



navigating grief



resource guide & workbook

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Grief is a natural, yet emotionally complex response to loss. A loss can be the death of a loved one, the end of a relationship, job loss, or any significant life change. Grieving is a necessary part of the healing journey. Experiencing grief is deeply personal, and everyone navigates it differently.

Bereavement is the period of mourning and adjustment following the loss of a loved one. Various factors, including the nature of the relationship with the deceased, cultural practices, and personal coping mechanisms can influence bereavement.

Mourning is the expression of grief in culturally specific ways, including a variety of rituals and practices, such as funerals or wearing specific attire, which provide structure and support during a time of emotional upheaval.

This workbook is designed to guide you through your grief, offering tools and exercises to help you process emotions and find peace. Remember, healing takes time, and it's okay to seek support from loved ones or professionals along the way.

Grief Self-Assessment

Complete this self-assessment to help you reflect on your grief. It's not for a diagnosis, but rather a simple way for you to better understand your emotions, notice patterns, and see if you might need extra support. Your responses are for your own awareness.



Check all that apply.

- ☐ I have experienced a significant loss recently.
- ☐ I feel hopeless, helpless, or numb for a long period of time.
- ☐ My feelings of grief affect my ability to perform daily tasks
- ☐ I have trouble accepting the loss of my loved one.
- ☐ Grief interferes with my daily life.
- ☐ Everything reminds me of the loss of my loved one.
- ☐ I have difficulty focusing on things other than the loss I experienced.
- ☐ Life seems pointless without my loved one.
- ☐ I have lost interest in activities I once enjoyed.
- ☐ I am having difficulty interacting with others.
- ☐ I distance myself from people I used to feel close to.

SCORING

Count the number of check marks.
Your responses will vary at
different stages of the grief process.

7-11 Things are still pretty difficult for you. Let's talk.
3-6 You're managing, but there's room to improve.
1-2 You're coping and managing your grief well.

TYPES OF GRIEF

TYPE	DESCRIPTION
NORMAL GRIEF	You are naturally able to recover from and return to your daily activities within time
ANTICIPATORY GRIEF	Grief that comes before the actual loss
COMPLICATED GRIEF	Grief that does not lessen with time and prevents you from going back to your daily functions
CUMULATIVE GRIEF	Occurs when multiple losses happen in a short period, compounding the grieving process
DELAYED GRIEF	Grief appears at a later time, rather than right away

What type of grief do I think I'm experiencing?

SYMPTOMS OF NORMAL GRIEF

EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS

- **Sadness:** A deep, pervasive feeling of sorrow is often the most recognized emotional symptom of grief.
- **Anger:** Grieving individuals may feel anger toward themselves, others, or even the situation surrounding the loss.
- **Guilt:** Feelings of guilt may arise, often centered around things left unsaid or actions not taken.
- **Anxiety:** A sense of fear or worry about the future and how to cope with the loss.
- **Loneliness:** A profound sense of isolation, even when surrounded by others, is common.
- **Denial:** Difficulty accepting the reality of the loss, often accompanied by disbelief.
- **Despair:** A feeling of hopelessness about the future and difficulty imagining life without the lost person or thing.
- **Confusion:** Trouble concentrating, making decisions, or feeling mentally foggy.
- **Relief:** In some cases, especially if the loss followed a prolonged illness, there may be a sense of relief that the suffering is over.

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Fatigue: Overwhelming tiredness or exhaustion | • Muscle tension |
| • Changes in appetite: Loss of appetite or overeating | • General aches and pains |
| • Sleep disturbances: Insomnia or oversleeping | • Weakened immune system:
Increased susceptibility to illnesses |
| • Headaches | • Changes in heart rate or blood pressure |

Understanding My Grief

What physical symptoms have I
experienced?

What emotions have I been feeling?

What has been confusing for me?

What has been surprising for me?

STAGES OF GRIEF

The seven stages of grief are a model for understanding the complex emotions people experience after a significant loss. These stages are not necessarily linear and can vary greatly from person to person. Understanding these stages can help you recognize your feelings and find comfort in knowing that grieving is a process.

STAGE	DESCRIPTION
SHOCK AND DENIAL	Difficulty accepting the reality of the loss, often accompanied by numbness
PAIN AND GUILT	Profound sorrow and regret experienced by the bereaved
ANGER AND BARGAINING	Frustration directed at others and attempts to negotiate to reverse the loss
DEPRESSION	Unavoidable reality leads to sadness and hopelessness
UPWARD TURN	Adjustment to life without the deceased, with less intense emotions
RECONSTRUCTION AND WORKING THROUGH	Finding ways to move forward and rebuild normalcy and control
ACCEPTANCE AND HOPE	Coming to terms with the loss and looking towards the future with peace and resilience

My Stages of Grief

Describe how you have experienced the stages of grief in your life by answering the questions and filling out each box.

