions to grief can assist in healing. We too can help the bereaved explore their reactions on their own terms, allowing them to become their own experts on their grief. It can be overwhelming to explore these impacts. As such, continued review of coping (see pages 24-26, 45-48) will be important.

Children and Youth

Children and youth may experience the impacts of grief very similarly to adults. However, depending on a child's age and development, they may have some different reactions such as:

- Behavioural regressions (e.g., bed-wetting, "baby talk," acting "childish")
- Asking excessive questions
- Being very sensitive to the loss
- Appearing indifferent
- Difficulty or fear of being alone, excessive worries
- Being socially withdrawn or clingy
- Feeling responsible for the loss

Such impacts do not appear in a particular order – they could be a constant, or come out of the blue during aspects of everyday life.

Also, as the meaning given to the loss is more important than the loss itself, children's understandings of the loss will influence its impact. E.g., if a loved one died in their sleep, young children may relate going to sleep with dying.

(See Appendix D, page 49, to see tips for working with children and youth.)

The Family and Grief and Loss

Grief is not just an individual journey. Rather, it has an impact on all around, including the family as a whole. Grief can disrupt the family system and can influence family routines, rituals, roles, and support systems. Although the whole family may be affected, not everyone will experience grief in the same way. As a family, it is important to explore the grief together rather than individually noting the diversity of impacts.

As a family, it may be helpful to:

- Explore what has changed within the family and what has remained
- Develop a ritual or rituals of grief
- Explore family of origin and their experiences and teachings on grief
- Explore cultural influences on grief

Practice Note

As parents and caregivers, it is important to be aware of the messages we are giving about grief. Children learn more from our actions than our words. As helpers, we can coach parents and caregivers on how and what they want their children to learn about grief from them.

The Elderly

As people age, loss can become more frequent. Although the aged may experience similar impacts from loss, certain variables may influence their experience. These may include:

- Experiencing several losses within a short time
- Accumulation of a lifetime of losses – this includes greater cumulative effect, but also greater opportunities for learnings around loss
- Losses relating to the aging process: e.g., change in role in the family (caregiver to receiver), loss of abilities, health, deaths
- Physical or cognitive challenges may complicate grief
- Lacking support systems that they once had
- More likely to become ill with grief

The Community and Grief and Loss

Grief does not remain with the individual or family but can also impact the community (e.g., school, workplace, the entire community). This is especially true if there has been a series of traumatic losses (e.g., accidents, violence, suicide) or there has been a legacy of loss (intergenerational trauma or historic trauma). When this occurs, the community can be shaped by these losses and as a whole can present with grief symptoms such as:

- Sense of numbness
- Decreases in motivation and energy
- Sense of reactivity
- Isolation
- Distrust of others

Practice Note

When working with a community's experience of grief and loss, the following strategies may be helpful.

- Immediately following a loss, responses such as critical incident stress debriefing or town hall meetings may help to provide information around loss, impacts, and coping
- Memorials may be placed to acknowledge the loss
- Community-based rituals may be developed

MYTHS, MISUNDERSTANDINGS, AND MESSAGES

Although there is no one right way to grieve, in Western society there are many assumptions about what “normal grief” ought to look like and what will be helpful. With this notion come certain sayings and beliefs. Although these are often rooted in good intentions, the effect they may have on those experiencing grief may vary. Being aware of such popular assumptions and potential impacts is central for us as helpers, in order for us to better respond intentionally and compassionately. It can also be helpful for those experiencing grief to understand these as well. Some common beliefs and sayings include:

- Time heals all wounds
- Grief should last about a year
- It is important to be strong in the face of loss
- The pain will go away quicker if you keep yourself busy
- Grief is only about sadness and despair
- If you don't cry, the loss isn't that big (or there is something wrong with you)
- She/he is in a better place
- It was the will of God

How might such messages impact the bereaved?

Reflection

Think back to a loss in your life. What types of messages did you receive from people about grief? What was helpful? What was not so helpful?

What message or messages do you want to give to a person who is grieving?

RESPONDING TO GRIEF AND LOSS

Inherent in any loss is a sense of disconnection. It only makes sense that connections are an important element when working through loss. A key element of grief is the support of others. Support can mean something different to everyone, and the needs for support may vary for the individual and shift with time. Whether we are friends, family, neighbours, coworkers, or professionals, we can and do have an important role in the grief process. We just need to have some understandings of grief and intentionality in how we respond.

Reflection

What does it take to support people in their grief (qualities, skills, values, etc.)?

What have you learned about supporting people in their grief? (E.g., strategies, activities, connections, etc.)

Key Qualities in Supporting Grief

- Empathy not sympathy
- Supportive listening
- Patience
- Nonjudgemental
- Ability to hear difficult experiences
- Comfort with wide range of emotions
- Reflective on own experiences with grief – having done own work

Providing Support Along the Way

The needs around support will vary from person to person. It is most helpful to take your cues from them regarding how best to be a support and ask directly:

How can I love you/be the best support to you in this moment?

As we walk alongside people in their grief, keep the following ideas in mind:

- Inquire into needs, now and in the future
- Ask permission and offer support: “Is it okay if I...”
- Sit with the person
- Check in
- Share stories or experiences of the loved one
- Ask about the loved one directly: “Tell me about...”
- Help mobilize resources

Ineffective Responses

Despite grief being a normal, natural, and regular part of life, we are often ill prepared to face it. There is discomfort regarding others’ grief, let alone our own. This discomfort coupled with a sense of not wanting to make things worse can impede responses, making them ineffective or avoidant.

