

unravel

Grief Support



**A practical guide to supporting
children experiencing grief**

WHAT IS GRIEF?

References:

Information taken from Frazer Consultants Blog: Grief Theories
Series: Continuing Bonds Theory Mar 22, 2018
Information taken from:
<https://www.funeralguide.net/blog/the-grieving-process>

WHAT IS GRIEF?

What is grief?

There are lots of different 'models' of grief. This can be confusing and make people wonder if what they are feeling is 'right' or 'wrong'.

The truth is, there is no right or wrong way to feel as everyone's grief is unique to them.

So, let's look at some of the different 'models' of grief. You might find one that suits your view of grief, or you might not like any of them, and that's okay! Maybe you could write your own model of grief based on your experience.

The five stages of grief

The Five Stages of Grief is one of the best-known grief theories. Psychiatrist Dr Elisabeth Kubler Ross identified denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance as the key 'stages' our minds go through after someone dies.

Some people have said that the five stages of her grieving process are too orderly to reflect just how messy grief can be. Dr Kubler-Ross later said that her theory was never intended as a linear journey, but a series of points we may often revisit, as we adjust to life without someone we loved.

The dual process model

As an alternative to the linear stage-based model, Professor Margaret Stroebe and Dr Hank Schut developed a dual process model of bereavement. They identified two processes associated with bereavement: loss-oriented activities and restoration-oriented activities.

Loss-oriented activities and stressors are those directly related to the death. These include crying, yearning, experiencing sadness, denial or anger, dwelling on the circumstances of the death and avoiding restoration activities.

Restoration-oriented activities and stressors are associated with secondary losses. They may involve lifestyle, routine, and relationships. Restoration-oriented processes include: adapting to a new role, managing changes in routine, developing new ways of connecting with family and friends and cultivating a new way of life.

Stroebe and Schut suggest most people will move back and forth between the two.

WHAT IS GRIEF?

Tonkin's model of grief

Dr Lois Tonkin's model of grief is based on the principle that grief is a wound we gradually heal around. Growing around our grief means that the loss of someone will always be a part of us, but that this void and sadness will eventually not dominate our capacity to truly live.

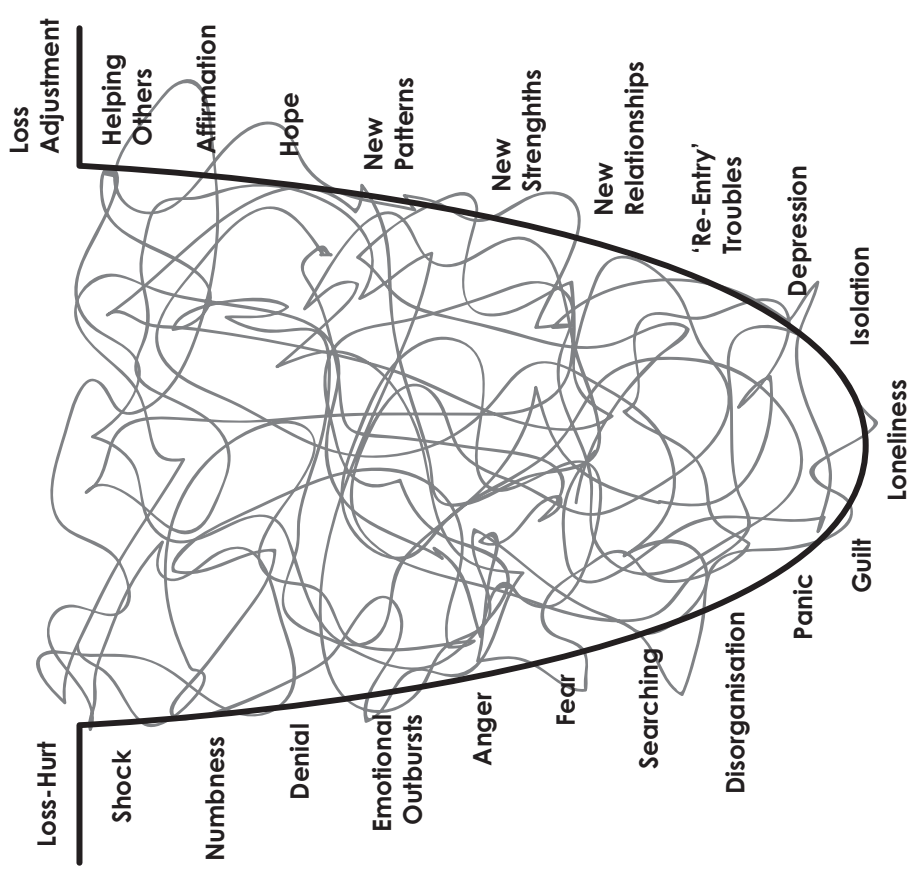
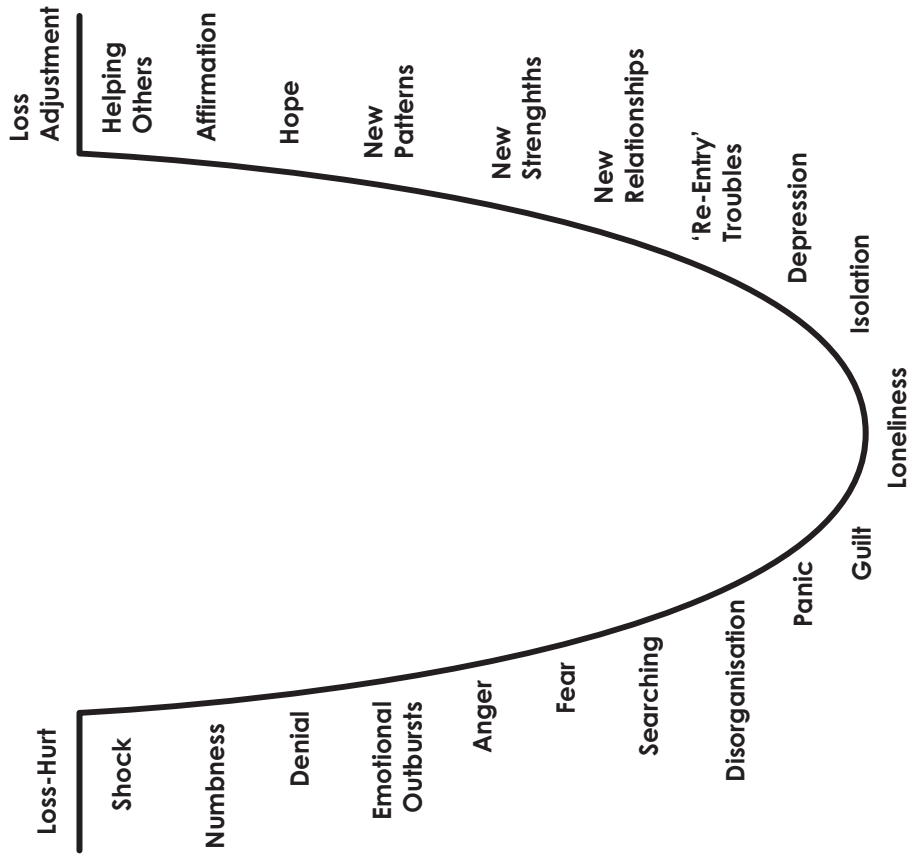
The four tasks of grieving

