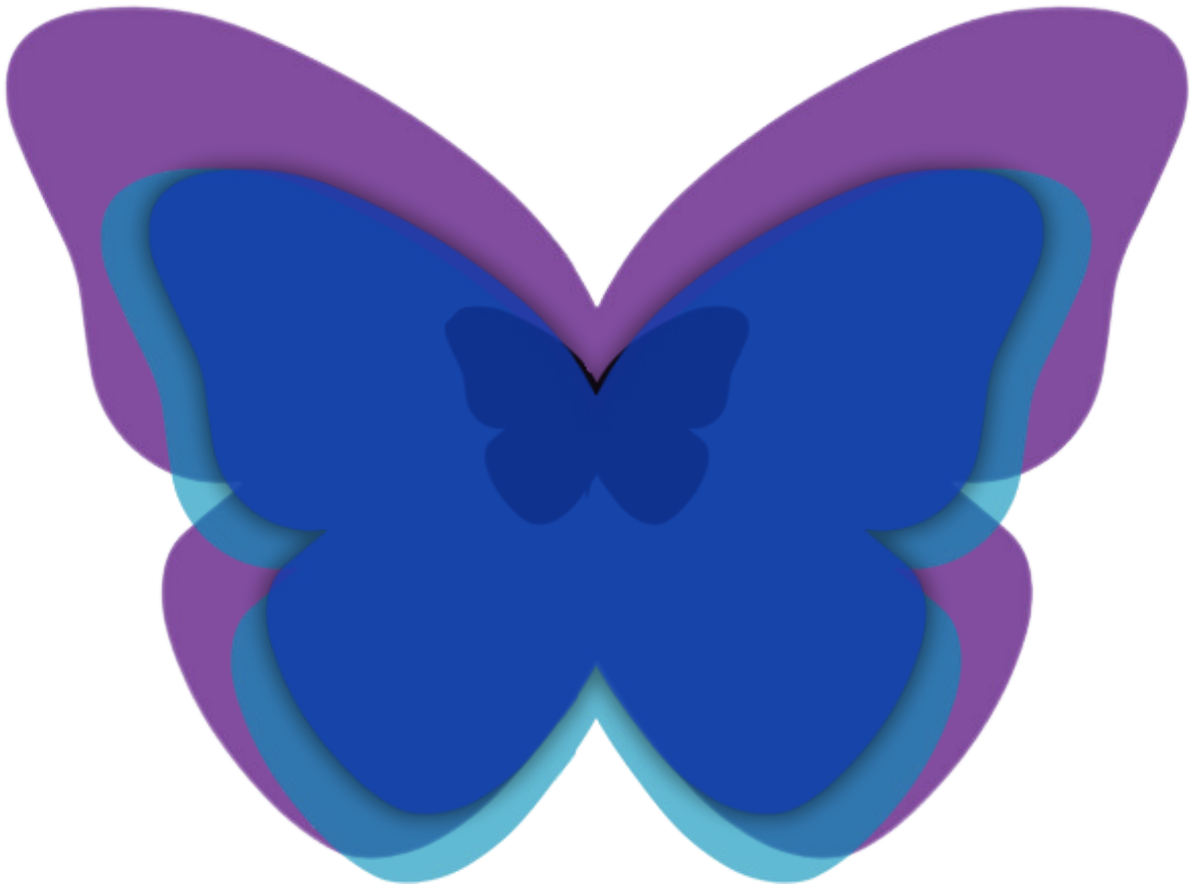




Beside you through grief's journey

Adult Grief Workbook



ACKNOWLEDGE. EXPRESS. CONNECT.

Like a Spring stream that cuts through Winter ice, grieving happens in its own time, at its own pace and with its own energy. The stream softens the edges of the ice and releases it to continue on its way to nourish new growth.

- S. Mustatia

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INTRODUCTION

This Workbook is designed to support you in your grief process with death loss.

Grief is a natural, normal process and is part of the human experience of having loved someone.

Although loss is a common human experience, how and when we process our grief and mourn our loss is unique to the individual.

It is recommended that one week at a time is worked on, so as not to become overwhelmed.

Working through this book will provide you with tools for acknowledging and expressing your grief and assist you in getting “unstuck” at times.

As well it will provide guidance in connecting and reconnecting with yourself and others, as you are ready to.

This manual was created by Stacey Mustatia in partnership with Caring Hearts. Funding for this manual has been supported by:



Department of Justice
Canada

Ministère de la Justice
Canada

Canada



Government
of
Saskatchewan
Ministry of Justice

The [Community Health and Wellness Conversations about Grief and Loss or Caring Hearts Counselling Inc.] is supported by the Government of Canada's Emergency Community Support Fund and South Saskatchewan Community Foundation.



