



We Grieve thanks you for participating
in our Grief Workshop.

Connecting with other grieving people

In addition to resources and free workshops,
We Grieve would like to connect you to others
who have experienced your same loss.

If you would like to be connected to others with your same loss,
please send an email to karl@wegrieve.net

More resources are available at <https://wegrieve.net>



We bring grieving people together to heal

My Notes:

WE GREIVE WORKSHOP



WE GRIEVE

RETURNING TO LIFE AFTER LOSS

Week One: Small group discussion (45 minutes)

Topic: *How Grief and Loss Changes a Person*

The purpose of this week's session is to allow participants to understand the topic, meet each other, introduce themselves, share their loss stories, and begin building community. Ask participants how their loss has changed them and their life.

Primary goals:

- Create a safe environment for all participants by describing community guidelines
- Introduce the workshop topic
- Help participants connect with each other through sharing their grief experience
- Remind participants of the grief work they can do between sessions

Small Group Flow:

1. Welcome everyone to the group and introduce yourself. Share your name, a few things about yourself including something memorable about you. Then invite others to introduce themselves, share a few personal things to get to know each other, and include something memorable.
2. Quickly remind the group of the community guidelines.
3. Share your loss story and invite others to share their story
4. If time remains, ask any of the following questions:
 - a. How has your loss changed you?
 - b. What is your greatest need right now relative to your grief?
5. Thank everyone for participating, remind them about their optional homework, and end the session.

RETURNING TO LIFE AFTER LOSS

Week Two: Small group discussion (45 minutes)

Topic: *Accepting and Adjusting to a New Reality*

The purpose of this week's session is to create a foundation for how to think about the change associated with loss. We will define acceptance and discuss how to think, write, speak and act in a new way.

Primary goals:

- Maintain a safe environment for all participants
- Discuss the elements of healthy grieving, a definition of acceptance, and possible barriers to acceptance
- Remind participants of the grief work they can do between sessions

Small Group Flow:

1. Welcome everyone to the group and re-introduce yourself. Invite others to introduce themselves, and have any new members share their loss story after introducing themselves.
2. Quickly remind the group of the community guidelines.
3. Ask participants to check-in by sharing how the week was for them. You can ask for the high/low for the week, or anything that happened since last week related to their grief.
4. Ask any of the following questions:
 - a. Which one of the elements of healthy grieving is most difficult for you?
 - b. In what ways do you feel you will never be the same again after your loss?
5. Thank everyone for participating, remind them about their optional homework, and end the session.



RETURNING TO LIFE AFTER LOSS

Week Three: Small group discussion (45 minutes)

Topic: *A Strategy for Confronting Unwanted Change*

The purpose of this week's session is to adopt a strategy for addressing unwanted change that involves how we think, feel and make decisions as a result of the impact of loss. The cognitive behavioral model provides a process for facilitating change.

Primary goals:

- Maintain a safe environment for all participants
- Discuss the cognitive behavioral model and the relationship between thoughts, emotions, and behaviors
- Remind participants of the grief work they can do between sessions

Small Group Flow:

1. Welcome everyone to the group. Invite participants to say hello and check-in by sharing how the week has been, and any grief issues that came up.
2. Ask any of the following questions:
 - a. Which do you struggle most with in your grief, thoughts, feelings or behaviors?
 - b. Which do you seem to have the most control over?
 - c. What would you most like to change with regard to your grief?
3. Thank everyone for participating, remind them about their optional homework, and end the session.



RETURNING TO LIFE AFTER LOSS

Week Four: Small group discussion (45 minutes)

Topic: *Normal is what you do every day*

The purpose of this week's session is to identify healthy behaviors we can choose at different points along the journey of grief. Whether we are experiencing shock, protest, disorganization, reorganization or new life, there are healthy choices we can make that will move us forward.

Primary goals:

- Maintain a safe environment for all participants
- Identify various grief perspectives and which one you are in most often lately
- Discuss the concepts of baby steps, building on success, and contact without control as motivation for making healthy choices

Small Group Flow:

1. Welcome everyone to the group. Invite participants to say hello and check-in by sharing how the week has been, and any grief issues that came up.
2. Ask any of the following questions:
 - a. Which perspective do you most often find yourself seeing your loss through?
 - b. What does it take for you to create a new habit?
 - c. Which of the Domains of Resilience is the most difficult for you to make healthy choices?
 - d. What has been most helpful to your grief journey in this workshop?