Dr. J. William Worden's Four Tasks of Grieving, offers four things we can strive to do, in order to live with the loss of someone:

1. accept the reality of what's happened
2. process the pain
3. adjust to a life without someone's physical presence
4. create a new connection with them, in our memory



WHAT IS GRIEF?



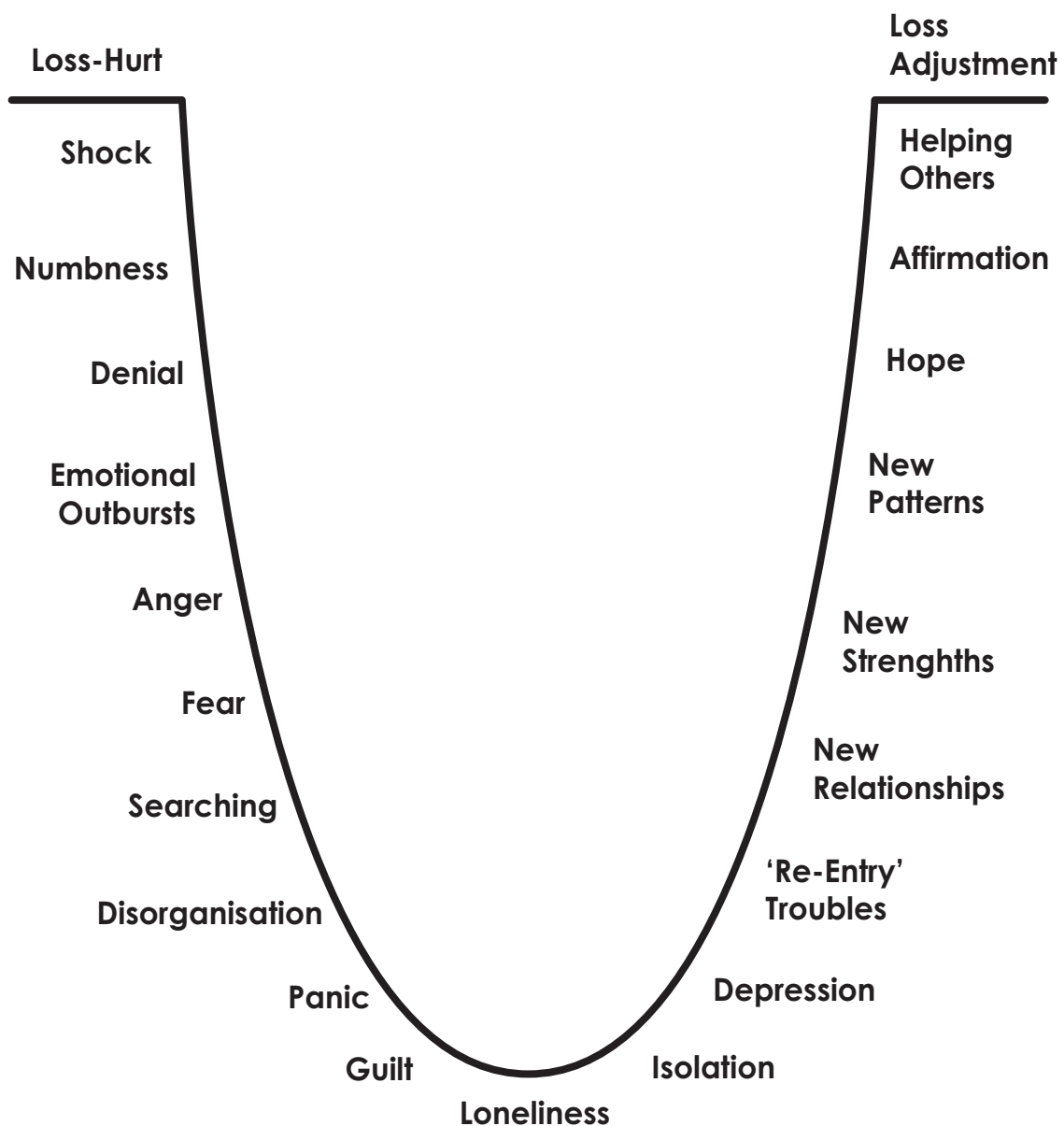
What do you think of this picture? What do you think it represents?