South
Saskatchewan
Community
Foundation

WEEK 1

The name of my loved one is:

Relationship to my loved one. (ie: sister, spouse, friend):

Describe the relationship with your loved one with no self judgment.

Examples:

We were married for 20 years and he/she was my best friend.

I was just reunited with my Mother and was getting to know her.

My brother and I never really got along.

What are my top three fears going forward around this loss?

1. _____

2. _____

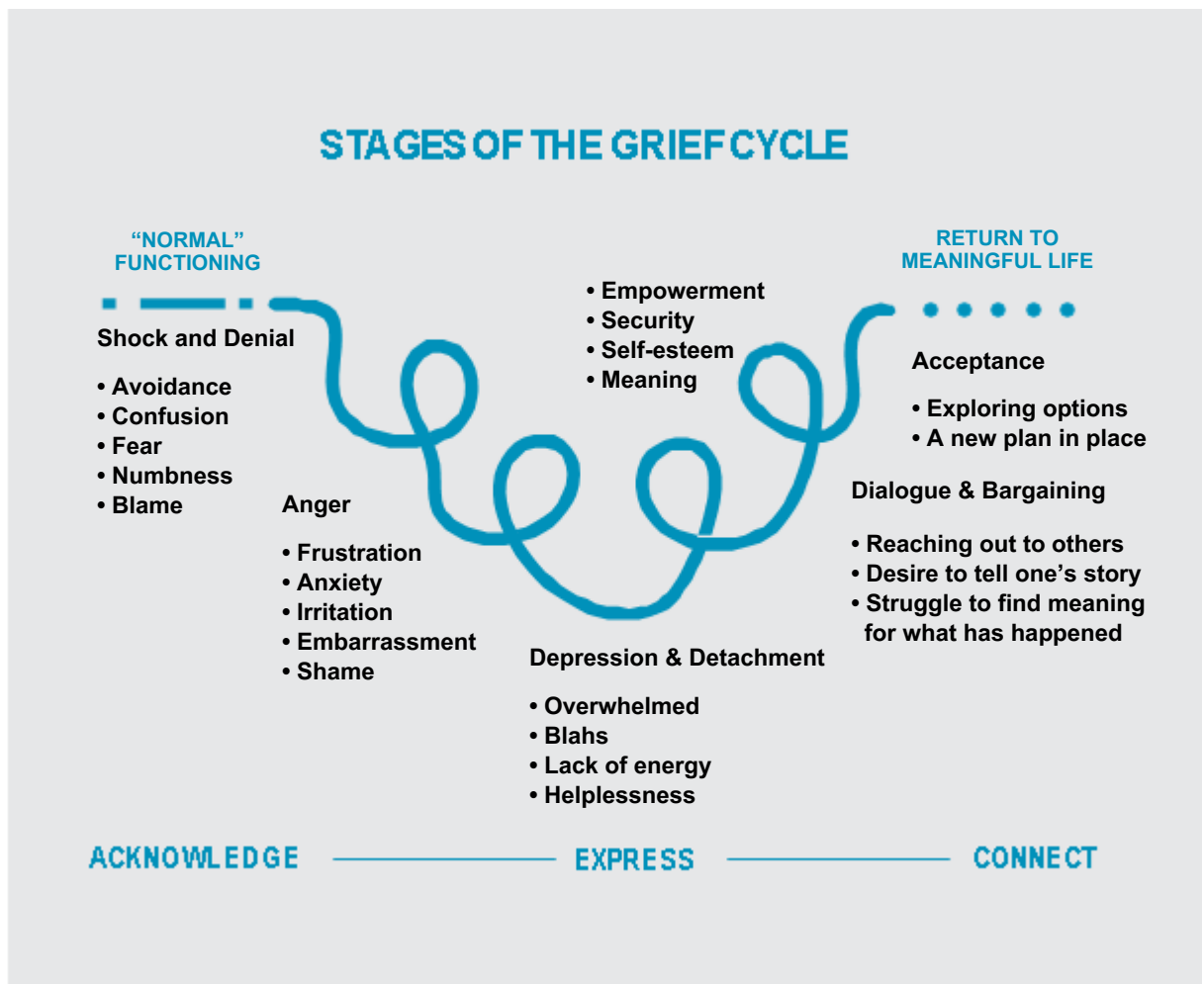
3. _____

What do I want to know about grief and what do I hope to get out of using this workbook?

BELOW IS A DIAGRAM OF THE GRIEF CYCLE.

You will notice that it looks very much like a curly ribbon and has many loops. It is not a straight line. The grief process is like the ribbon. It does not have a defined beginning or end. You can loopback through the feelings of grief often.