Common *but ineffective* themes in responding to grief and loss may include:

- Not knowing what to say, so avoid saying or doing anything
- Mistaken attempts at relating
 - “I know what you are going through”
- Intellectualizing responses or clichés
 - “Things will get better”
 - “She/he is no longer in pain”
- Avoiding painful emotions
 - “Big boys/girls don’t cry”
 - “You need to be strong in the face of...”
- Medicalizing or pathologizing grief: e.g., “This is depression,” “This is PTSD”
- Emphasizing faith
 - “Find comfort in God”

PATHWAYS OF THE JOURNEY

Grief and loss are part of all of our lives. We have all experienced grief, and will experience it again. Depending on the loss and numerous accompanying factors, how people engage in their grief will vary. There is no one right way to grieve, but rather many pathways. As those sitting with/walking alongside others in their grief, it is helpful for people to name their experience, identify potential obstacles along the way, and be intentional when determining the themes within their grief.

As you walk with your grief, do you have a name for this experience?

What themes might aid the grieving process?

What obstacles might complicate the process?

Grief Themes

- Self-care
- The relationship with time
- Experiencing and expressing the pain of loss
- Becoming the expert on your grief
- Imagination
- Connection
- Being kind to yourself
- Developing a new identity

SELF-CARE / BEING KIND TO ONESELF

Grief and loss create a lot of stress in people's lives. It is not uncommon for routine and basic functioning such as eating, sleeping, exercise, and connecting to be thrown off balance. Attention to these basics can aid in the grieving process.

Nutrition

Grief can influence a person's relationship with food and nutrition. For some, their appetite will diminish. Others may turn to food as comfort and subsequently overeat. Seeing food as fuel may be helpful in terms of considering the relationship with food during this time.

It may be helpful to consider limiting or being aware of the intake of "CATS" (see list below), as these can negatively impact the body and mind – especially during times of stress.

- **C**affeine
- **A**lcohol
- **T**obacco
- **S**weeteners

Sleep

Sleep is often one of the first things affected during loss. For some, sleep may be limited or broken. Others may find themselves sleeping much more. Be aware of sleep hygiene basics such as:

- Limiting sleeping to only when tired
- Maintaining routine in going to bed and waking
- Engaging in relaxing activities prior to bed such as reading, listening to music, having a bath
- Awareness of food intake and exercise

Exercise and Physical Activity

This too may be affected by loss. For some, exercise may be the last thing that they pay attention to. For others, physical exertion may be a means of escape. Intentionally engaging in physical activity – especially cardiovascular activity – has been shown to have positive health benefits.

Being Kind to Oneself

Self-kindness is also an important aspect of grieving, but it's not always easy. We often say and do things we may regret later. Awareness of such tendencies and taking things in stride can be helpful. It is also helpful to be aware that decision-making may be compromised during the initial process of grief. Awareness of this and avoiding making major life decisions can also be helpful.

THE RELATIONSHIP WITH TIME

A common understanding around recovery is that it takes time.

- Time heals all wounds.
- This too shall pass.

On its own, time may not be key to the healing process – it is *how* we use the time that counts. Healing is an active and intentional process. Being intentional with time will be helpful in recovery. Be aware of popular (and unhelpful) assumptions (spoken or assumed) such as:

- Grief should last only [*a certain period of time*].
- You need to wait until _____ before _____.

With awareness of such assumptions, we can better choose whether or not we buy into these assumptions or experience grief on our individual timetables.

Preparing for the Firsts

As time progresses, reminders of the loss will be all around us. Some of these reminders may appear out of the blue; others may be anticipated. Preparing for “the firsts,” such as holidays, anniversaries, birthdays, etc., will be important. In preparing for “the firsts” and “the nexts,” it may be helpful to consider:

- What might this be like?
- What will be helpful with this?
- Do I want to keep this tradition or create something new?
 - What would be the benefits and drawbacks to either?

Setting Aside Time for Grief

Taking intentional time to experience grief and reflect on the loss will also be important. For a period, grief will take up most of a person’s time and attention, but this may shift over the long term. Setting up intentional time for reflection allows for this process to continue and creates a greater sense of control for the individual.

Some ideas for setting up intentional time for grief include:

- Creating specific space for grief (e.g., specific room, going to the grave, walk in nature)
 - Creating a routine or ritual
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EXPERIENCING AND EXPRESSING THE PAIN OF LOSS

Viewing Emotional Pain as Messenger

Within Western culture, there is a strong emphasis on acquiring. This cultural norm sets the stage with a problematic relationship with loss. Loss becomes something to be avoided at all costs. Because of this, it is no wonder we have difficulties with loss.

Not only is loss to be avoided, but so too is the pain that comes with it. Our society overvalues happiness – anything outside of this realm often gets pathologized (i.e., as depression or anxiety).

Rather than avoiding loss, we can view it as a messenger. Curiosity around loss allows us to reflect:

- What does the pain of loss tell us about the importance of the relationship?
- What does this experience of pain say about you?
- How will you use this pain?
- How will this pain change you? In what way(s)?

Expressing Emotions

Many people have a difficult relationship with their emotions. There can be many reasons for this (e.g., gender messages, culture, trauma, etc.). When grief occurs, we may have a roller coaster of emotions, from sadness to anger to despair to guilt to shame, as well as glimpses of joy, happiness, etc. Some of these emotions might be expected; some might be surprising.

Anticipating and accepting this roller coaster of emotions is an important part of grieving. In doing so, consideration of various strategies will be helpful.

Strategies for Identifying and Expressing Emotions

Strategies for Sitting with Emotions

Strategies for Moving Past Various Emotions

Coping

We all have our means of dealing with stresses and difficulty. Being aware of our coping patterns both past and present and intentionally choosing what will be helpful with grief is important. Just as there is a tendency to avoid loss, there is also a risk that coping strategies involving distraction and numbing (e.g., drugs, alcohol, food, keeping busy, etc.) may take over. Being mindful around coping allows us to be intentional in how we face the pain of loss. It also allows us to consciously shift away from the pain when needed. This intentional back and forth between experiencing grief then moving from it is a key aspect of moving forward.

Reflection

What has gotten you through difficult times?

What has been helpful or not so helpful?