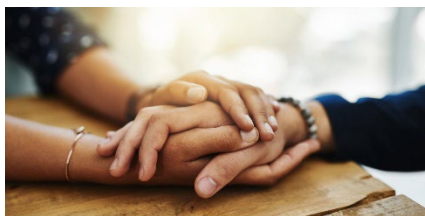
YOU MAY NOT KNOW...

You may not know...

- You don't "get over" a significant loss.
- It takes a long time to feel normal again.
- No one can tell you how to grieve.
- Healthy grieving requires the release of emotional pain.
- Grief changes you and your priorities.
- You may feel like isolating and being alone.
- Grieving is not forgetting but remembering in a new way.
- There are primary and secondary losses.
- You will discover triggers that stir your grief.
- Unresolved conflicts and issues from the past will surface.
- Not everyone you think will be there for you will be there.
- Your grief will teach you things about yourself.
- Society will not understand your grief journey.
- You can do more than you think you can.



WHAT A GRIEVING PERSON NEEDS



TIME

Time alone and time with people they trust and who will listen when they need to talk. Grieving people need months and years of time to feel and understand the feelings that accompany loss.

REST-RELAXATION-EXERCISE-NOURISHMENT-DIVERSION

Grieving people need extra amounts of things they have always needed. Hot baths, afternoon naps, a trip, a “cause” to work for to help others — any of these will provide a lift. Grief is an exhausting process emotionally. Following what feels healing and what offers connection to the people and things they love is critical.

SECURITY

It will be important for a grieving person to reduce or find help for financial or other stresses in life. Getting back into a routine will help create motion and a sense of purpose, and staying close to trusted people will enhance the feeling of belonging. Grieving people need to be allowed to do things at their own pace.

HOPE

Hope and comfort are found in connecting with those who have experienced a similar loss. Knowing some things that helped them, and realizing that they have recovered, and that time does help, gives grieving people hope that sometime in the future their grief will be less raw and painful.

CARING

Grieving people will struggle with receiving help but need to try hard to accept the expression of caring from others, even though doing so may be uneasy and awkward. Helping a friend or relative who is suffering the same loss usually brings a feeling of closeness with that person, and that soothes grief.

GOALS

For a while, life will lose meaning for grieving people. At times like these, small goals will be helpful. Having something to look forward to — like playing tennis next week, a movie, a trip next month — helps grievers get through the time in the immediate future. Living one day at a time helps, as a rule of thumb. At first however, grieving people’s enjoyment of these things isn’t



the same. This is normal, and with the passing of time long-range goals will give structure and direction to life.

SMALL PLEASURES

Small pleasures are so very important to a grieving person. Sunsets, a walk, a favorite food — all are small steps toward regaining pleasure in life itself.

PERMISSION TO BACKSLIDE

A person suffering grief may sometimes, after a period of feeling good, find themselves back in the old feelings of extreme sadness, despair, or anger. This is often the nature of grief, up and down, and it may happen over and over for a time. It happens because, as humans, we cannot take in all the pain and the meaning of life at once. We let it in a little at a time and the intensity is diminished.

DRUGS ARE NOT HELPFUL

The use and abuse of drugs and alcohol may prolong and delay the necessary process of grieving. We cannot prevent, cure, avoid, or anesthetize grief. The only way to get to the other side of grief is to go through it.

Compiled by Judith Herr, MSW, Hilltop Hospice, Grand Junction, CO.

Edited by Karl Shackelford, BCC, Founder, We Grieve, Evergreen, CO



EXPERIENCING GRIEF

"normal reactions to pain & suffering"

Thoughts

- disbelief
- confusion
- preoccupation with the death & the deceased
- sense of presence
- lack of concentration
- lack of ability to organize & process intellectually
- trouble remembering
- difficulty making decisions

Feelings

- shock, numbness
- denial, disbelief
- anxiety, fear, panic
- loss, emptiness
- loneliness
- sadness, depression
- loss of pleasure
- hurt, frustration
- helplessness
- hopelessness
- guilt, regret
- disorganization
- confusion
- relief, emancipation
- reconciliation
- re-establishment
- feeling crazy
- explosive emotions:
anger, hate, resentment,
jealousy