For example, you may not have felt anger or guilt for sometime, then you hear a song or smell a certain food cooking and it can have you feeling sad, angry or guilty. You may move slowly through the grief cycle over weeks or months or can experience many of the emotions in a day or an hour. Those experiences are all normal. Your grief process is unique to you.



WEEK 1

1. Identify where you believe you are at currently on the ribbon of the grief cycle or where you have been recently. (What emotions are you experiencing)?

Some of these emotions are uncomfortable and we want to push them away, or we may be afraid that if we express our feelings that we will be unable to stop. We may worry about how our emotional state will affect others.

2. What fears or thoughts do you have about expressing the emotions of your grief?

You will notice 3 large words printed under the grief cycle ribbon:

ACKNOWLEDGE, EXPRESS, CONNECT

In order to process our grief, we must first acknowledge the feelings we are experiencing. This is a time to be very kind and gentle with yourself.

3. Fill in the blank with the predominate emotion you are feeling around your grief and say it aloud three times.

Of course, I am feeling _____, I am grieving.

Let the knowledge of that sink into you. Allow yourself to accept that feeling. Continue to use the phrase daily, several times a day, as you need to:

Of course, I am feeling... I am grieving.

Of course, I have no... I am grieving.

Of course, I am having difficulty... I am grieving.

Although this workbook is to support us in processing death loss, it is very important to recognize that there are other types of non-traditional loss as well, that we may experience over our lifetime.

Examples:

Terminal illness, a loveless or failing marriage, loss of childhood, missing person, loss of identity, retirement, chronic pain, relocation, job loss, divorce, death of a pet, victimization by crime, abuse, abortion, substance abuse, mental illness. (These are examples and not a complete list).

Society does not do very well with supporting people with loss. The best we ever do is with death loss, where there may be rituals such as funerals or wakes, offerings of food and condolences. These rituals and supports do not take place when nontraditional loss occurs. Often the loss goes completely unrecognized.

WEEK 1

- 1. Starting as far back as you remember, list any nontraditional loss you have experienced. After each, write the letter Y or N indicating Yes or No, as to whether you believe you have processed / dealt with the loss.**

Sometimes when we are dealing with a death loss, some of our other unprocessed loss may be “simmering” as well. We can be at different places with processing each one. This can extend the grief of our death loss or complicate it.

When we **ACKNOWLEDGE** our other losses, this enables us to start processing or letting go of them.

When we recognize that we may be dealing with several losses, it is a further reminder to be kind to ourselves.

This does not mean you have to process each one separately, just acknowledge that the loss took place.

2. Say aloud...“I acknowledge that I have had loss from my divorce, from relocation, from abuse” etc. Acknowledge each unprocessed loss, in a separate statement.

Allow any feelings or thoughts that arise from this to surface, acknowledge them and let them move through you. Take as much time as you need.

3. What is self-care? Write your definition here and provide a few examples.

Self-care is giving oneself permission to engage in an enjoyable or relaxing activity, to enhance our sense of well-being, Guilt free.

Grieving takes a great deal of energy, so self-care is very important, to rejuvenate our energy and mood. One of the main reasons, we do not do self-care is that we feel guilty for taking time away from chores, family members or responsibilities.

The less time that you feel you have for self-care - is a huge indicator that you need more of it. Other reasons commonly given for lack of self care are lack of money or lack of energy.

Some activities may involve cost and longer term planning; others could be done on the spur of the moment for zero dollar or very low cost and small investment of energy.

WEEK 1

Fill out the following chart with self-care ideas that you like. It does not mean you are doing them right now or tomorrow.

HIGH COST/HIGH ENERGY
(IE. SKIING)

HIGH COST/LOW ENERGY
(IE. GOING TO A MOVIE)

LOW COST/HIGH ENERGY
(IE. JOGGING)

LOW COST/LOW ENERGY
(IE. LISTENING TO A PODCAST OR MUSIC)

Is there a self care activity either on this list or in your head, that you could commit to doing one time, in this next week? Write it here:

If not? What is getting in the way?



4. From having completed your list of non-traditional losses what did you discover?

5. What has been your past method of coping with loss?

6. Take some time to Review the Grief Cycle diagram. (page 3)

Remind yourself that the healing process of the stages is reliant upon:

Acknowledging, Expressing, Connecting.

7. Consider where you may be at on the grief cycle with any non-traditional losses you have experienced.

8. Do you see any connections in honouring yourself or honouring your loved one, by beginning to allow your grief?

WEEK 2

When we experience grief, we experience it in our bodies as well, such as in a foggy brain, muscle spasms, aches and pains. The tense and relax method of relaxation for the body will assist to relieve some of the tension, pain and lack of focus.