BECOMING YOUR OWN EXPERT ON GRIEF

By setting aside time and intentionally experiencing the complexities of grief, a person gets to know their unique experience – thus becoming their own expert through gaining a greater sense of control. Inherent in any loss is a sense of powerlessness. Whatever can occur to give a greater sense of control will be helpful. Two strategies that help facilitate this are the Grief Monitoring Journal and the Loss Timeline.

Grief Monitoring Journal

Taking stock of the loss, its impacts, what in fact is lost or what has changed, can also be a helpful part of grieving. Attention to the rhythms of grief and the ebbs and flows in intensity can give a sense of control. This may reduce anxieties associated with grief. Keeping a journal may be a useful tool. Not only does this help with the current loss, it can help movement into future losses.

Instructions

On a daily basis, the person tracks the intensity of the grief on a scale of 1-10, including when it was at the lowest and what they were experiencing at that time, as well as the highest.

Date	Lowest Grief (0-10)	Situation	Highest Grief (0-10)	Situation	Average Grief
6/12	4	Going for a run	8	Going to bed alone	6
6/13	3	Supper with friends	7	Breakfast alone	5
6/14	4	Playing guitar	8	Looking through pictures	6

Adapted from Turret & Shear in *Techniques of Grief Therapy* (2012).

Lifeline Exercise

As part of getting to know grief, doing a personal lifeline or inventory of joys and challenges can be insightful. When loss occurs, it often brings up memories of other losses. Reflecting back on the history, impacts, intensity, and learnings of life's joys and sorrows is valuable. Such an inventory not only brings new awareness into the current situation, but also prepares for future losses.

Caution and Consideration

Doing such an exercise can be helpful, but caution ought to be used as this can become very overwhelming. Prior to doing the exercise, it is important to review readiness and coping strategies. This exercise is most suited for those further along in their grief journey.

Instructions

1. Draw a line across the page.
2. Label one side 0 (indicating your birth), the far side your current age, and the middle half your age.
3. Now draw a vertical axis and label it -5 to +5 to indicate level of intensity.
4. Place your joys and losses in sequence on the timeline.
5. Indicate the impact, influence, and intensity of each of the experiences of joy and loss in relation to the vertical intensity.
6. Make brief notes (e.g., words, phrases, drawings) that come to mind with each experience.
7. Reflect/debrief using the following as possible prompts:
 - What was it like doing this?
 - What themes do you notice?
 - Which losses were easier or harder to face? Why is this?
 - What influence has loss had on your life?
 - How have the losses influenced the joys?
 - How have the joys influenced the losses?
 - What will you take from this experience?
 - If you had to share this with another person, who would you choose?
 - What would you hope they would gain from seeing this?

Adapted from James & Friedman (2009).

REMEMBERING AND RITUAL

Loss is about a change in a relationship (relationship with a person, thing, job, etc.), not necessarily about an end. To be in relationship means to influence and be influenced. Influence does not necessarily end when a physical relationship ends. Reflection on the continued influence takes time, intentionality, and imagination. Developing and engaging in rituals can aid in this.

Remembering is an essential part of mourning. Working with grief is not moving past the loss, but rather including and integrating what once was into what is “becoming.” Remembering and ritual often work together as ritual can be seen as the intentional act of remembering.

What rituals have you experienced around loss?

What was this experience like?

There have always been rituals to assist with grief. However, as society becomes more secularized, there can be a sense of discomfort for some as they associate ritual with faith traditions. Rituals may or may not contain elements of faith. They can be traditional or created anew, formal or informal, a one-time occurrence or repetitious, done individually or communally, have a spiritual connection or be secular.

Some examples of rituals include:

- Funerals
- Sweat lodges
- Feasts
- Celebration of life lived
- Shiva
- Divorce ceremony
- Retirement party

Some of the benefits of rituals:

- Allows for the expression of grief
- Creates a greater sense of control through an active process
- Places connection to the loss
- Can be done individually or collectively – opportunity for social support
- Provides opportunity for meaning in the loss, tying spiritual aspects to the ritual

Other activities that do not have the formal nature of ritual but are an active process of remembering may include:

- Photo albums
- Creating a memory box
- Favourite playlist
- Menu of favourite foods
- Visitation of favourite or memorable locations
- Throwing a party to acknowledge important dates (e.g., birthday, anniversary)

WORKING WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE “STUCK” IN THEIR GRIEF

A person’s relationship with grief is an individual one – everyone experiences grief in their own way. However, popular assumptions/beliefs around grief can mislead people into believing that others may be “stuck” in their grief or that they are doing it wrong. These judgements tend to further silence, isolate, and pathologize those who are already struggling. As helpers, when people appear “stuck” in their grief, it is important to remind oneself of the following:

- Grief is normal, natural, and needed – it serves a purpose.
- There is no “right” way to grieve.
- There are no specific stages/tasks to be completed and grief will come to an end.
- There is no specific time frame for grief.
- The degree of pain reflects the degree of loss.

Keeping the above in mind helps shift judgement to curiosity. Using a curious framework, we can explore their relationship with grief. All relationships serve a purpose and include benefits and challenges. A curious helper stance allows for reflection and the potential to change in their relationship with grief.

Questions to Explore the Relationship with Grief

- How are you in this relationship with grief?
- How do you want to want to be?
- What does this pain say about you? What is important to you?
- What do you wish I/others knew about your experience?
- Do you notice rhythms in the grief (when is it bigger/smaller)?
- When is the grief more welcomed? When is it not?
- What have you learned about grief?
- What do you wish others knew about this?
- Does this relationship with grief impact other relationships?
- If grief were to continue as is, where may this lead you?
- If your relationship with grief were to change, how might this impact you/others?

PREPARING FOR LOSS

Our relationship with loss begins at birth. It is not a matter of *if*, it is *when* the next loss will begin. Preparing for loss can ease the grieving process.