Behaviors

- absent-minded behavior
- crying and sobbing
- restlessness
- inability to sit still
- trying to "stay busy"
- visiting places or carrying
- treasuring objects
- avoiding reminders
- experiencing "grief bursts"
- dreams of the deceased



Relational Changes

- ___ social withdrawal
- ___ fear of being alone
- ___ dependent, clingy
- ___ busyness as a distraction
- ___ irritable, moody
- ___ argumentative
- ___ trying to replace the loss
- ___ changes in role, status, family system, identity
- ___ avoiding people to avoid conversation about the loss

Physical Factors

- ___ fatigue, lack of energy
- ___ hollowness in the stomach
- ___ stomachache, other gastrointestinal disturbances
- ___ sleep difficulties (too much/little, interrupted sleep)
- ___ feelings of emptiness and heaviness
- ___ heart palpitations, trembling, shaking
- ___ hot flashes, indications of anxiety
- ___ nervousness, tension
- ___ agitation, irritability
- ___ shortness of breath, headache, muscle aches & pains
- ___ chest pain, pressure, or discomfort

Spiritual Concerns

- ___ searching for meaning
- ___ asking the "why" questions
- ___ mystical experiences
- ___ reassessing values, beliefs, and priorities
- ___ feeling anger at God
- ___ feeling abandoned by God
- ___ experiencing comfort from God and faith community
- ___ exploring new dimensions of faith
- ___ using rituals like prayer and meditation to help the healing process



THE JOURNEY OF GRIEF

Elements for Healthy Grieving

These elements of healthy grieving describe the journey of grief, and how to experience emotional pain in a healthy way. Each person's journey through grief is unique. Measure your success at facing each one and determine what is needed to move forward.

- **Accept the reality of the loss;** prepare to experience emotional pain
- **Feel the feelings** normal with your loss; express & release emotional pain; celebrate happy memories; refuse to stuff your emotions
- **Take care of yourself** in every way along the journey - physically, mentally, spiritually, relationally, and emotionally
- **Adjust to the new reality** created by the loss experience; relearn to live in the world
- **Remember the good** about who or what you have lost; you choose your point of focus
- **Develop a new self-identity** based on life after loss
- **Relate your loss to a context of meaning;** grief is a spiritual journey; a reexamination of core truths, values, passion, purpose & goals
- **Reinvest in life** and go on living and loving after loss

Based on the work of Alan Wolfelt and William J. Worden; edited by Karl J. Shackelford



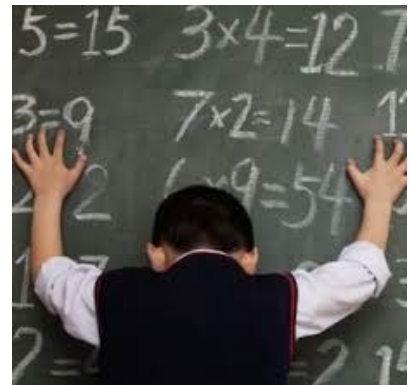
A HEALING FORMULA

A Healing Formula

You've probably heard the story of the man who went to the doctor and rotating his arm at the elbow said, "**Doc, it hurts when I do this...**" The doctor glanced at him quickly and said, "**Then I suggest you don't do that!**" Professionals will tell you there is no simple or quick fix to healing from the pain of grief and loss. Someone telling you to just "**get over**" your grief or to "**Stop feeling like that**" really has no concept of the nature of grief. While I agree with the professionals that there is no simple or quick fix to healing, I do believe there is a formula in the process of healing.

HEALING = FAITH + WORK + TIME

My formula for healing begins with **how we define healing**. Newcomers to grief and loss tend to think of healing as the **absence** of the pain - no longer feeling like you've been punched in the stomach, no more panic attacks where the loss is overwhelming, or the unrelenting memory of your loved one consuming every detail of life. A more realistic picture of healing would be **arriving to a place where your loss is no longer the central thought of every waking moment, no longer the driving influence of your consciousness that dominates and defines your life**.