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION - TENSE AND RELAX TECHNIQUE

Prepare:

1. Make yourself as comfortable as possible in a seated position on a chair
2. Try to sit up straight with good posture your hands resting in your lap
3. Make sure your feet are flat on the floor
4. If you wear eyeglasses, take this opportunity to remove them
5. Close your eyes
6. Starting from the feet and working upward, you will practice tensing and relaxing your muscles
7. Before you begin, notice where you are carrying tension, a sense of weight or stress in your body – is it in your stomach, shoulders or neck?

RELAXATION OF THE FEET AND CALVES

- Flex your feet upward off the floor by pulling your toes toward your knees
- Contract calf muscle and muscles of the lower leg
- Feel the tension build and hold the tension
- Take a deep breath
- As you exhale, say the word RELAX and let the tension go

RELAXATION OF THE KNEES AND UPPER THIGHS

- Straighten your legs out in front of you, lifting them off the ground
- Contract your thigh muscles and all the muscles of your legs
- Feel the tension build and hold the tension
- Take a deep breath
- As you exhale say the word RELAX and let the tension go

RELAXATION OF THE HIPS AND BUTTOCKS

- Tense the buttock muscles by squeezing them inward and upward
- Feel the tension build and hold the tension
- Take a deep breath
- As you exhale say the word RELAX and let the tension go

RELAXATION OF THE ABDOMEN

- Observe, in your mind's eye your abdomen rising and falling with each breath
- Inhale and press your navel toward your spine then tense the abdomen
- Feel the tension build then hold the tension
- Take a deep breath
- As you exhale say the word RELAX and let the tension go

RELAXATION OF THE UPPER BACK

- Draw the shoulder blades together to the midline of the body
- Contract the muscles of the upper back
- Feel the tension build and hold the tension
- Take a deep breath
- As you exhale say the word RELAX and let the tension go

RELAXATION OF THE ARMS AND PALMS OF THE HANDS

- Turn palms face down and make a tight fist in each hand
- Raise and stretch both arms with fists
- Feel the tension build and hold the tension
- Take a deep breath
- As you exhale say the word RELAX and let the tension go

WEEK 2

RELAXATION OF THE CHIN NECK AND SHOULDERS

- Drop the chin to your chest
- Relaxation of the Jaw and Facial Muscles
- Clench your teeth together
- Tense the muscles in the back of your jaw
- Turn the corners of your mouth into a tight smile
- Wrinkle the bridge of your nose and squeeze your eyes tightly shut
- Tense all facial muscles in toward the center of your face
- Feel the tension build and hold the tension
- Take a deep breath
- As you exhale say the word RELAX and let the tension go

RELAXATION OF THE FOREHEAD

- Raise eyebrows up and tense the muscles across the forehead and scalp
- Feel the tension build and hold the tension
- Take a deep breath
- As you exhale say the word RELAX and let the tension go

INTENSIFICATION OF RELAXATION THROUGHOUT THE BODY

- Focus on relaxation flowing from the crown of your head
- Over your face
- Down the back of your neck and shoulders
- Down your body through your arm and hands
- Over your chest and abdomen
- Flowing through your hips and buttocks
- Into your thighs, your knees and calves
- And finally, into your ankles and feet
- Continue to deep breath for several minutes in silence

COMPLETING THE TENSE AND RELAX EXERCISE**Count backwards in your head from 3 to 1**

- 3 - Become aware of your surroundings (location, people noises)
- 2 - Move your feet, legs, hands, arms, rotate your head
- 1 - Open your eyes feeling energized, refreshed and relaxed

Check in with your body and notice if your stress, tightness or heaviness is lessened or completely gone. You can do a mini version of this exercise anywhere – for example, relaxation of the upper back while waiting at a red light or sitting at your work desk.

***Notice that the entire exercise took less than 10 minutes to complete*



WEEK 3

Take time to remind yourself that the Stages of the Grief Cycle are not linear; the process is not finite, more than one grief process can be happening for you at the same time and that you may be at different points simultaneously, on the Grief Cycle.

The healing process of the stages is reliant upon Acknowledging, Expressing, and Connecting.

1. How have you allowed your grief this week?

2. How / where have you felt stuck at times on the Grief Cycle?

3. How has this 'stuckness' been impactful to you, your relationships with family, work and community life?

4. What have you done that has you sometimes feeling not stuck or what do you see as one small step to feel less stuck?

5. Do you see any correlation right now to the stage you are feeling stuck in and the relationship you had with your loved one?

WEEK 3

THE TASKS OF GRIEF – TEAR MODEL



THE FOUR TASKS OF MOURNING

Accept the Reality of the Loss

The goal is to develop an awareness and understanding of the loss and its impact on us.

Experience the pain of grief

This means we will experience a variety of intense feelings and begin to work through them as part of the grieving process. We can't avoid these feelings forever.