STAGE	How have I physically shown it?	How have I felt it?	How has it affected my life?
SHOCK AND DENIAL			
PAIN AND GUILT			
ANGER AND BARGAINING			
DEPRESSION			
UPWARD TURN			
RECONSTRUCTION AND WORKING THROUGH			
ACCEPTANCE AND HOPE			

TASKS OF HEALING

The four tasks of healing are actionable steps and active coping strategies that help you adapt to a loss.

TASK	DESCRIPTION
ACCEPTING THE LOSS	This stage involves not just an intellectual acknowledgment of the reality of the loss, but also an emotional acceptance. Initially, individuals may experience a state of shock, with full emotional acceptance taking longer and occurring while the other tasks are being accomplished.
FEELING THE FEELINGS	Most people would rather deny or suppress their emotions. Embracing uncomfortable feelings allows individuals to process and release them, fostering personal growth and resilience. By acknowledging and working through emotions, people find healing.
ADJUSTING	Learning to live without the presence of a loved one. Reorganizing one's life without the deceased depends on the nature of the relationship and role with the deceased.
MOVING FORWARD	Learning to carry the memory of the deceased forward, weaving them into the fabric of a new reality. It's about finding gratitude amidst sorrow, bringing the best parts of what was into what will be, creating a life that respects and cherishes all that has been lost, while still moving forward with courage and grace.

My Tasks of Healing

Here is a checklist of the worksheets in this workbook. Each worksheet helps you work through the Tasks of Healing and can be completed in any order.

TASK	CHECKLIST
ACCEPTING THE LOSS	☐ Grief Self-Assessment ☐ Understanding My Grief ☐ My Stages of Grief ☐ Serenity Prayer ☐ Farewell Letter
FEELING THE FEELINGS	☐ Identify My Feelings ☐ Sharing My Feelings ☐ Tracking My Feelings ☐ Releasing Guilt
ADJUSTING	☐ Self-Care Assessment ☐ Self-Care During Adjustment ☐ A Sacred Space ☐ I Have Choices
MOVING FORWARD	☐ Moving Forward ☐ My Future ☐ How Will I Honor ☐ Daily Reflection

Serenity Prayer

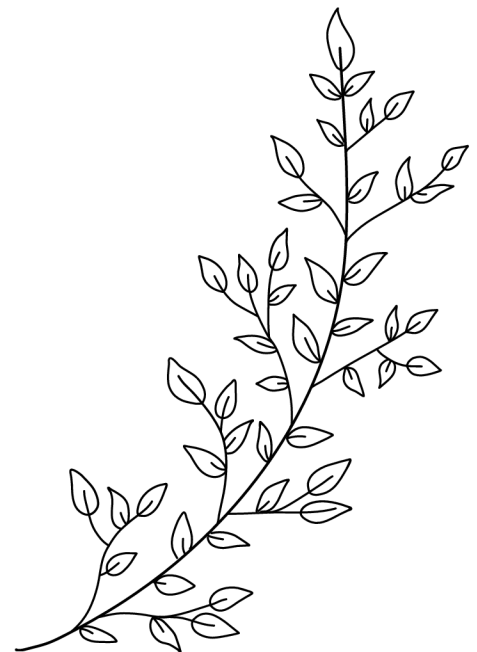
Fill in your thoughts about acceptance by completing the statements below.

Grant me the serenity to...

Accept the things I cannot change...

Courage to change the things I can....

And the wisdom to know the difference.



Farewell Letter

Write a goodbye to your loved one to express your thoughts and to find acceptance of his or her death.

Date:

Dear _____,

I am writing this letter because:

What I'll miss most is:

My most cherished memory is:

I want you to know:

Thank you for:

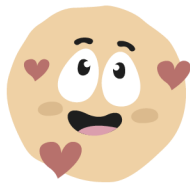
Love,

Identify My Feelings

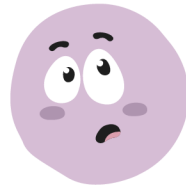
Circle the feelings that you have experienced since his or her death. This will help you to identify and label your feelings.



mad



affectionate



hesitant



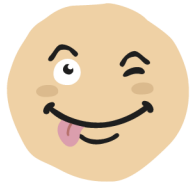
joyful



hurt



fearful



silly



sad



nervous



annoyed



upset



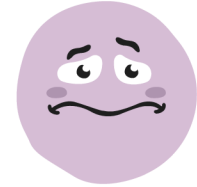
disgusted



happy



down



displeased



angry



cheeky



worried



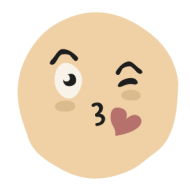
furious



sick



surprised



loving



hopeless



confused



disappointed

Sharing My Feelings

Sharing what you are feeling helps you externalize your emotions
and regain a sense of self.