WHAT IS GRIEF?

So why do we all grieve differently?

We all deal with grief differently and it is likely that even if we have experienced grief before, our grief may feel different than it did previously. The best way to show how and why this is the case, is by looking at all the different factors that play a part in our grieving process.

Here's a blank copy if you would like to map out your experience and personal journey through grief so far.



LABELLING OUR EMOTIONS

Sort Cards Reference:

This activity was taken from 'Grief Support Groups in the School Setting: A Guide for School Counselors'
by Providence Hospice of Seattle Safe Crossings Children's Grief Support Program. ©

LABELLING OUR EMOTIONS

Our emotions

It can be really difficult to express how we are feeling sometimes. Often, when we experience grief, we can feel a lot of different emotions and many of these emotions can be present at the same time.

One common misconception is that when we feel really strong/difficult/uncomfortable emotions, we should avoid feeling them and push them away. This comes naturally to us humans because we don't like being uncomfortable – think about hunger, being too cold/hot, being tired... whenever we get these sensations we do all we can not to feel them; we eat, get wrapped up when it's cold, get enough sleep at night-time. etc. So of course we are going to NOT want to feel sad, angry, upset, frustrated, and of course we are going to try to avoid these feelings.

However, when we push our strong feelings away, ignore them or avoid 'facing' them, it backfires!

Here's a great way to prove it...

If I asked you to imagine a pink elephant, sitting with us now, and then asked you to NOT think about the pink elephant, what happens? You continue to think about the pink elephant because you are trying hard NOT to do so. This is the same with our emotions. The more we push them away, the more energy we are giving to them.

The best thing we can do is recognise these feelings, observe them non-judgementally and allow ourselves to feel these.



LABELLING OUR EMOTIONS

Here's a list of ways that we can use imagery to help us 'observe' these strong emotions 'non-judgementally':

We can imagine our strong emotions as an ocean wave. You might have panicked in the wave, fiercely treading water and thrashing your arms against the wave, getting exhausted and feeling close to drowning. Instead when you are being mindful of your emotions you don't fight the wave, but instead allow the wave to carry you over its crest and down the other side, or you might choose to surf the wave allowing it to carry you into shore.

We could imagine our emotions as clouds in the sky or leaves on a stream. With either image you can't stop the emotions, but you can imagine each cloud or leaf as your emotions. As such, you can just watch your emotions floating by you in their own time, eventually passing out of sight.

We could maybe think of ourselves as an empty room with a front and back door. Emotions enter through the front door and leave through the back, coming and going. Some emotions may take their time in the room, others may move quickly, and some may re-enter the room a number of times. But, they all eventually leave.

Maybe we could even think of our emotions like a child throwing a tantrum at the supermarket. There is no point trying to stop the child because the tantrum just gets worse, and it would be dangerous to abandon the child in the supermarket. Instead you might just keep a watchful eye over the child from a distance, until they exhaust themselves and settle of their own accord.

The more we manage and cope well through experiencing strong emotions, the more we prove to ourselves that we can manage them and we don't need to fear and reject them! This in turn reduces our fear, worry and avoidance, and builds our tolerance to feel the huge array of emotions that we feel throughout our lives.

Dr Russ Harris has some great mini videos that help with this: <https://thehappinesstrap.com/free-resources/>

- The Sushi Train Metaphor
- The Struggle Switch.

Also, 'The Unwelcomed Guest' story in Unravel Resources is another great metaphor to link with this.

Reference:

Information used from Distress Tolerance Facing Your Feelings Module, Module 2: Accepting Distress.
CCI www.cci.health.gov.au.