Adjust to the new environment/life that has been impacted by the loss.

This is the part where we struggle with all of the changes that happen as a result of the loss – including all of the practical parts of daily living and all of the effects the loss has upon our sense of who we are and how we see the world.

To reinvest energy in life, loosen the ties to the loss and forge a new type of relationship with the loss, based on our strength of spirit and love.

This means that we begin to acknowledge the value that the loss had for us and all facets of awareness and emotion that are connected to the loss. It is a recognition that we understand that we don't need to forget the loss and that it is okay to care and connect with other people and continue our lives even though we have experienced such a significant event.

1. Express your thoughts on the following quote:

"Time goes on and your life is still there, and you have to live it. After awhile you remember the good things more often than the bad. Then, gradually the empty silent parts fill up with sounds of talking and laughter again and the jagged edges of sadness are softened by memories."

- Lois Lowry

The idea of "letting go" as it relates to grief can seem frightening or impossible as we correlate it to the idea of letting go of or forgetting our loved one.

2. Take the time to consider reframing what "Letting Go" means. Try to reframe the idea of 'letting go' as an attitude. This does not mean that it is my attitude today – but it can be. I can choose my attitude.

Thinking of "letting go" as an attitude is much like the Grief Framework ...Of course I feel ... I'm grieving. We can reframe our thoughts.

WEEK 3

2. Is there some comfort in knowing that you can choose? Comment below:

3. Read the Following Letting Go Statements aloud and let them settle into your “sense of knowing”.

- Letting go means to be present here and now
- Letting go means to enjoy the day
- Letting go means to express anger in order to get rid of it
- Letting go means that when I let go of resentment, anger and guilt, it opens up the door for me to focus on the person I love
- Letting go helps create a balance in emotions
- Letting go is related to identifying with that which is stopping us from moving on
- Letting means that you cannot let go of that which you have not yet discovered
- Letting go means that what others say and think and about me should not matter
- Letting go means accepting me, forgiving myself
- Letting go means own what you own, don't own what you shouldn't
- Letting go means I might have to forgive myself
- Letting go means it is okay to do things wrong
- Letting go means coming to sense with the lack of answer, the lack of sense
- Letting go means coming back to a sense of faith
- Letting go means accepting that there are some things I cannot fix
- Letting go means it's a process
- Letting go means feeling emotions and not stuffing
- Letting go means putting things into perspective, not forgetting
- Letting go means it may result in forgiving
- Letting go means we know it is not our fault
- Letting go means allowing myself to take on and appreciate what I value
- Letting go means walking away ... and walking towards

4. Which Letting go statement most resonates with you at this time and why?



WEEK 4

Thus far we have been concerned with our own grief process. It is helpful to understand that others around us whom may be grieving maybe out of step with where we are on the Grief Cycle.

When we can acknowledge and accept **where we are** at and where they are at, it can greatly reduce conflict and misunderstanding. It is so important to continually revisit the Grief Framework. (Of course I feel... I am grieving), as this is acceptance of the idea that grief is not linear, the earliest step in Acknowledging, Expressing, Connecting.

THIS IS THE KEYSTONE.

If we do not give ourselves permission to do AEC, others may avoid the topic, make assumptions about us or about our wellbeing. This is a very common experience amongst those who are grieving. An important habit to form in your grief is being kind to yourself by suspending judgment of your feelings or your perceived process in grief.

Gentle words and gentle imagery toward yourself is so important at this time, such as:

1. **“I will allow myself to rest gently in the cradle of grief.”** (accept where you are at and allow yourself to be there and to be in the moment)
2. **Notice when you “should on yourself”.** For example: I should be doing more around the house. I should be connecting more with friends.
3. **Think of any statements you say aloud or in your head with the word “should” in it and write down anything you have recently “shoulded” on yourself for.**

Now ask yourself: **“What is it that I want?”** For example: Do I want to do more around the house, or get out more with friends, or do I want more time to reflect and nurture myself?

Write down what it is that you really want. Speak your truth. These statements are only for you.

What is one small step I can take toward getting more of what I want? For example: “I want to get my house cleaned up.” **Write down what it is that you want below:**

If your thought is "I want to get my house in order."(but it feels overwhelming) a small step you could take is:

1. Start with one shelf or one countertop and stop when that is finished, you can re-evaluate if you want to do another small area
2. Set a timer for 30 minutes or 60 minutes whatever feels manageable. Stop when the timer runs out or choose to reset it again, if you have energy for more.

Like in previously discussed letting go statements, there is comfort in knowing that you can choose.