Healing from grief and loss is more about a reluctant acceptance of reality where the pain of loss is still felt, your way of life is altered, but is only one painful experience in your life instead of a loss that defines your life. **One person described experiencing the pain of grief and loss as similar to being a member of an exclusive club that no one wants to join!** Defining the goal of healing allows you to even unwillingly, begin the process with the confidence that you at least have some idea of where you are going.

The first necessity of my healing formula is **faith, the spiritual component**. The contribution of faith in healing from grief and loss is marked in different ways for different people. Some find faith to be that aspect of life that addresses the existential questions of "**Who?**" and "**Why?**" and "**What next?**" Our "spirit" is that force within us compelling us to regain the equilibrium taken from us, the stability disrupted by the impact of our loss. We find **strength from within as well as from beyond ourselves** when we engage our faith in attempting to find elusive answers to these intricate existential questions.





For others faith is the **strong foundation** upon which life is built, and a personal belief in a supreme being who is **present with us** and who **loves us** is a great comfort when being pummeled with the pain of loss. I love the story of the boy who woke up early on a Saturday morning to **play ball with his dad**, and unable to get his dad to join him, headed outside on his own. His dad asked, “Who will you play with at this early hour?” The boy stated simply, **“Its easy dad! I play with God. I throw it up... and he throws it back!”**

Realizing that **we are not alone** and that there is someone who has the **power to bring good from evil** is encouraging when we feel like helpless victims without hope of rescue. To trust optimistically in the existence of someone with **greater power, vision and authority** than myself is key to the role of faith in healing.

The second requirement of my healing formula is **work, specifically the work of the grief process**. Therapy is defined as treatment, or a set of actions or techniques applied in a specific situation. In the case of loss, a therapeutic action might include **remembering** or **celebrating** the person you lost. One person I know asked for permission from a friend to call every day to share one memory or characteristic of their loved one. The calls are most often brief, but the repetition of speaking a memory is powerful for healing.

Another action that promotes healing is **moving toward community**. Pain has a tendency to isolate us and **with isolation the imagination can take us to unhealthy and even scary places**. Staying connected to people **we love and respect** that treat us with **understanding** and **compassion** contributes greatly to our adjusting to our new reality.

The final component of my healing formula is **time**. The adage, “Time heals all wounds” is just not true. **Time alone is not a healer**. Time is passive, not active. While time is crucial because it creates a context for therapy and faith to apply their influence, it has no healing power of its own. **People ask me how long their grief process will take... and my answer is always the same. “It depends on you!”** With hard work, the support and encouragement of faith, and the space of time within which you can process, healing will come. Be sure of it!

Karl Shackelford, MDiv, BCC
Counselor, Peaks & Creeks Life Development, Inc
Founder, We Grieve Community



ARE WE THERE YET?

My parents hated that question! Growing up in Texas, our family of five made the 8-hour drive from Greenville to Amarillo several times a year, and every time we made the trip it seemed to grow painfully longer! As kids **we just wanted the drive to be over** so we could enjoy time with Grammy and Grandpa, and all our uncles, aunts and cousins. And this was in the days before video games and movies in the car kept the kids busy! It felt a lot like it does today experiencing a pandemic with the economic shutdown and social distancing. In no way am I minimizing the pain of others, but **we just want it to be over**.



This pandemic with its wide-ranging impact of **loss of life, devastating sickness, social distancing, stay at home orders**, and the **economic shock** of closing businesses and putting so many out of work has been unprecedented. When you are **anxious, worried, afraid** or possibly even **grieving** the loss of a close friend or family member, and you just want this whole thing to be over, what are some ways you can get through this in a healthy way?

The pain of anxiety and fear are a result of our **inability to establish equilibrium** between our **expectations** of life and the **realities** of life. In other words, **what we want** and **what is** are very different, and depending on **how different** and **how long the disparity lasts**, we experience pain.

For decades we have known that as a culture, **we are used to immediate gratification**. When we want something, we want it **our** way and we want it **now!** That works well when you're ordering a **burger and fries** at a fast food drive-through window, but not as well when the risk is the **death of a friend or loved one**. We don't control as much of life as we wish we controlled, and we don't always get what we want. Whether we like it or not, this deadly virus has found its way into our communities, and **we could be the vehicle of transmission!**



We will certainly do all we can to be safe, and to protect the ones we love. This may cause us pain, so it might serve us well to learn a few new skills in our relationship with pain.