Children and Youth

Children and youth experience many losses during their development. Helping them develop a healthy relationship with loss can help them develop a strong foundation for dealing with grief as they enter adulthood. Many parents and caregivers have the sex and drugs talk with children or youth, but the loss talk is equally important and often overlooked until significant loss occurs. Using opportunities to explore loss – such as the death of a pet, theft of a bike, or breakup of a relationship – can prepare children and youth for more significant losses they will experience in life. Attention to how we as adults face loss and experience grief also provides significant learning for children and youth.

Adults

Is there a day in which we don't experience some type of disappointment or loss – big or small? Attention to these smaller experiences of loss and how we handle (or don't handle) them can provide insight into how we may experience more significant losses. Daily reflection on these smaller losses gives the opportunity to see both our strengths and the challenges. These insights will be useful when greater losses surface. Consider:

What losses or disappointments did you experience yesterday? This past week?

How did you initially respond to these?

How did these affect you?

Upon further reflection, would you approach these differently?

What might others learn from your responses?

WHEN ADDITIONAL SUPPORT MAY BE NEEDED

Many people are able to work through grief utilizing their natural supports. However, it's important to also have additional supports available should they be required.

Indicators

- The loss was sudden or related to violence (assault, homicide, suicide)
- The loss involved a child
- Thoughts of suicide are occurring
- The grief appears too much to bear
- There has not been a shift in grief's intensity over time
- Normal functioning (e.g., work, connections, hygiene) is compromised
- Emotions such as sadness, anger, and guilt become overwhelming
- Signs of depression are occurring (e.g., social withdrawal, low energy, decrease in activities that previously gave enjoyment)
- Coping becomes problematic (e.g., use of drugs and alcohol increases, engaging in risk taking behaviours, engaging in self harming behaviour)
- Experiencing flashbacks
- Others believe additional supports may be helpful

Additional supports can be accessed by contacting:

- Grief counsellors
- Mental health professionals
- Health care providers
- Employee assistance program (EAP)
- Religious leaders

As helpers, we can be a support to accessing appropriate resources. For some, seeing a counsellor or mental health professional can be an intimidating experience. Also, a lot of stigma still exists about seeking help. Considering these issues, we can:

- Highlight seeking help as a sign of strength in the recovery from grief
- Share our own experiences of seeking help
- Be aware of appropriate resources
- Let them know what to expect of the support – demystify counselling
- Accompany or be a part of the meetings

APPENDIX A – SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Grief, Loss, and Depression

The experience of grief shares many of the same characteristics as depression. After a significant loss, it is normal to feel sadness, loss of energy and motivation, changes in appetite, etc. But where is the line between “normal grief” and depression? Grief may be an influence in depression, but not all depression has elements of grief.

With the release of the DSM-5 (Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) in 2013, there was a change in how the psychiatric community understood grief and depression. Until then, bereavement was seen as an exception to the criteria to diagnose major depression. With this change to the DSM, there has been significant criticism that this is an attempt to pathologize normal aspects of life.

Consider the subtle differences between “normal grief” and depression:

“Normal” Grief	Depression
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Able to attend to daily activities, often within 2-3 weeks after the loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulty maintaining normal functioning
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experience waves of sadness or despair – often after a reminder of loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sadness or despair often more constant
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sense of self-esteem more intact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Poor sense of self-esteem
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Belief that things may get better over time	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greater sense of hopelessness
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stronger sense of connection to supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greater disconnection

Practice Note

Avoid using the word *depression* when talking about grief. Depression is a clinical term, a diagnosis made by a doctor. Unless a diagnosis of depression has been made, use other terms such as *sadness*, *despair*, etc., as the term *depression* can mean something very different to different people and can carry its own baggage.

However, you should also be aware of the potential of “normal grief” to slip into depression.

Grief, Loss, and Trauma/Complicated Grief

Just as there is some overlap among grief, loss, and depression, so too there is overlap between grief and trauma. This has created some debate in how to distinguish between the two.

Trauma is a wound that injures us emotionally, psychologically, or physiologically. Trauma occurs when a person experiences a threat, including sexual violence, to physical or psychological survival of oneself or a close family member or friend. We each have innate capabilities to respond to such situations and return to a state of equilibrium. However, if the intensity of the situation overwhelms our resilience – often with intense helplessness, shame, or terror – and we are not able to reestablish a sense of relative safety, our built-in survival mechanisms remain on high alert and continually respond to threat. Thus, we become traumatized.

All trauma contains elements of grief, but not all grief is traumatic. For example, when an elderly grandparent dies naturally, it is to some degree expected. We still have sadness, loss, etc., but the themes of danger, hopelessness, or helplessness inherent in trauma are not as present. However, if this same grandparent dies unexpectedly or tragically in an accident, act of violence, etc., a person may have a trauma response.

When trauma is a part of grief, the grieving process can be more complicated. With “normal grief,” the grief process is often a back and forth dialogue of the event story (the loss) and the relational background story. This back and forth dialogue creates a new story, which is part of recovery and healing. When trauma is present, especially if the loss is related to issues of violence, suicide, grotesque accident, missing persons, etc., the back and forth between the loss and history is more complicated, as the loss story often dominates. How the loss occurred becomes more prominent than the life lived.

Reactions Within a Traumatic or Complicated Grief Framework May Include:

- Inability to believe or accept the loss
- Extreme anger
- Feeling numb or detached
- Lack of meaning
- Lost sense of security
- Intense and, at times, intrusive thoughts regarding the loss
- Preoccupation with the loss

Such reactions can go on for months or even years and influence other issues, such as:

- Work and social relationships
- Coping difficulties such as drug, alcohol, or behavioural problems
- Physical or mental health problems
- Increased risk of suicide

Practice Note

When trauma is part of the grieving process, a common question is what to focus on first. Keeping in mind basic trauma recovery principles of promoting safety, empowerment, and connection may be a helpful guide within support. Awareness of the differing stories of the event and background and helping to facilitate this dialogue can also be a part of healing. Other professional supports may be necessary to assist in exploring the trauma aspects of grief.