- I can choose to call one person today to chat; and I can choose to limit it to 10-15minutes
- I can choose to accept an invitation out
- I can choose to say that I do not have time to shop for the day, but I could come for a half hour coffee
- I can choose to make a healthy meal for myself today
- I can choose to dress my best
- I can choose to go for a walk
- I can choose to shower today

4. What are some things that you recognize you have control over and are willing to start to choose?

Sometimes when there is more than one person in a family or one person in a community dealing with a grief, we can get caught up in dealing with the grief of others. For example, we may feel guilty if we do not support our sister, or feel guilty if we do not attend church, as we perceive others may need support.

Consider the advice given to you, when you fly in a plane: "PLEASE put on your own air mask first, before helping others." **Give yourself permission to look after your own grief.**

WEEK 4

Is it possible that I am looking after the grief of others, and thereby ignoring having to deal with my own?

What proof do I have that this statement is or is not true? (What are the thoughts, feelings and behaviours that indicate this)?

What are some small changes I can make and am willing to make, in this area, if needed? (Think about AEC)

POSITIVE COMMUNICATION

Setting Boundaries with Others and Asking for What I Need

When we use the word “You” in sentences, it can come across as blaming and accusatory, and it can create conflict with others, or have others shut down.

Consider this example. A parent says to their ten-year-old child:

Your room is a mess. “You are not being respectful! I have asked you over and over to clean it up.”

Child responds: “That is not true; I cleaned it up two weeks ago. You are not being fair. I don’t care if my room is messy.” The child then goes into their bedroom and closes the door.

When we use YOU messages – the recipient either defends their actions or closes down communication – in the above example both happened. This is not effective communication.

To have positive communication, we want to turn You messages into I messages.

For the above example, the parent could say. "I need to have a tidy house". See the difference? There are no accusations, no blaming. The parent owns his statement and clearly states what is needed. The child will now likely respond with curiosity – What does that mean? The parent can go on to explain. "My responsibility is to clean the kitchen, bathroom and all other rooms in the house. It is the responsibility of the children who live here to clean their rooms."

There is nothing blaming or accusatory in this messaging.

When we are struggling ourselves, such as with grief, we often use more YOU messages, which can breakdown communication.

Do these statements sound familiar to you?

- You don't understand what I am going through.
- If you cared about me, you would want to talk about (deceased love one).
- What makes you think I want to go anywhere? You know I am not ready for that.
- You make me so angry.

These statements as I messages, look and sound like this:

- I feel misunderstood in my grief, at times.
- I need to talk about (deceased love one). I am afraid he/she will be forgotten.
- I feel anxious about going to visit others. I am afraid I may cry in front of them.
- I feel angry sometimes. I know its part of grief but I am not sure what I am angry about.

"I messages" always start with one of the following four descriptors:

- I WANT...
- I NEED...
- I THINK...
- I FEEL...

When someone sends a "You message" your way, you can give yourself permission to respond with an "I message", as well. You will quite likely be pleasantly surprised how this makes positive changes in the communication.

Take the time to consider what it is you wish to communicate to someone you care about.

For example:

"I feel alone lately. I think I have been snappy and short quite a lot. I want to spend some quiet time together tonight."

"I am struggling with my grief lately. I need to have some alone time today. I feel more positive when I can think through things quietly."

"I need to get out of the house. I feel nervous about how I may feel in public. I want to go out, but I need to limit it to an hour this first time."

WEEK 4

Below, write down “You messages” that you have been using or the “You messages” that someone close to you has directed toward you:

What do you want them to know? What would you like to express? Write that below using “I messages”:



WEEK 5

Check in with yourself and consider how you did with "Letting Go" this past week. Revisit the Letting Go page.

1. I am having success in letting go of:

2. Or write one of the Letting go Statements below and comment on your success.

Review of Recent Concepts:

How do I adjust to my new reality and express what I need effectively to others?

I discovered that I can be out of step with where others are at in their grief cycle or be misunderstood in my own grief.

Where I or others feel fearful, it can result in saying, what could be perceived as something hurtful—mostly because it is pushing me/us beyond our own readiness.

Sometimes people say nothing or are absent in our life (avoidance) or they or we make assumptions. I discovered there are things I can do and take control of. I can close in the "mindreading gap" by giving myself permission to do AEC.

- I can ask for what I need using I messages: I Need, I Want, I Think, I Feel.
- I can continue to revisit the Grief Framework – Of course I feel...
- I can notice when I am "shoulding on myself". STOP. Ask myself "What Do I want"?
- I can consider what I want, and I can break it into manageable chunks
- I can consider whether I am looking after the grief of others or my own

What are some successes I have had this past week in using any of the above tools?

What are some positive changes that I notice in myself?

What are some positive changes others may have noticed in me or perhaps commented on?