Learn to be present in the pain. As a culture **our response** to pain is mostly to **avoid, ignore, or numb** against anything that hurts. I'm not talking about **intense levels** of physical discomfort, but regarding **emotional** and **psychological pain**, being present in that pain is a skill with which we have little experience. We don't know how to **sit well** with pain, **understand** pain, or find ways to **learn** and **grow** through pain. There are ways to **develop strength** by enduring struggle.

Sitting with pain begins with **broadening our awareness** of **all** that is happening to us. As we experience the pain of loneliness, the sadness of loss, or the anxiety of fear of any bad thing that could happen, we can take an **honest look** at how **we are responding**, notice the **actions** and **concerns** of **others**, and ask questions about **how we got here** and additional options available to us to walk through our pain.



In pain **we learn the truth about ourselves**, and what is most important to us. In pain **we discover those who truly care** about us and the extent of their willingness to become personally involved in our suffering. In pain **we are more introspective**, open to **new** and **different ways** of relating to the world, and getting **out of the rut** we've been living in.

In your pain **turn off your electronics**, grab a **notebook & pen**, and take a moment to be **still, quiet, and alone**. Allow your **thoughts** to flow, and the healthy expression of your **emotions** as they arise. Open your notebook and write about what you are **thinking, feeling** and **doing** as a result of your pain, and what you are **recognizing** and **discovering** about yourself. *Learn to be present in the pain.*

Learn to be present in the purpose. In a world where both **good and evil** exist, we are destined to experience both. We have learned to expect a certain amount of pain from **unmet expectations**, but when the amount of painful experience seems to be so **disproportionate** to the amount of **positive experience**, we cry out for **understanding**. *Why do I have to lose my job*



and ability to pay my bills? Why can't I visit my loved one in their time of need? Why do I always feel so alone?

Those who seem to be **less resilient** tend to follow a pattern.

Pain is perceived as **Personal – Pervasive – Permanent**.

- **Personal:** My pain is a **personal attack** and is directed specifically at me
- **Pervasive:** My pain is **everywhere** in my life and I can't get away from it
- **Permanent:** My pain will **always** be with me and I will **never** be happy again

It would serve us well to identify these **false beliefs** and **trust** in the **truth** we find in the writings of the Bible, that God is able to cause **all things to work for our good**. Losing your ability to support yourself will never be a good thing; however, out of this tragedy, **good can come**. We might not be able to see it now, but **evil will not prevail**. Good will emerge. **Sitting with suffering** allows us to see a larger picture of how from the **ashes** of pain, a **better future** can rise.



*There is meaning and purpose in the pain of life. Suffering is not meaningless. Just because we have yet to see meaning and purpose doesn't mean it isn't there. **Open your notebook** and in your calm and quiet, allow the possibilities of good to emerge, and write down as many examples as you can think of. *Learn to be present in the purpose.**

Learn to be present in the process. Pain is **transformational**. Anyone who has suffered greatly is not the same person they were before the painful experience. The result of living in a world where both good and evil exist is that **we will be changed**. Life is a **process** of moving in and out of **equilibrium**. It has been said that we are all either **entering** a storm, **going through** a storm, or **coming out** of a storm. *We live in a constant process of change.*

Learning to be present in the process is about **encouraging self-awareness** of this change in you. It may sound like a familiar cliché but depending on your willingness to submit to a process, **pain** can either make you **bitter**, or it can make you **better**. I don't have to **like** the



suffering I experience in my life, and I don't have to **invite it in, make it comfortable, or prepare a meal** for it – but I can **take advantage** of its presence to help **shape** the change it creates in me.



One truth I learned in my 20's **enduring a year of chemotherapy and radiation treatments** in my battle with cancer was that **pain will end**. No matter how much I suffered in my treatments against that horrible disease, **it did end**. It had a **start** and a **finish**. This has taught me over the years to be **patient in suffering** and believe that it will **not always feel like it feels right now**. As my friend Kari Eckert says, "There is **HOPE** –

Hang On, Pain Ends."

*We may not be there yet, but for now we will learn to be present in the **pain**, present in the **purpose**, and present in the **process**. We will have hope!*



TAMING THE TIGER

COPING WITH WORRY DURING GRIEF

Grief is not a simple emotion. It is an extremely complex mix of many different emotions, all of which seem to come at us at the same time. When someone very dear to us has died, we grapple simultaneously with intense feelings of sadness, nagging regrets and anger, fear and wonder about the meaning of life, and our own mortality, as well as endless worries about how we will cope in the future without our loved one.