Intergenerational/Historic Trauma

Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart (2011) defines historic trauma as “The cumulative emotional and psychological wounding across generations, including the life span, which emanates from massive group trauma.”

Examples of those affected by historic trauma include:

- First Nations, Inuit, and Metis peoples
- Jewish holocaust survivors and their descendants
- Japanese internment camp survivors

Practice Note: Working with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Communities

Taking into account historic and intergenerational trauma is key to working with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities. The ripple effects of colonization and residential schools, for example, continue to negatively affect and influence individuals, families, and whole communities. These historic issues directly influence current issues such as increased rates of:

- Depression
 - Substance use
 - Trauma
 - Rates of violence
 - Suicide
 - Accidental deaths
-
-
-

APPENDIX B – ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES

Interviewing Grief

One engaging and innovative intervention when dealing with grief can be to imagine or enact a conversation or interview with that feeling or dynamic. This often yields interesting new and helpful insights and learnings.

[Counsellor] Hello, Grief. Can I call you Grief? Or what would you prefer to be called?

[Grief] People know me by many names. Some know me as Sorrow, Despair, or The Blackness. But, you can call me Grief if you want.

[Counsellor] Tell me a bit about yourself. What keeps you busy?

[Grief] Busy? That's a good one! I am extremely busy. I'm well known in all walks of life. In fact, everyone knows me and spends time with me whether they like it or not! With such a social calendar, I have very little down time.

[Counsellor] Being so widely known, I'm wondering how people view you?

[Grief] Unfortunately, I am often shunned and avoided. People think I'm out to cause pain and misery wherever I go.

[Counsellor] Does that fit for you?

[Grief] Definitely not. Sure, sadness and sorrow are a part of me, but it isn't everything. I don't think people can have love, joy, or happiness without me. Tolstoy put it best when he said, "Only people who are capable of loving strongly can also suffer great sorrow, but this same necessity of loving serves to counteract their grief and heals them."

[Counsellor] That is a great quote. So, it sounds like you have gotten a bad reputation. How do you want to be known?

[Grief] I kind of fancy myself as a teacher. You and everyone else can learn a lot about yourselves, what is important in life, what is valued, by spending some quality time with me. If I may quote Lord Byron, "Sorrows are our best educators. A person can see further through a tear than a telescope." The thing is, the lessons learned by hanging out with me are difficult. A person needs time, patience, courage, and, most importantly, supports.

[Counsellor] A teacher? Do people often see you this way?

[Grief] Some do, but most do their best to avoid me. If people take the time to get to know me, some do begin to welcome me. Say, have you heard this one? According to most studies, people's number one fear is public speaking. Number two is death. Does that sound right? This means, to the average person, if you go to a funeral, you're better off in the casket than doing the eulogy!

[Counsellor] (laughing) I don't think many people would expect you to have a sense of humour!

[Grief] Yes, I like to hang out with Laughter. I find we work well together.

[Counsellor] I am getting to see a different side of you here. But let's face it, it's not all learning and laughter. Do you ever find that problems follow you?

[Grief] Yes, unfortunately. Sometimes I am just too much to bear and people turn off.

[Counsellor] What do you mean, "turn off"?

[Grief] They turn off as a way of coping. Some turn to drugs or alcohol, others lose themselves in their work, gambling, and so on. A visit from Addiction becomes a reality for some. For others, "turning off" looks more like Depression, and sometimes Anxiety creeps in. The unfortunate thing is, I am still *there*. These things just tend to pause or cover over the pain of the loss.

[Counsellor] So, these are friends of yours – Addictions, Depression, and Anxiety?

[Grief] I wouldn't really call them friends, but they sometimes follow me around and tend to get in the way of things.

[Counsellor] That sounds complicated. As you know, I work a lot with people in their relationship with you. Do you have any advice I could pass to them?

[Grief] Tell them I am part of their life. They have known me since birth and will continue to know me until they die. We have a life-long relationship whether they want to acknowledge it or not. Take the time to invest in and consider this relationship. When they do, I wouldn't be surprised if they are better for it. Reflecting on our relationship may also help prepare them for the next time I come to visit.

[Counsellor] Thank you Grief for taking the time to meet today. I found this most interesting. I'm assuming we will meet again...

[Grief] It's only a matter of time! See you soon.

Introducing the Ones You Have Lost

When the death of a loved one occurs, grief is what continues to connect the bereaved and the deceased. This relational aspect of grief is often overlooked by traditional grief practices, as grief tends to focus more on the individual's loss rather than the relationship that was and is. Death does not necessarily mean that the relationship dies with the person. The "relationship that was" continues to be felt, influences the present and, with attention, the future. Reflection on the person, the relationship and influence keeps the relationship alive. Focusing on stories of strength helps balance the stories of loss.

The dead are not able to speak for themselves, but are still an important part of the grief process. This is why it is important for the living to provide an introduction. In doing so, consider the following introductory questions:

- Tell me about your loved one.
- What kind of person was she or he? (Qualities, values, interests, hobbies, etc.)
- What stories come to mind that demonstrate what kind of person she or he was?
- What is a favourite memory of yours?
- What influence did she or he have on you?
- What influence did you have on him or her?
- Where and when do you continue to feel this influence?
- If you wanted to continue to grow this relationship, how would you do this?

This exercise focuses on saying *Hello* to the deceased rather than the traditional emphasis on *Goodbye*.

Adapted from Lorraine Hedtke, 2012

The Tree of Life

We are all connected to the past. Exploring and building on these connections can be a source of strength for many as part of their recovery. This is especially true when there have been issues of intergenerational and historical trauma.

One exercise that has been helpful in creating connections and meaning with the past is the “Tree of Life” exercise, first developed by Ncazelo Ncube and David Denborough in their work in Africa with children orphaned by AIDS. Since then, this has been utilized around the world.