I am sad when: _____

I am angry about: _____

I miss: _____

I wish: _____

Time with family now is: _____

I would like to have told my loved one: _____

I cry when: _____

Being alone feels: _____

I've discovered: _____

It's just too much when: _____

I get upset when: _____

I hate when: _____

I'm grateful for: _____

I'm surprised that: _____

I've learned that: _____

I treasure: _____

Tracking My Feelings

Track your feelings over the week so that you can see patterns over time. By tracking them, you become more self-aware and can manage them better.

WEEK OF:

sunday

monday

tuesday

wednesday

thursday

friday

saturday

Releasing Guilt

While grieving, it's common to have feelings of guilt. Expressing your feelings of guilt will help you release them.

I'm sorry I: _____

I knew: _____

We didn't talk about: _____

I wish: _____

I never should have: _____

If only I: _____

How could I have: _____

Why didn't I: _____

I'm angry: _____

I did not honor the request that: _____

I get upset when: _____

I regret not: _____

When I think back I: _____

I am forgiving myself: _____

I am managing my guilt: _____

I am letting the guilt go: _____

ADJUSTING TO A NEW NORMAL

Adjusting to a new way of life without your loved one can be both challenging and rewarding. Here's a helpful list to make the transition smoother:

- **Stay Open-Minded:** Embrace change with curiosity and a willingness to learn. This mindset can help you adapt more easily to new situations.
- **Establish a Routine:** Creating a daily schedule can provide structure and stability, helping you feel more grounded in unfamiliar surroundings.
- **Connect with Others:** Building a support network by reaching out to friends, family, or new acquaintances can provide comfort and guidance during transitions.
- **Set Realistic Goals:** Break down your adaptation process into smaller, achievable tasks to avoid feeling overwhelmed and to celebrate small victories.
- **Practice Self-Care:** Prioritize your mental and physical well-being by incorporating activities that relax and rejuvenate you into your routine.
- **Stay Informed:** Learn about your new environment or situation by gathering information and asking questions, which can increase your confidence and ease anxiety.
- **Be Patient with Yourself:** Understand that adapting takes time. Allow yourself to experience and process emotions without self-judgment.
- **Find Joy in Small Things:** Take time to appreciate simple pleasures and moments of happiness, which can help maintain a positive outlook.

By following these steps, you can navigate the complexities of a new way of life with resilience and optimism.

SELF CARE STRATEGIES

- **Meditation:** Mindfulness meditations encourage a non-judgmental acceptance of thoughts and feelings, leading to greater self-awareness and compassion.
- **Prayer:** Engaging in prayer provides a sense of peace and connection to a higher power, which fosters a sense of hope and positivity.
- **Journaling:** By putting pen to paper, or fingers to keyboard, you can gain clarity on your feelings, identify patterns in your behavior, and develop a better understanding of yourself.
- **Exercise:** Exercise improves mental health by releasing endorphins, which are natural mood lifters, thus reducing stress, anxiety, and symptoms of depression.
- **Talking to a counselor:** Counselors are specially trained to provide a safe, non-judgmental space for individuals to express their feelings and thoughts.
- **Get a Massage:** Massage therapy is known to reduce stress and anxiety levels, as the soothing touch and calming environment can lead to a decrease in stress and tension.
- **Try Reiki:** Reiki is a Japanese technique for stress reduction and relaxation that focuses on channeling energy to promote healing and balance within the body for relaxation and stress relief.
- **Sit in a Sound Bath:** A sound bath uses soothing sounds and vibrations from instruments like singing bowls, gongs, and chimes to create a tranquil environment. This immersive experience can help reduce stress and anxiety by promoting a deep state of relaxation and mindfulness.
- **Healthy Eating:** A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins can help prevent chronic diseases such as obesity, heart disease, and diabetes.

Self-Care Assessment

Take this assessment to gain insight into your current well-being and identify areas that may need attention.

- ☐ Am I eating three healthy meals a day?
- ☐ Do I belong to a support group or social group that meets at least once a month?
- ☐ Do I do something to relax at least three times a day?
- ☐ Am I keeping my mind stimulated?
- ☐ Do I exercise at least three times a week?
- ☐ Am I keeping my appointments and obligations?
- ☐ Do I sleep six to eight hours each night?
- ☐ Am I kind to myself?
- ☐ Do I take my medicines as prescribed?
- ☐ Do I say NO when I need/want to?
- ☐ Am I forgiving myself?
- ☐ Do I enjoy poetry and/or spiritual readings?
- ☐ Am I engaged in social activities?
- ☐ Am I journaling?
- ☐ Am I balancing between "being" (feeling my feelings) and "doing" (keeping busy)?