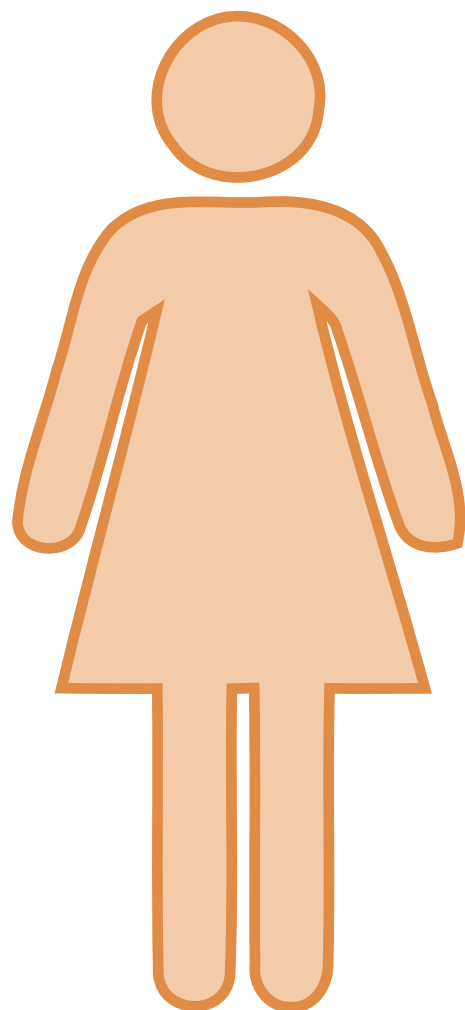
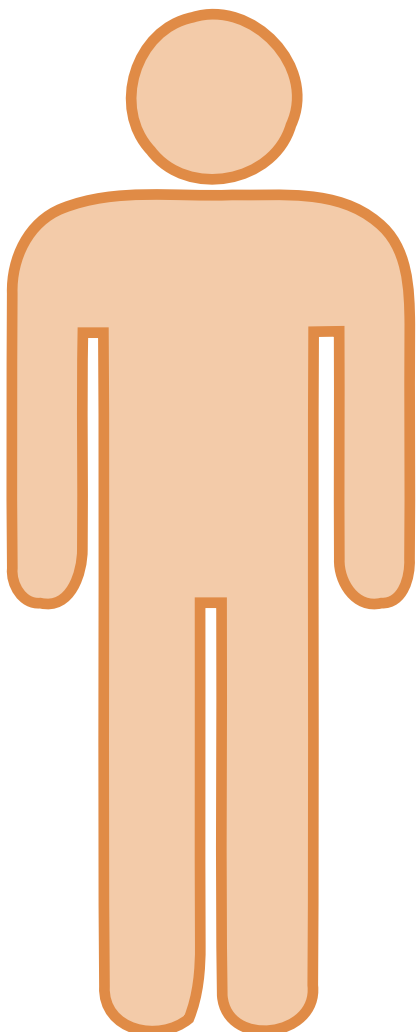
LABELLING OUR EMOTIONS

Processing and expressing our emotions

Sometimes, people find it hard to explain how they are feeling. This can sometimes be due to the wide array of emotions that we can feel all at once!

By exploring our emotions through physical sensations, it can help build stronger self-awareness.