Instruct the person to draw a tree, one stage at a time. At each stage, encourage the person to reflect:

- **Roots** – Where we are connected to the earth and our past, our ancestry, places we come from, people we come from, etc.
- **Trunk** – Our name for ourselves.
- **Branches** – Skills and knowledge we have learned or been taught.
- **Leaves** – People and animals we are connected to.
- **Fallen leaves** – Loved ones who have died.
- **Storms** – Events we are surviving or have survived.
- **Fruit or nuts** – Our hopes, dreams, and values for ourselves, loved ones, our community, the world, etc.

Encourage further conversations through reflective questions including:

- Where are trees the safest? Alone or with others? (If in a group setting, invite them to collect trees into a forest)
- What happens to trees? (Storms)
- What are the storms in people’s lives? (Pain, hurt, loss, etc.)
- What do animals do when storms come? (Come together, run, hide, etc.)
- What do people do when storms come? (Same...)
- When do animals know it is safe to come out? (Wind, sun, new day, rain stops, no thunder, etc.)
- When do people know when it is safe to come out? (Yelling or fighting stops, next morning, no drinking, feeling better inside, etc.)
- What do the animals do after the storm? (Run, play, eat, normal life)
- What do people do after the storm? (Same...)

Adapted from David Denborough, 2008

Packing for the Journey

Some losses we see coming, while others happen out of the blue. Regardless, we are all on a journey with grief. Like all travels, it is helpful if we can bring things with us to assist along the way. For some of losses, we can prepare what we pack. For others, we are thrust into the voyage with little to no preparation and are forced to consider picking up items along the way. As we walk through grief, it is helpful to pack and consider the following:

- A notebook/guidebook: This represents lessons learned and notes made from previous experiences of grief. These lessons may be your own or have been observed or passed on from others.
- Compass: This represents the values and beliefs that you want to hold on to and have as your guide.
- Snacks: What will nourish you along the way?
- First aid kit: Bumps and bruises are inevitable – what are the things that can help with the pain/s on this journey that you want to intentionally employ?
- Toiletries bag: What are the rituals and routines that you want to continue? (E.g. daily, weekly)
- Souvenirs: What reminders of this journey do you want to hold on to and why?

Additional Considerations:

- Companions: Some trips are best made alone while others welcome company.
 - Who do you wish to accompany you?
 - On what parts of the journey would you welcome others? When might you prefer to be on your own?
 - Who are people that you have met along the way that have been helpful?
- Pit stops: What are some of the experiences that may provide a break and respite along the way?

APPENDIX C – COPING STRATEGIES

To Calm and Settle, Be Regulated and Stay in Control of Reactions

It is completely normal to struggle with feeling more stressed or deal with stronger emotions. Sometimes this can be an ongoing struggle, and it can be beneficial to practice and learn how to calm ourselves. Not only will this help in times of high stress, it can also help prevent us from becoming too agitated or worried in the anticipation of stress.

General Tips for Increasing Ability to Settle

- Pay attention to your diet and avoid excessive stimulants and sugar.
- Avoid excessive amounts of alcohol and ensure you drink enough water.
- Pay attention to your sleep and develop a calming routine before bed.
- Ensure you get regular exercise – physical activity helps your body use its natural abilities to regulate itself.

Key Strategies for Developing the Capacity to Be Regulated

Pay attention to what activities you enjoy that promote a sense of calm. Be intentional about building more of these into your life:

- Showers or baths
- Ritual of afternoon tea or a walk in nature
- Doing activities with your hands (knitting, origami, sculpting)
- Yoga, exercise, listening to music, etc.

Learn ways to intentionally deepen your ability to become more regulated:

- Breathing exercises and practices
- Meditation and visualization exercises to focus and settle the mind and body
- Muscle relaxation to deepen body awareness and relaxation
- Strategies to specifically deal with anger, fear, and anxiety

Incorporate play into your life:

- Play an instrument
- Fly a kite
- Sing a song
- Draw or paint a picture
- Etc.

Deepen your positive connections that hold meaning and value for you:

- Practice your spirituality and incorporate it into your life
- Spend time in nature
- Spend time with close friends and family and work on these relationships
- Join a support group, walking club, art class, volunteer organization, etc.

Dealing with Flashbacks and Intrusive Thoughts and Images

1. Educate the person on intrusive thoughts and flashbacks.
2. Remind them that flashbacks are normal, they usually decrease in severity over time, and they often go away (or change).
3. Typically in the acute phase, intrusive thoughts may be more unpredictable. If they become chronic, they often begin to happen at certain times and places. Usually they consist of:
 - A trigger event (internal or external)
 - The actual memory
 - The aftermath (period of confusion or a return to normal functioning)
4. Remind them that every flashback or intrusive thought has a beginning, middle, and end. It will end even when it is very vivid and real.
5. Remind them they are not going crazy.
6. Remind them of the flight, fright, or freeze response and that their body and mind are becoming activated.
7. Remind them that they will have times when they do not feel dominated by intrusive images, thoughts, or flashbacks. Develop concrete practical ways to cope.

Tips for Clients Coping with Flashbacks

- Stop what you are doing.
- Pay attention to yourself – be mindful and calm.
- Reorient yourself and ground yourself to the present moment. (What do you see, hear, touch, feel, or smell?)
- When ready, take action. What do you need to do next? Call a friend, contact a counsellor, journal, talk, stop watching the movie, etc.

Processing Reoccurring Flashbacks

- If the client is stable enough, encourage them to share about the flashback by writing, talking, or drawing. Fit the flashback into the larger picture of the trauma.
- If it was abuse, explore messages about the relationship or the self.
- The goal is to *eventually* reframe the flashback to a specific memory of an experience in the past as opposed to random, meaningless experiences. This could be the memory of *feeling* a certain way rather than a specific event.
- The goal is to help the client ground themselves, feel in control, and not get overwhelmed.