WEEK 5

It is very common to feel anxious with grief. We worry about what others may think of us. We worry about whether we should be doing better in our grief. We worry that we may be forgetting our loved one, if we are feeling happiness again. We worry that we may cry in front of others or not be much fun if we were to attend a social outing.

AFTER READING THE BELOW INTRODUCTION AND DIRECTIONS, COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING STOPP EXERCISE ON THE NEXT PAGE:

Imagine that you are in that place of worrying. Perhaps your worrying is keeping you awake at night or interferes with your ability to get things done during the day. You go around and around with the same thoughts, but you are not getting anywhere. (like a hamster on a wheel)

Directions:

- 1. Read the first statement aloud and consider if this would be a helpful question to break the worrisome thought pattern.**
- 2. After each statement ask yourself aloud if this would be a helpful question to get you thinking about something else or to get you off the “hamster wheel”.**
- 3. If it is helpful put a check mark beside it. If not, move onto the next question. Do not over think the questions but go with your gut reaction.**
- 4. When you are finished, choose 3 of the questions that you like the best and put a star beside those. Commit to using these 3 questions to help you to settle when your worrisome thoughts come in.**
- 5. If possible, take a photo of the questions on your phone, so that you have them when needed.**
- 6. When you get comfortable using the 3 questions and they are becoming more automatic, add in 3 more, and continue the same, then 3 more, until all of the questions are questions that come to mind when you begin to worry.**

CBT STOPP QUESTIONS

STOPP! Pause, take a breath, don't react automatically. Ask yourself:

What am I reacting to?

What is it that I think is going to happen here? Is this fact or opinion?

What's the worst that could happen? The best that could happen?
What's most likely to happen?

Am I getting things out of proportion?

How important is this really? How important will it be in six months time?

Am I overestimating the danger?

Am I underestimating my ability to cope?

Am I mindreading what others might be thinking?

Am I believing that I can predict the future?

Is there another way of looking at this? What is the helicopter view?

What supportive words would I say to someone else in this situation?

Am I putting more pressure on myself?

Just because I feel bad does not mean things really are bad.

What do I want or need from this person or situation? What do they want or need from me to compromise?

What would be the consequence of responding the way I usually do?

Is there another way of dealing with this? What would be the most helpful and effective action for the situation? (for myself and others)

Have I got my stress head on? (Hungry, angry, lonely, tired?)

WEEK 5

Below is a quick demonstration to illustrate how the STOPP questions can work for you. Sit in a quiet space and work through the following commands:

- 1. Think Blue (when you have thought about something blue write down what you thought about or what picture came to mind)**
- 2. Think Orange (when you have thought orange write down what you thought about or what picture came to mind)**
- 3. DO NOT think orange (when you have thought about something other than orange write it down or write down what picture came to mind)**

Did you notice that when you told yourself NOT TO THINK ORANGE, that it was more difficult or took longer to get a different picture in your head? This was most likely the case.

The same is true when we tell ourselves to stop thinking about a picture or an image or to stop worrying and go to sleep. It is usually not very helpful.

When you were thinking Blue and you told yourself to think orange– the orange bumped the Blue out of your thoughts, because it is physiologically impossible to hold 2 thoughts in our brain at the same time.

The worrisome thoughts you are having (the blue), will be bumped out by the new thought of the question you have chosen to ask yourself (the orange).

Changing our thoughts is so very important as our thoughts are connected to what we say and what we say is connected to what we do or the behaviors we choose.

If we change something that we think or something that we do, very often our mood or feelings will change as well.

In one week revisit this page and write down your experience with using the STOPP Questions.



WEEK 6

Moving through the grief cycle brings up so many emotions. Some of these emotions we seem to revisit again and again. There can be challenging work to getting reconnected with others and in establishing a new reality.

Common struggles around reconnection when we are grieving are such things as:

- dealing with anniversary dates
- not knowing how to reconnect to others socially
- feeling guilt at wanting a friend or companion
- anger at not hearing from others
- anger when we do hear from others
- not wanting to feel lonely, but not wanting to do much about it
- not knowing how to or not knowing if we should reconnect with far away relatives of the deceased

1. Complete the Exercise entitled *Why Do Friends Drop Away*:

Directions:

- Check all that you think apply.
- Put a second checkmark beside the items that you have control over and are willing to make an immediate change to.
- Put a star beside the items that you are willing to have conversations with your friends about.
- Add in any ideas that uniquely apply to you on the blanks provided.