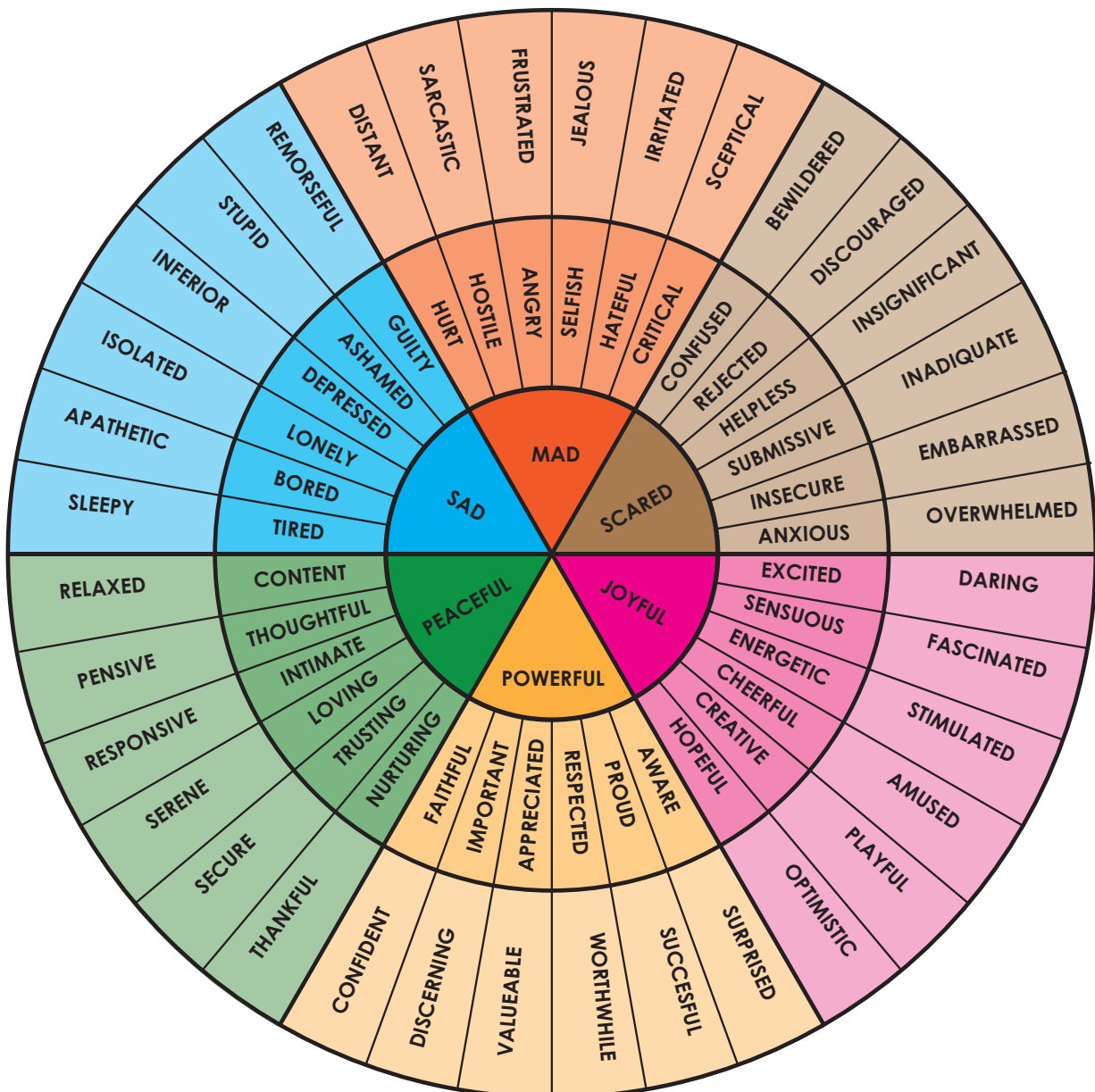
Before we start to think about verbalising emotions... can you identify **where** you feel?



LABELLING OUR EMOTIONS

Feelings wheel

This feeling wheel can help to identify our emotions and label them using the core inner circle emotions and branching outwards to choose the most suitable one.



Developed by Dr. Gloria Willcox

Wanting to be
alone more



Guilty



Feeling like I
made the
person get
sick



Angry



No interest
in food



Not able to
concentrate



Lonely



Scared



Fearful



Sick a lot



Questioning
'why' this
happened



Constantly
thinking
about the
significant
person



Anxious



Wanting to
eat more



Worried about
the future



Feeling my
friends don't
understand



Feeling tired,
no energy



Tearful,
crying



Unable to
sleep



I wish I could
wake up and
find out it was
all a dream



Wishing
things were
different



Having
dreams of the
significant
person



Sad



Things just
aren't the
same
anymore



Thankful that
the significant
person was in
my life



Relieved



Missing the
significant
person



Energised



Overwhelmed



Happy



Out of
control



Just want
to die



Confused



Irritable



Hopeful



Encouraged



Calm



Shocked



Going
crazy



Try to escape
the pain with
risky
behaviour



Stomach
aches



Other
emotions not
mentioned



I don't feel this



**Sometimes I feel
this/I have felt this
before**



I feel this



EXPLORING OUR GRIEF

Talk Cards Reference:

This activity was taken from 'Grief Support Groups in the School Setting: A Guide for School Counselors' by Providence Hospice of Seattle Safe Crossings Children's Grief Support Program. ©

At the time of the death, who in your family was most helpful?



What is the most positive thing you remember about the funeral?



What was the most difficult thing for you to handle at the funeral?



How do other members of your family express their grief?



In what ways has this death strengthened or weakened your religious beliefs?



How do you feel when someone says, 'I know just what you're going through'?



If you could change parts of the funeral, what would you do differently?



Describe one of the most special sympathy cards you received.



When you feel like expressing your grief, with whom do you choose to be with and why?



What advice have you received that was helpful to you in coping with your grief?



Which feelings surrounding the death are the most difficult for you to deal with now?



Anger is a common response to loss and grief. Give an example of such anger in your life.



How have you coped with the holidays since your loved one's death?



The anniversary of the death may be difficult for the survivors. What was that like for you?



In what ways have your hopes and plans for the future changed as a result of the death?



In what ways have you grown as a person since the death of your loved one?



Describe what it is like for you to visit the cemetery.



Complete this statement: 'One thing I wish teachers understand is...'



Have your attitudes towards what is most important in life changed as a result of the death?



Complete this statement: 'When I feel like crying, I ...'



Give some examples of how you denied the death, either initially or more recently.



Complete this statement: 'It isn't easy for me to admit...'



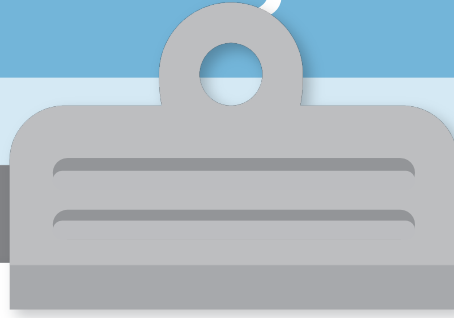
Complete this statement: 'One of my greatest fears is...'