The impact that grief can have on our ability to function effectively in daily life is similar to the effect that a four-legged stool has on a magnificent and powerful tiger. The renowned Methodist minister Rev. William H. Hinson explains why animal trainers carry a four-legged stool when they go into a cage of wild animals. They have their whips, of course, and their pistols are at their sides. But invariably they also carry a stool. Hinson says it is the most important tool of the trainer. The trainer holds the stool by the back and thrusts the legs of the stool toward the face of the wild animal. Those who know maintain that the animal tries to focus on all four legs simultaneously, a kind of paralysis overwhelms the animal, and it becomes tame, weak, and disabled because its attention is fragmented.

Sound familiar? How many different things are you trying to focus on right now in the wake of your loss? Too many things, and a sort of mental paralysis sets in. We get overwhelmed. We don't know what to do so we don't do anything. We just shut down. Or worse, we keep going and create even more pain for ourselves. When someone close to us dies, the number of things to worry about can be debilitating.

But think about worry for a moment. Worry is taking responsibility for something over which you have no control. When you find yourself immobilized by the worries of grief, try this. Take a sheet of paper and draw a line vertically down the middle of the page. On the left side of the line list all the things about your situation that you can control. On the right side list all the things you cannot control. The left side becomes your "to do" list, and the right side a list of things you hand off. Coping with the worries associated with loss is about being strategic. Developing the skill of discernment between what you do and do not control, as early as possible in the worrying, will identify quickly what to let go of. We hand off worries to the person who can actually effect change, or to our higher power who controls it all. Breathe, relax, focus, discern, and hand off. You can stop pouring energy into things or people you do not control.



HOW CHANGE FEELS

Aspen leaves turn into the familiar shades we love to remind us that the seasons change and nature transitions.

People also experience transitions requiring adjustment. We experience loss, whether it be in the form of a person, pet, place, job, habit, or object. We experience loss in the form of change. We experience loss within ourselves.



Loss is scary. It is unsettling and can feel overwhelming. With it, feelings of sadness, nostalgia, anxiety, and confusion may arise. It is difficult to fully accept loss. After the immediate loss, the brain rejects change and resists adapting to the new version of what your life will be. Resisting change only intensifies our reactions of fear and panic.

Change forces us to examine our lives and to pause and gain perspective. It is possible that change or loss will cause one to investigate the past, leaving one feeling helpless at what is now different. It can also cause one to investigate the future and not understand how he or she will function without that part of his or her identity.

Throughout our daily lives we are faced with choices. With each decision, we have a mini-loss of the other option. We also have a gain of what we did choose. We have many gains, shifts, losses, and transitions, whether they seem grand or seemingly insignificant, throughout every day of our lives. This flexibility allows us to maintain forward movement in our lives. However, when we experience a great loss, a subtraction that leaves us frozen, we can temporarily crumble.

The beauty of life, and human beings, is that we are adaptable. We adjust and adapt constantly. There are some losses that can leave holes in our lives, voids that could never be filled — but when we learn to accept that life is full of loss, we can expect it and let go of the idea that we can control it or prevent it. We can learn to accept that certain losses cannot be replaced, fixed, or mended, but instead honor it for what it represented and meant to us.

Feelings of joy, excitement, euphoria, hope and anticipation of what is yet to come can come from positive change. It can propel us forward and motivate us. Sometimes it can seem



impossible to see the positive changes amidst the tragic ones. Like the seasons, however, we keep growing, and blooming, and living. We keep walking.

Change can cause some of us to walk in place and feel stuck. It can cause some of us to walk in circles, wandering and lost. But the easiest thing to do is to keep walking forward, even if it can sometimes take an uncomfortable amount of effort to do so. It is hardest on us to stay still. It can paralyze us. To keep one foot in front of the other will keep you growing, learning, exploring, adapting, accepting and carrying on.

This article is from the work of Kristi A DeName . See <https://psychcentral.com/blog/adapting-to-change/> for more of her work.