SCORING

Count the number of check marks.
Your responses will identify if your
self-care needs attention.

10-15 You've made self-care a priority.

5-9 There can be improvements in your self-care.

1-4 Your self-care needs immediate attention.

Self-Care during adjustment

It is critical to take care of yourself in every way while learning to adjust to a new way of living. Use the space below to identify some ways you can do this.

To care for my physical well
being, I can:

To care for my spiritual well
being, I can:

To care for my emotional
well being, I can:

To care for my mental well
being, I can:

A Sacred Space

A sacred space is a safe space for healing. This activity will help inspire you to create your own sacred space.

Where can I find a safe and sacred place? _____

What color would be most soothing? Why? _____

What objects would I keep in this space? Why? _____

What aroma would be pleasing? Why? _____

What music would be comforting? Why? _____

What mementos would I bring into this space? Why? _____

What else would make this space sacred? _____

Whom would I trust to see this space? _____

Moving Forward

Breaking down tasks into smaller, more manageable action step makes them less overwhelming and easier to approach.

What task do I feel needs to be done and I just can't get started? _____

Is it necessary to do this task immediately? _____

When would I like to get it done? _____

When would I want to start? _____

What is the first step in getting the task done? _____

How long would that first step take? _____

When will I take the first step? _____

After the first step, when would I be willing to work on it again? _____

What would be the next step? _____

And the next? _____

And the next? _____

Would I like some support or would I prefer to do it alone? _____

If I would like help, who would I consider asking? _____

How could I reward myself each time I work on this project? _____

Am I willing to do it? When? _____

My Future

One year from today, how do I see my life...

Home: _____

Work: _____

Education: _____

Recreation: _____

Social: _____

Relationships: _____

Family: _____

Spiritually: _____

Healing: _____

I Have Choices

During times of stress, decision-making can become incredibly difficult as emotions may cloud judgment. It's crucial to approach these moments with self-awareness and mindfulness. Here are some questions to consider as you navigate adjusting to life without your loved one.

- Are my decisions aligned with my core values and long-term goals?
- Am I making choices based on immediate emotional reactions?
- Have I considered their long-term implications?
- Is fear driving my decisions, or am I choosing out of love and compassion?
- Am I allowing myself the time and space to reflect on my choices?
- I rushing into decisions to escape discomfort?

By asking these questions, you can better ensure that your decisions are thoughtful and considerate, even amidst emotional turmoil. Remember, it's okay to seek support from trusted friends, family, or professionals when needed.

What decision do I have to make?

What are my choices?

How I Will Honor....

Finding ways to honor your loved one allows you to celebrate and cherish his or her life and legacy which keeps their memory alive in you heart and mind in a positive way.

Here are some ways of honoring a loved one:

- Arrange a funeral or head-stone unveiling.
- Say a prayer on the anniversary of death.
- Plant a tree.
- Give clothes to a charity.
- Sort through photos and put them in an album with comments written next to the pictures for the benefit of family members.
- Donate books to a school, university or public library.
- Volunteer time at a place in which the deceased had an interest.
- Establish a fund at a place of worship, favorite charity or college/school.
- Create and/or attend a memorial service.

How will I honor my loved one?



Daily Reflection

How am I feeling right now?

Today I am missing...

Today I am having a hard
time with..

A simple activity I can do today to show
compassion to myself is..

What am I grateful
for today?

Good things about
today?

What made me smile
today?

RESOURCES

SALUS Grief Support

Call 949-390-7308 to learn more about the available resources and services.

Orange County Office on Aging - Grief and Loss Services

<https://www.officeonaging.ocgov.com/covid-19/resource-toolkit/grief-and-loss>

Los Angeles County - Grief and Loss Resources

<https://dmh.lacounty.gov/mental-health-resources/grief-loss/>

San Diego County - Bereavement Center

<https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/me/families/bereavement.html>

Riverside County - Department of Public Social Services, Mental Health Resources

<https://rivcodpss.org/mental-health-resources>

What's your grief? whatsyourgrief.com

What's Your Grief is a grief website and online community for grieving people and grief support professionals

Grief Share griefshare.org.

GriefShare is a grief recovery support group where you can find help and healing for the hurt of losing a loved one.

The Compassionate Friends compassionatefriends.org.

The Compassionate Friends non-profit organization exists to provide friendship, understanding, and hope to those going through the natural grieving process.

SAMHSA's National Helpline: A confidential, free, 24-hour-a-day, 365-day-a-year, information service, in English and Spanish, for individuals and family members facing mental and/or substance use disorders. This service provides referrals to local treatment facilities, support groups, and community-based organizations. Call 1-800-662-HELP (4357) or TTY: 800-487-4889.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: The Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals. We can all help prevent suicide. Call 1-800-273-8255.