What advice would you give a funeral director or minister in terms of helping grieving young people?



EXPLORING OUR GRIEF



My experience

When I experienced the loss of _____

Many people who are grieving benefit by talking or journaling about what happened as well as their individual relationship with that person or event.

Here are some sentence starters to help.

I was _____

The week before _____

That day _____

The day after _____

The family _____

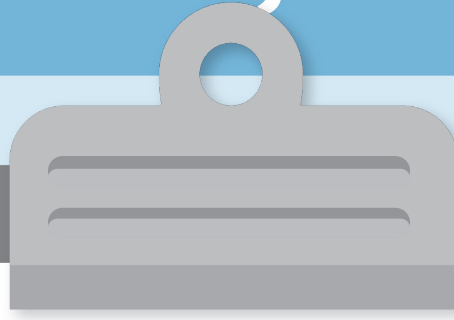
The most difficult part was _____

My friends _____

I hadn't expected _____

Other thoughts _____

EXPLORING OUR GRIEF



What I miss...

Regrets and guilt

When someone we love dies, it is normal and common to have regrets or experience feelings of guilt.

Some people regret or feel sad that they were not able to say goodbye or be with their special person before he or she died. Others may regret they had an argument, or cross words or thoughts, before their loved one died.

Talking about our feelings around regrets and guilt with people we trust can help us understand that these thoughts are very normal and most people have them. If we do this, we can then let the regrets go! Think about your regrets. Here's a few sentence starters to help you begin:

- I wish I had...
- If only...
- I'm sorry that...
- I blame myself for...

EXPLORING OUR GRIEF

Making a memory box

Creating a memory box is a great way to keep everything in one place. It doesn't have to be called a memory box, you could call it anything you like.

In a memory box you can keep and treasure all kinds of things that remind you of the person who has died. You can customise it to make it more personal, and fill it with photos, letters and objects that remind you of your experiences together.

Here are some ideas you might want to use, you may have lots of other ideas too:

- letters you have written
- your journal
- this booklet/parts of this booklet you've filled in
- spray of perfume or aftershave that your loved one wore
- pictures
- their favourite music
- music that reminds you of your loved one (you could make your own playlist and put it on a USB/CD and put in your box)
- poems or song lyrics that remind you of your loved one
- items which belonged to your loved one
- Postcards, letters or cards
- A piece of jewellery
- Inspirational quotes
- Your list of mood-boosters and self-care strategies



SELF-CARE AND SUPPORT

SELF-CARE AND SUPPORT

Are you taking care of yourself?

This mini checklist can be helpful for you to identify how you are taking care of yourself and give you some more ideas to practise self-care.

		Yes I'm doing this	No, not yet	This isn't for me
1	Are you eating regularly, e.g. breakfast, lunch, dinner?			
2	Are you eating healthy foods?			
3	Are you engaging in risky behaviours?			
4	Are you seeking medical care when you need it, E.g. taking any prescribed medicines, seeing your doctor when needed?			
5	Are you exercising at least 3 times a week?			
6	Are you getting 6-8 hours of sleep each night?			
7	Are you taking time to relax each day?			
8	Are you being kind to yourself?			
9	Do you have some effective strategies that help you feel calmer?			
10	Are you upholding healthy boundaries when necessary, e.g. saying no to extra responsibilities sometimes?			
11	Are you giving yourself time to reflect and process your thoughts, emotions, judgements, beliefs, attitudes, etc?			
12	Are you taking some time away from your phone every once in a while?			
13	Are you spending time with supportive friends?			
14	Are you staying in contact with important people in your life?			
15	Are you recognising your achievements and praising yourself?			
16	Are you journaling or expressing your feelings, thoughts and emotions through other ways such as drawing?			
17	Are you asking for help when you feel overwhelmed/when you need it?			
18	Are you communicating your feelings with others in a healthy way?			
19	Are you keeping up with your schoolwork?			
20	Are you spending time in and around nature?			
21	Are you able to recognise things you are grateful for?			
22	Are you letting others help you when you need support/help?			
23	Are you recognising things that inspire, interest or amaze you?			
24	Are you visiting places you like to be?			