(Object of Control)

What I Control:

What I Do Not Control:

1. _____

1. _____

2. _____

2. _____

3. _____

3. _____

4. _____

4. _____

5. _____

5. _____

Worry is taking responsibility for something over which you have no control. The very act of separating the elements in a situation you can control from those you cannot relieves **stress**. Once you have identified the items you cannot control, **make a sincere effort to let them go**. The list of items you can control becomes your **“to-do”** list.



WEGRIEVE

Control
Exercise

WeGrieve.net

COPING STRATEGIES

"You don't heal from the loss of a loved one because time passes, you heal because of what you do with that time."

~ Carol Crandell

COPING STRATEGIES THAT WORK

Self-Care

- **Exercise** – dance, run, walk, hike, sign up for an exercise class.
- **Allow time off** – take time off from your routine, house, job, or even from grieving for a while.
- **Allow time for yourself** – see a movie or play, listen to music, read, daydream, journal, watch TV, or just do nothing.
- **Nurture yourself** – take a hot bath, get a massage, garden, do activities you enjoy. Make sure that you are getting enough to eat and drink, and try to make healthy choices. Be gentle with yourself.
- **Rest** – get enough sleep, take breaks and rest throughout the day.
- **Concentrate on breathing** – remember to take deep breaths. Give your body the proper oxygen to function efficiently.
- **Play** – participate in sports, go shopping, socialize with friends, eat out, play video games, visit the art museum, library, botanic gardens, theater, film, or concert.
- **Use humor** – cultivate your own sense of humor and seek out opportunities to laugh or at least smile (read the comics, watch a comedy, etc.).
- **Visit nature** – take walks or sit in the park and enjoy seeing nature surround you.
- **Meditation and prayer** – practicing meditation, prayer, or other rituals from your faith traditions can be a source of strength and healing.
- **Prepare for difficult days** – make plans for how you will spend holidays and other special days. Think about what rituals may need to change, be added, or stay the same. How will you include the memory of your loved one?
- **Be creative/Use creativity** – draw, paint, sculpt, dance, sing, play music, garden.



Support

- **Communicate** – tell others clearly what you want and need.
- **Make time to talk** – share with family members, friends, co-workers, neighbors, or a religious advisor (clergy person).
- **Seek out grief support** – speak with a trained professional to seek support and education about grief. Also consider joining a support group.
- **Rely on outside help** – ask for support with simple things like chores. Asking for help is not a weakness.

(Over)

Writing

- **Keep a journal** – express your feelings, thoughts and needs. Use it as a space for release, exploration, and introspection. Looking back will help you see your progress.
- **Write a letter** – write to the person who has died, telling them exactly what you are going through or expressing any feelings or thoughts to resolve “unfinished business.”
- **Write lists** – list good things about your loved one, the loving things they said to you that you never want to forget, etc.
- **Organization** – grief can influence our concentration, memory and decision making abilities. Writing down to-do lists can help us stay organized and more in control.

Developing Resources

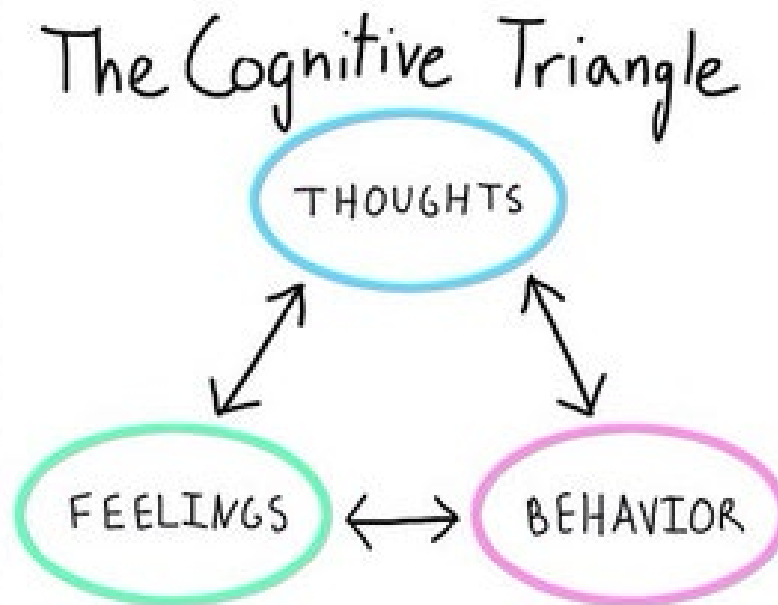
- **Set small goals first** – accomplish them, and then set more or bigger goals.
- **Reach out to others** – be open and talk about your thoughts and feelings.
- **Cry!** – tears are as natural as laughter and just as healing. Tears, whether shared with others or shed in private, can help release bottled up sadness, anger, guilt, exhaustion, and loneliness. It takes a great deal more energy to keep your feelings inside than to let them out.
- **Safe/nurturing place** – go to a safe space, in person or in your mind, whenever you feel overwhelmed or in need of nurturing.
- **Use imagery** – for example, imagine the shower as a waterfall – washing away the pain and fatigue, covering and filling you with peace, strength, and protection.
- **Help others** – reaching out to others who are hurting, donating or volunteering for good causes can help you to feel needed and connected to others.