- A. They may be frustrated because they cannot help me feel better.
- B. We now have different lifestyles.
- C. They want to find me someone new and I am not ready.
- D. They have never had a loss like mine, and they cannot understand my grief
- E. They want me to be done grieving. I'm not.
- F. They are uncomfortable with their own feelings, let alone mine.
- G. It is difficult for them to see me without the person I lost.
- H. They are afraid that something might happen to them or to someone close.
- I. I am not as cheerful as they would like, and they do not want to be pulled down.
- J. I am a reminder of their loss
- K. They are tired of hearing my story, but I still need to tell it.
- L. I don't fit in with their social group anymore.
- M. They called me often, but I did not call them.
- N. Maybe they did not invite me because they assumed that I would not be comfortable.
I might need to initiate.
- O. I wanted so much to tell my story that I might have forgotten to listen to others' stories.
- P. In every conversation, I think I interject something about my loss that might get tiresome.
- Q. They are concerned that I might be a threat to their marriage.

R. I am needier than I used to be.

S. I have more time on my hands now, but my friends are still very busy.

T. _____

U. _____

V. _____

W. Are you left with any that you cannot change? _____

X. Do you have any reconsideration with those – such as I can accept this or I am not ready and therefore this is not a relationship I want to invest energy in?

Y. What do I need to give myself permission around?

Z. What do I need to give others permission around?

HOLIDAYS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

Holidays and Special events can bring up feelings of dread and anxiousness. We may feel especially sad or lonely and /or we may perceive that we feel very different from others at these special times. We may want things to remain the same or we may want to make changes. We worry what others will think of us.

Complete the following sentences:

My birthday _____

On _____ *(fill in holiday)* my concern is _____

WEEK 6

Buying gifts is _____

Special family events (*graduations, weddings, births etc*) **are** _____

_____ **is coming up soon and** _____

On holidays I am still expected to _____

On holidays I feel obligated to _____

My loved one is coming soon and _____

The weekends _____

WHAT DO I HAVE CONTROL OF? *REFLECTION QUESTIONS*

A. I want to keep things the same and change is frightening because

B. I want to move toward making changes to things and it is frightening because

C. What are some things that would feel honouring to keep the same and with whom do I need to plan/discuss this with?

D. What can I keep the same in my own way – with no consult with others?

E. What are some things that would feel honouring to change and whom do I need to plan/discuss this with?

F. What can I change in my own way with no consult with others?

WEEK 6

What Else is Holding Me Back in? What Might I Be Holding Onto?

It is very common for grieving persons to consider all the things they may not have said to their loved one, or have regrets about things that were said. If our loved one was in the hospital and ill for a longtime, we may have had to make hard decisions for which we feel guilty or we may be in strong disagreement to medical decisions that were made. If our loved one died accidentally, we blame ourselves for having loaned our vehicle, not being vigilant enough or any number of things. When we hold onto 'If only's' we can get stuck in our grief process, playing scenarios over and over in our mind.

Below are two exercises to assist you with letting go of 'if only'(s), regrets or other yet unexpressed emotions:

EXERCISE 1: LETTER WRITING

It can often be helpful to express our thoughts and feelings in the form of a letter to any number of people: to medical staff, to yourself or to your deceased loved one. This is an opportunity to say the things that we cannot or did not say aloud. Remember that this letter is only for you and your own grief process. Do not worry about spelling, grammar or flow. Just get the words down. They can be unflattering words, swearwords, whatever comes up in those raw emotions. You may be angry with your loved one for having left you or for the choices they made and it is okay to express that, just as you would if they were here. You do not have to complete the letter all in one sitting, you may find it easier to take breaks and come back to it. When you are done writing the letter, it is strongly suggested that you burn it, or rip it into tiny pieces and let it go in the wind– the literal act of letting the thoughts and emotions go is freeing.

What are your initial thoughts about writing a letter to express your feelings?

If you do go forward with writing a letter, write down below how you felt afterward.

EXERCISE 2: LET GO AND WATCH WHAT GROWS

If you wish, this exercise can follow the letter writing activity or it can stand on its own.

Materials: Seeds, soil, containers for planting, water

You may want to choose seeds that can be transplanted to your garden if you are a gardener. If not you might want to plant easy to grow herbs.

Think of all the things you want to let go of, all the emotions you would like to release.

- **You can say aloud unsaid thoughts or unspoken worries.**
- **As you do this, plant one seed for each thought or for each letting go.**
- **When the seeds sprout acknowledge their growth and say aloud, I am thankful for new growth.**
- **You may want to take note of and record your own personal growth as it relates to your grief at regular intervals throughout the life of the plant.**
- **When the plant dies, say aloud, “This life cycle is completed”, and give thanks for it.**

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[Getselfhelp.co.uk](http://getselfhelp.co.uk) Free Downloads- CBT worksheets & leaflets

www.courageousliving.com

www.encouraging-appropriate-behaviour.com

Memories will bring sadness, but they will also carry the warmth of the good times you shared with your loved one. Nothing can ever take those away.

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