Grounding Techniques

Breathing Exercise

- Focus on the breath coming in and out of your nose.
- Take a few long, deep breaths, then relax your body, then repeat.
- It can be helpful to add some structure to focus the breathing.

Example: Cycle Breathing

- *As you inhale, count slowly to 4, matching your full inhale with the count, 1-2-3-4.*
- *Pause and hold your breath for a count of 2.*
- *Exhale slowly to a count of 4, matching your full exhale with the count, 1-2-3-4.*
- *Repeat several times, gradually lengthening your count.*

The 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 Exercise

If a person begins to feel overwhelming sensations, they can begin a countdown to ground themselves. They can talk out loud or to themselves.

Have them get comfortable for a moment and then begin:

- *What are 5 things you hear, see, and feel (touch)?*
- *What are 4 things you hear, see, and feel (touch)?*
- *What are 3 things you hear, see, and feel (touch)?*
- *What are 2 things you hear, see, and feel (touch)?*
- *What is 1 thing you hear, see, and feel (touch)?*

Now feel yourself being present in this moment, not the past or the future. Notice where you are in the room. Present and grounded. Repeat if needed.

Tell clients not to get caught up in remembering the order of numbers and sensations for this exercise. This exercise can be done at any time, anywhere. Usually it is beneficial for the service provider to demonstrate this exercise, with the client silently going through it with them.

Rooting to the Ground – Breath Visualization

Bring your attention to your breath – use your awareness to ride your in-breath and follow it as it turns around to your out-breath. As you breathe in, visualize it as energy, light, particles or a colour. Continue to follow your breath and visualize how it moves through your body. You might track it along your arms, down your torso, down your legs, and finally all the way down to your feet. As you continue to breathe normally, follow your in-breath and see the energy, light, etc., flow all the way through your body, through your feet, and into the ground below you, anchoring you and holding you solid and firm. Notice how it feels to be rooted to the earth, and have all of you connected.

Visualization: Warm Water Wash

The following is a guided visualization.

Phase One

Have the person sit comfortably in their chair, hands placed on their thighs. They can have their eyes closed or they can keep them open. Have them place both feet flat on the ground. Say to them, *“Notice your body sitting in the chair and your feet on the ground.”*

Phase Two

“Notice your whole body and the energy that is moving through it. Don’t judge it, just notice it. Notice the energy in your mind, your chest, stomach, everywhere. Notice where you feel tense, negative, scattered. Just pay attention and notice it for a few moments.” Pause.

Phase Three

“Now, imagine a warm, welcoming bucket of healing water above your head. Imagine it slowly – very slowly – being poured over your head. Imagine it slowly washing over your head, then your forehead, pushing out the negative energy. Down your body and out the bottom of your feet into the ground.”

“Feel the energy in your head, forehead, cheeks, face, back of head, back of neck slowly relaxing, feeling positive” (pause for a brief moment for each of the body parts). *“Notice the water washing over your shoulders, upper arms, elbows, forearms, your hands and fingers”* (pause for a brief moment for each of the body parts).

“Each of those areas is now fully relaxed with all the negative energy flowing out the bottoms of your feet. You may notice your feet begin to feel heavy as the negative and scattered energy leaves through the ground.” Repeat the rhythm through the chest, upper and lower back, stomach, hips, thighs, knees, shins, and ankles. Pause briefly at each body part. *“The water washes away and replacing negative energy.”*

Phase Four

“Finally, feel your feet and toes empty the remaining energy into the ground. Your feet becoming very relaxed. Now, just notice yourself feeling and being very relaxed, and very present with your body sitting in your chair.”

“Take a few moments to just sit and be aware.”

“When you are ready, I want you to come back to the room. Start to slightly wiggle your fingers, feet, and body. Open your eyes. Notice the room. Still feeling relaxed, calm, and positive.”

APPENDIX D – SUICIDE ASSESSMENT

Grief and loss can be overwhelming, and their very nature can throw a person off balance. It can impact coping and overwhelm resources of resilience. In the fog of grief, thoughts of suicide may occur. As helpers, we need to be aware of this potential and assess for safety. Some factors surrounding the loss that may make a person more at risk for suicide include:

- The degree of closeness to the loss (e.g., partner, child)
- Children
- The degree of self-identification with the loss (e.g., loss of job, athletic injury)
- Serial losses
- When suicide has been attempted in the past or the loss is related to suicide

Suicide Warning Signs

Warning signs are often the subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) things we observe or hear. Many of these warning signs are not overly alarming individually, but collectively they become very concerning:

- Loss of interest in things they used to care about
- Irritability and edginess increases
- Giving things away
- Visiting or calling people and saying “Goodbye”
- Methodically making amends, settling quarrels
- Withdrawal and isolation from friends and family
- Suddenly happier, right after a long deep depression
- Change in appearance – hygiene, etc.
- Increased risk-taking behaviour (e.g., use of drugs, reckless driving)
- Talking about feeling hopeless, helpless, or worthless
- Hoarding of pills, hiding of weapons
- Talking about suicide or what it would be like to die (preoccupied with death)
- Self-injury
- Threatening suicide
- Indirect statements
 - “What’s the use of going on?”
 - “I just can’t take it anymore.”
- Direct statements
 - “Sometimes I just feel like killing myself.”
 - “You won’t have to worry about me much longer.”

* Sometimes there are no warning signs.

Assessing the Severity of Suicide Risk

In assessing the risk of suicide, the following questions will be a helpful guide.

- Do they have a plan? If yes, what is the plan and do they have access to it?
- Have they felt suicidal in the past, or is this the first time?
- Have they ever attempted suicide before? When?
- Are they using drugs or alcohol? Do they have access?
- Will they be home alone?
- Do they take medications for mental health concerns? Have they been taking them?