SELF-CARE AND SUPPORT

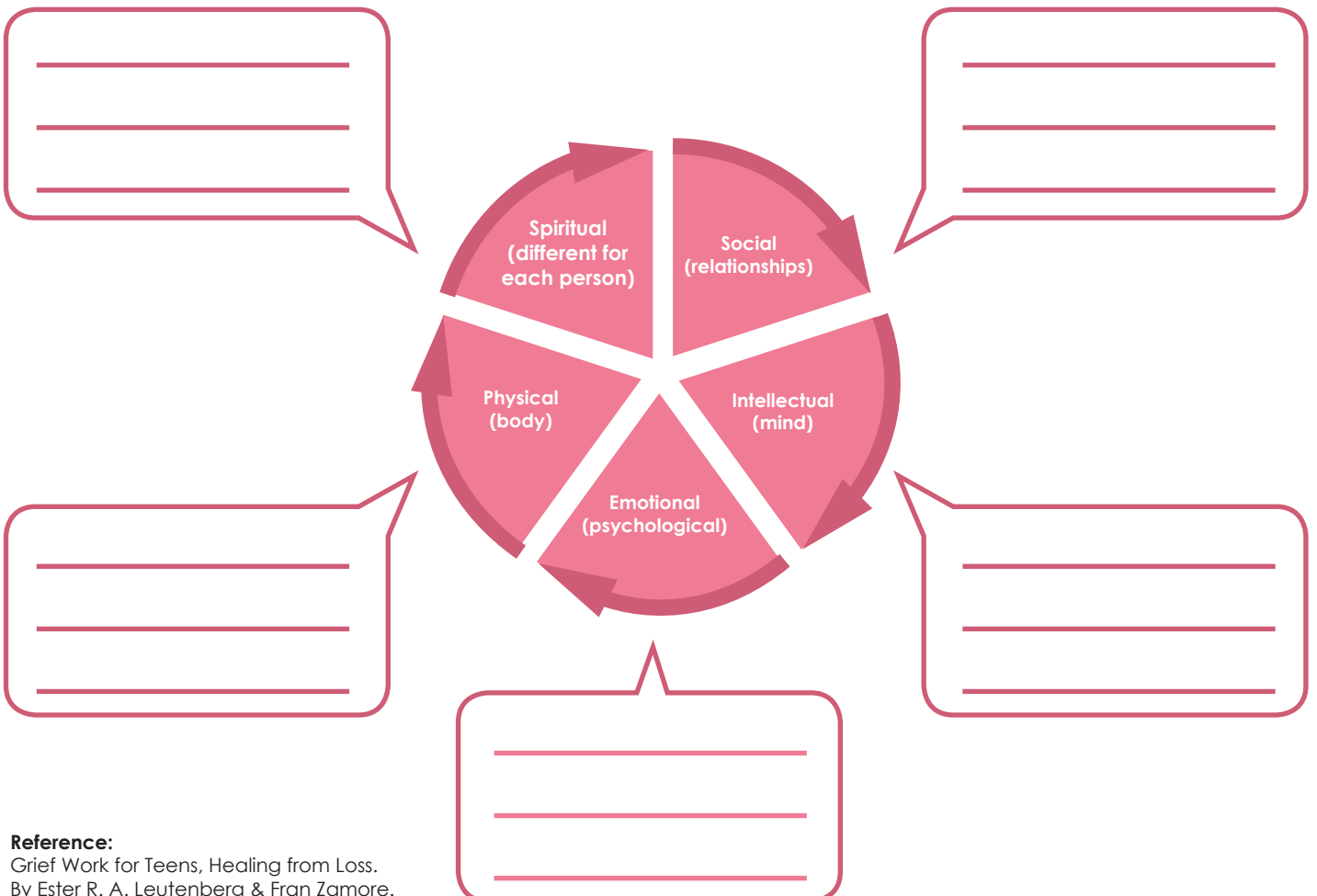
Self-care domains

Taking good care of ourselves is important. This can feel harder than usual when we are grieving. Sometimes we find that we're doing an okay job in some domains, but not all. All five domains are equally important and all combine together to help us feel psychologically healthier.

For each domain, list the activities you are doing to take care of yourself. To start, you could make a list of all the things you are doing to take care of yourself now, and then see where they fit. Maybe they fit in more than one section.

For example: 'exercising' might fall into:

- physical because it is good for your body and health
- social because you exercise with friends or family
- emotional because you release some anger/frustration when you exercise



Reference:

Grief Work for Teens, Healing from Loss.
By Ester R. A. Leutenberg & Fran Zamore.
Whole Person. www.wholeperson.com.

SELF-CARE AND SUPPORT

Taking time to notice the positives

At certain times, particularly when we are grieving the loss of a loved one, it is so easy to focus on the negatives and overlook or ignore what we have to be grateful for, and the positives that are around us.

It is okay to allow ourselves to be sad when we are grieving; it is also okay to allow feelings of happiness, joy and gratitude too.

At Unravel, we have a great blog 'Negativity Bias' which may be worth a read to help you understanding why, as humans, we are more 'tuned in' to negatives over positives. Researchers are even saying there could be a ratio of anywhere between 3:1 and 5:1, for the number of positives needed to balance out negatives! That's at least three positives for every one negative.

When we are grieving, we experience lots more 'negatives' than normal, increasing feelings of sadness, worry, fear or anger.

So, what can we do? By actively seeking out the positives, no matter how small, we can help balance out some of the negatives and make ourselves feel psychologically healthier.

Let's practise with gratitude. List things you are grateful for. This can be 'big' blessings such as family, good health etc. or could be 'small' blessings such as seeing a lovely flower on the way to school or someone holding the door for you.

Top tip: Embed this as a strategy to add to your self-care domains! Before bed each night, log 3 things you are grateful for each day. This will then become a natural habit that you will do throughout the day without realising – you will be more 'tuned in' to the positives.