- **Try something new** – explore new activities or hobbies to help get you out of a rut and to connect with others.
- **Enjoy good memories** – reminisce, by yourself or in company, over personal belongings or family pictures of your loved one.
- **Talk out loud** – speaking out loud to your loved one may bring a sense of connectedness and comfort.
- **Visit the place of burial**
- **Create rituals or sacred space** – to honor your loved one and help keep his or her memory alive. Consider planting a tree, placing a bench or stepping stone, creating a ceremony for special days or an everyday ritual to connect with your loved one.



JOURNALING EXERCISE



Journaling of Thoughts, Feelings, and Behavior

Self-Awareness is the Goal

One of the best ways to maintain awareness of what you are experiencing is a targeted journaling exercise. Using the Cognitive Therapy Triangle of thoughts, feelings and behavior, stop 3 times a day to write about your experience. In your journal or notebook write the date at the top of the page, then write the time of day. It is best to choose three times each day, such as 11:00am, 4:00pm and 9:00pm.

Writing Should Include Specific Details

Three times a day stop and ask yourself, "For the past 4-5 hours, what have I been thinking, feeling and doing?" Be specific with detailed examples. One or two-word answers will not be as helpful as descriptions and specific details. For example...



- *"I've been thinking about how I have no one to talk to about my concerns."*
- *"I've been feeling anxious and worry that with my sadness I will never feel joy again."*
- *"I've been unwilling to leave the house and find myself drinking alcohol and watching television."*

With Time You Will Begin to See Patterns

Don't worry if you miss a time or even a day. Pick up your journal and resume as soon as you can. Journal faithfully for at least three weeks and you will begin to notice patterns repeating themselves. Pay attention to these and speak with a trusted friend about what you are noticing.

Grief Writing Prompts

- Write down a list of people you can turn to for support, either in person or virtually.
- One feeling I've felt coming up a lot lately is...
- Write about where you feel your grief in your body. Where does your grief stay?
- Where does your mind go when you let it wander?
- What is one thing you could try to make today easier on yourself?
- I need more of...
- I need less of...
- What is something that makes you feel taken care of?
- Do you feel comfortable asking for help? Why or why not?
- I feel most connected to my loved one when...
- What is a way you can celebrate your loved one's memory? Can you plant something, cook something, watch something, volunteer something?
- One thing I wish I could do over with them is...
- If I could forgive them for something, it would be...
- If I could forgive myself for something, it would be...
- Write about a time you got along well with your loved one.
- Write about a time you had difficulty getting along with your loved one.
- If you could tell your loved one about your day, what would you tell them?
- How did your loved one make you feel?
- Write a mantra you can return to when you feel overwhelmed by grief.
- What is something you wish your support system would understand?
- What is something you wish your support system could help with.
- What songs make you think of them?
- Make a photo collage in your journal with some of your favorite pictures of them.
- Is there anyone else I know going through this right now? How can we support each other?





Grief Workshops – Resources - Connection

If this workshop was valuable to you...

Please consider making a donation to the We Grieve Community.

[Make a Donation to We Grieve](#)

Funds received help with new workshop development, additional resources, web services and time spent facilitating participant needs.

You can also complete a review in the form of your own comment about your experience with the We Grieve Community.

Thank you for your participation in the We Grieve Community and your support of our work to bring grieving people together to heal.



We bring grieving people together to heal