If you're not clear about the level of risk, you might want to ask:

- "On a scale of 1-10, how serious are you about killing yourself?"
- "On a scale of 1-10, how hopeful are you that this situation will improve?"

LEVEL OF RISK	LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
Suicidal ideation frequency (how often?)	Occasional	Intermittent	Continuous
Intensity (how strong?)	Mild	Strong	Overwhelming
Lethality of method	Not high	Possibly lethal	Very lethal
Availability of means	Doesn't have access	Can get access	Has immediate access
Specificity of plan (how, what, where, when)	Not considered	Considered details	Details worked out

If the level of risk is very high and help is needed immediately, take the individual directly to an emergency room. If you are worried that the individual may jump out of a moving car or put your life in danger by possibly grabbing your steering wheel while in motion, phone the local police for assistance.

APPENDIX E – TIPS FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Every child is different. How one child experiences grief may be very different from another child. This is true even when they are experiencing the same loss. Awareness and openness to their differing experiences will be key. Helping children work through their loss also means working with their parents or caregivers and important people in their lives (e.g., extended family, friends, teachers, coaches). Helping the adults involved in these children's lives to understand and support their grief will assist the child in working through their loss.

Do

- Provide reassurance, care, and concern
- Be proactive around loss; use everyday disappointments and losses to teach about grief and loss
- Allow the child to be his or her own expert around loss
- Allow them to express and share their experience in their own time
- Tell the truth about the loss; provide the facts and check in with how they understand and make meaning of the loss
- Expect a roller coaster of emotions; allow for outbursts of grief to be intermingled with laughter, play, etc., as this is normal
- Be patient
- Allow for normal routines to continue but do not push for this if the child is not ready

Don't

- Don't hide the loss
- Don't use metaphors or half-truths when talking about the loss
- Don't assume that the child understands the loss as you do; check in with them on how they make sense of what is happening
- Don't psychoanalyze their behaviours and activities; if you are wondering about what they are doing or why they are doing something, ask them

A Note on Supporting Teens

Teens walk that fine line between being an adult and a child. During grief, this line between the two may vary. Teens can, at one moment, appear very mature and at the next moment, childish.

Loss creates a sense of isolation for people of any age – this is especially true for teens. Many teens believe in the uniqueness of their experiences. Providing links to others' experiences can be helpful to normalize their loss. This may be in the form of groups, books, or online resources.

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CTRI WORKSHOPS AND SERVICES

Training

Our training is available in **public** (open workshops that anyone can attend), **on-site** (on-location, right where you are), **live stream, on-demand** and **webinar** formats (access training right from your computer, from any location). Below is a sample of the 50 different workshops we offer. For a complete list of the training we offer, please visit our website.

Trauma and Crisis Response Workshops

Crisis Response Planning
Critical Incident Group Debriefing
Trauma – Counselling Strategies for Healing and Resilience
Trauma Informed Care – Building a Culture of Strength
Vicarious Trauma – Strategies for Resilience
Walking With Grief – Helping Others Deal with Loss

Counselling Skills Workshops

Anxiety – Practical Intervention Strategies
Brief Focused Counselling Skills – Strategies from Leading Frameworks
Cognitive Behavioural Therapy – Tools for Thinking Differently
Depression – Practical Intervention Strategies
Dialectical Behaviour Therapy – Balancing Acceptance and Change
The Ethics of Helping – Boundaries and Relationships
Mindfulness Counselling Strategies – Activating Compassion and Regulation

Children & Youth Issues Workshops

Addictions and Youth – Substances, Technology, Porn
Challenging Behaviours in Youth – Strategies for Intervention
Mental Health Concerns in Children and Youth
Play Therapy – Tools for Helping Children and Youth
Self-Injury Behaviour in Youth – Issues & Strategies

Addictions & Mental Health Workshops

Addictions and Mental Illness – Working with Co-occurring Disorders
Borderline Personality Disorder – Understanding and Supporting
Harm Reduction – A Framework for Change, Choice and Control

Violence and Restorative Justice Workshops

De-escalating Potentially Violent Situations™
Restorative Justice – Guiding Principles for Communities and Organizations
Violence Threat Assessment – Planning and Response

Disability Support

Autism – Strategies for Self-Regulation, Learning and Challenging Behaviours
Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder – Strategies for Supporting

Member Plan

CTRI offers a membership plan that provides the member with unlimited access to our on-demand webinars for \$12.99 a month. Member benefits include:

- Unlimited access to all pre-recorded webinars whenever and however often you want. New content added throughout the year.
- Notification of special discounts and promotions on products and training only available to members

Consulting Services

CTRI's consulting services are designed to help individuals, caregivers, communities and organizations prevent and cope with unfortunate and distressing events. To explore how to implement these services, please contact us to discuss your needs in more detail.

- Clinical Consultation
- Crisis Response Team and Plan Development
- Critical Incident Group Debriefing
- Disability Support – FASD and Autism Consultation
- Mediation – Conflict Resolution
- Suicide Prevention Plan Development
- Violence Risk Assessment and Planning

Assessment Tools

CTRI Assessment Tools help leaders and organizations have thoughtful and proactive discussions related to a variety of topics and issues. Each Assessment Tool Package includes one Facilitator's Guide and 25 copies of the Assessment Tool questionnaire.

- Wellness Assessment Tool
- Workplace Violence Assessment Tool
- Emergency Preparedness Assessment Tool

Books

Through our ACHIEVE Publishing division, we have three book titles available for purchase:

- *Counselling Insights – Practical Strategies for Helping Others with Anxiety Grief and More*, edited by Vicki Enns and written in collaboration with eight of CTRI's trainers.
- *The Culture Question – How to Create a Workplace Where People Like to Work* by Randy Grieser, Eric Stutzman, Wendy Loewen and Michael Labun
- *The Ordinary Leader – 10 Key Insights for Building and Leading a Thriving Organization*, by Randy Grieser