LOOKING AHEAD

LOOKING AHEAD

Core values

A broad core values definition is: 'what one considers important or worth seeking'.

More specifically, your personal core values are the select values that you hold most dear in the world. Some examples of personal values include wisdom, family, freedom, adventure, and authenticity.

They are your core beliefs about what is essential. These personal core values make up the heart of who you are and what is important in your life.

Here's a really long list of some core values... highlight some that resonate with you.

Acceptance	Challenge	Development	Good Health
Accomplishment	Change	Devotion	Gratitude
Accuracy	Cheerfulness	Dignity	Greatness
Achievement	Cleanliness	Discipline	Growth
Adaptability	Clever	Discovery	Happiness
Adventure	Comfort	Drive	Hard work
Affection	Commitment	Effectiveness	Health
Affluence	Communication	Empathy	Helping others
Alertness	Community	Empower	Honesty
Ambition	Compassion	Endurance	Hope
Amusement	Competence	Enjoyment	Humility
Art	Competition	Enthusiasm	Humour
Assertiveness	Concentration	Excellence	Improvement
Attentive	Confidence	Excitement	Independence
Authority	Connection	Experience	Individuality
Awareness	Consciousness	Exploration	Influence
Balance	Consistency	Expression	Innovation
Beauty	Contentment	Fairness	Inquisitive
Belonging	Contribution	Faith	Insightful
Be of service	Control	Fame	Inspiring
Boldness	Creativity	Family	Intelligence
Bravery	Credibility	Fearless	Intensity
Brilliance	Curiosity	Feelings	Justice
Calm	Decisiveness	Focus	Kindness
Capable	Dedication	Freedom	Knowledge
Careful	Democracy	Friendship	Lawful
Certainty	Determination	Generosity	Leadership

LOOKING AHEAD

Learning	Reflective	Sincerity	Thoughtful
Love	Relationships	Skill	Tolerance
Loyalty	Religion	Smart	Trust
Motivation	Resourcefulness	Solitude	Truth
Openness	Respect	Spirit	Understanding
Optimism	Responsibility	Spirituality	Uniqueness
Organisation	Risk	Spontaneous	Versatility
Passion	Safety	Stability	Victory
Patience	Satisfaction	Status	Vision
Peace	Security	Strength	Vitality
Perfection	Self-reliance	Structure	Warmth
Performance	Selfless	Success	Wealth
Persistence	Sensitivity	Support	Welcoming
Personal Growth	Serenity	Sustainability	Well-being
Popularity	Service	Talent	Winning
Potential	Sharing	Teamwork	Wisdom
Power	Significance	Thorough	Wonder

Which are your top chosen ones?

1	_____	4	_____
2	_____	5	_____
3	_____	6	_____

It is good to revisit your core values and remember what is important for you in your life.

At difficult times, it can be helpful for us to remember what we value and to check in with ourselves to ensure we are still upholding these views.

When we are experiencing a stressful time or life event, it can be easier for us to act impulsively (doing things without thinking first).

By checking in with ourselves, we can ensure we reduce the impulsive decisions and continue to strive towards our life goals and be the person we want to be.

Reference:

List of core values taken and adapted from <https://tomillama.com>

LOOKING AHEAD

What makes me unique?

You are unique. What are your talents?
What makes you special? What do you
receive compliments on?

Mind-map them here:

What makes me
unique?

LOOKING AHEAD

Hopes, dreams and goals

What are your ultimate hopes, dreams and goals for the future? (It is fine to not be 100% sure yet!) It's also fine if your dreams seem extravagant and 'out of reach' right now.

Mind-map them here:

Hopes, dreams
and goals

LOOKING AHEAD

Bucket list

A bucket list is a number of experiences or achievements that a person hopes to have or accomplish during their lifetime. Have you got a 'bucket list'? What things would you like to achieve in your lifetime? The items on your list are completely personal to you and can be 'small' things or can be 'big' things.

Examples: see a giraffe in its natural habitat, see the pyramids in Egypt, learn how to play the saxophone, get married and have a family... etc.

What would your loved one think to your list?

Is there anything they'd add for you?



LOOKING AHEAD

Affirmations

Affirmations are positive phrases or statements used to challenge negative or unhelpful thoughts. Practising positive affirmations can be extremely simple, and all you need to do is pick a phrase and repeat it to yourself.

You may choose to use positive affirmations to motivate yourself, encourage positive changes in your life, or boost your self-esteem.

Here are some examples of positive affirmations:

- I have the ability to handle this
- I ask for help when I need it
- I feel happy at times
- I am hopeful
- I gain emotional strength each day
- I am taking care of myself
- I am loved

Do you have any that you would like to embed?

-
-
-
-
-
-
-

unravel

Experts in Children & Young People's Emotional Well-being

About Unravel

Copyright © 2018 Unravel

Unravel is an organisation dedicated to the promotion of positive mental health and well-being in children and young people. To contact Unravel or to find out more please visit the links below.

The rights of Unravel to be identified as the author of this work have been asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. All rights reserved.

Contact and Links



hello@unravelsupport



unravelsupport.co.uk



www.facebook.com/Unravelsupport



twitter.com/Unravelsupport