

Week 1: Understanding Grief & Dispelling Myths

 Pages Covered: 2-3

Objective:

- Define **grief** as a natural response to change & loss.
- Challenge **grief myths** that hinder healing.
- Create a **safe and supportive** group space.

Talking Points:

Grief is a universal experience, yet many people struggle to understand and process it. One of the biggest misconceptions is that grief only applies to the loss of a loved one. In reality, grief can arise from the loss of anything significant—whether it's a relationship, a job, financial security, or a dream for the future. A crucial aspect of healing is recognizing that grief is a normal reaction to change, not something to be ashamed of or ignored.

There are many common myths about grief that can make the process more difficult. For example, people are often told not to cry or to "stay busy" to distract themselves from their pain. Another common misconception is that time alone will heal all wounds. However, grief does not follow a set timeline, and avoiding emotions can actually prolong suffering. Healing comes from actively working through emotions, not suppressing them.

Activities:

Icebreaker: "Where Are You in Your Journey?"

- Each participant shares a single word or phrase that describes how they feel about grief at the moment. This can be done in a circle or in pairs.
- Encourage participants to reflect on why they chose their word.

Debunking Grief Myths:

- Read each **grief myth** aloud and ask participants to raise their hand if they've heard it before.
- Discuss the impact of these myths. Ask: "How did this belief affect your grieving process?"
- Replace each myth with a healthier perspective. Example: Instead of "Don't cry," discuss why allowing emotions to be felt is essential for healing.

Week 2: The Active Process of Healing & Attachment Styles

📖 Pages Covered: 4-5

Objective:

- Explain that **healing is an active process** (not just waiting for time to pass).
- Introduce **attachment styles** and how they shape grief.
- Discuss **unfinished emotional business** and how to process it.

Talking Points:

Healing from grief requires action. It's a process that involves engaging with our emotions, expressing them, and learning to live with the loss rather than waiting for it to disappear. Many people assume that time alone heals wounds, but time only provides space for healing if we actively work through our emotions. This includes recognizing how our early attachment styles shape the way we process loss.

Attachment styles, developed in childhood, influence how we respond to grief as adults. Those with **secure attachment** can openly express emotions and seek support. **Avoidant individuals** may suppress their grief and struggle with vulnerability. **Anxiously attached people** may feel overwhelmed, fearing abandonment in their loss. **Disorganized attachment** stems from traumatic past relationships and may cause intense emotional turmoil. Understanding these styles helps participants recognize their emotional patterns and move toward healing.

Activities:

Attachment Style Reflection:

- Provide a brief description of the four attachment styles.
- Ask participants to reflect on their childhood relationships and identify their attachment style.
- Discussion: "How do you think your attachment style has influenced the way you grieve?"

Unfinished Business Letter Writing:

- Participants write a letter to someone they have lost or a situation they regret.
 - The letter should express unresolved emotions, what they wish they had said, and how they would like to move forward emotionally.
 - Sharing is optional, but participants are encouraged to reflect on how expressing these thoughts felt.
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Week 3: Acknowledging Loss & Challenging False Beliefs

 Pages Covered: 6-7

Objective:

- Help participants **name and process** their losses.
- Challenge **misinformation** that creates guilt or shame around grief.

Talking Points:

One of the most powerful steps in grief recovery is acknowledging the full weight of our loss. Many people avoid thinking about what they've lost because it feels too painful, but naming the loss is the first step toward healing. This includes recognizing what has changed, what has been lost, and what will never be the same again. Avoiding grief does not make it go away—it often prolongs the pain.

Another challenge in grief recovery is the misinformation we carry. Society often teaches us to "be strong," "move on," or "focus on the good." While positivity has its place, it cannot replace the need to process grief. Unlearning these beliefs allows us to grieve fully without unnecessary guilt or shame.

Activities:

Guided Journaling: "What has changed? What has been lost?"

- Participants write freely about their loss, including both physical and emotional aspects.
- Encourage them to acknowledge not only what they lost but also what they hoped for that will no longer happen.

Truth vs. Misinformation Exercise:

- Have participants write down common beliefs about grief they have heard.
- Group discussion: Are these statements true, partially true, or false?
- Work together to rewrite harmful beliefs into healthier perspectives.

Week 4: Understanding Responses to Grief & Coping Strategies

 **Pages Covered: 8-9**

Objective:

- Teach how people suppress or explode grief.
- Introduce healthy coping strategies (H.E.L.P. model).

Talking Points:

Many people experience grief in ways that either suppress or intensify their emotions. Some people "cork" their grief, pushing down emotions until they manifest in unhealthy ways, such as anxiety or physical symptoms. Others "explode" emotionally, reacting with anger or overwhelming sadness that disrupts their daily life. Both responses are natural, but neither is sustainable for long-term healing.

Healthy coping strategies, as outlined in the Handy Emergency Life Pack (H.E.L.P.), help manage grief in a way that allows for emotional expression while maintaining stability. These include journaling, seeking social support, engaging in physical activity, and practicing mindfulness techniques.

Activities:

Grief Mapping Exercise:

- Ask participants to draw their personal grief journey, noting peaks and valleys, significant milestones, and changes in emotional state.
- Encourage reflection on patterns in their grief response and what has helped them move forward.

Building Your H.E.L.P. Pack:

- Provide a list of coping strategies (e.g., exercise, creative expression, support groups, meditation).
- Have participants select methods that resonate with them and discuss:
 - "What coping strategies have helped you in times of deep grief?"
 - "What new strategies might you be willing to try?"

Week 5: Assessing Grief & Taking Ownership of Healing

 Pages Covered: 10-11

Objective:

- Encourage self-awareness in grief processing.
- Shift from passive suffering to active healing.

Talking Points:

Healing begins when we take responsibility for our own recovery. Grief is not something that just happens to us—it is something we must work through. Avoiding grief or expecting others to "fix" our pain can prolong suffering. Instead, we can take ownership of our healing journey by setting goals, seeking support, and engaging in self-care.

A key part of healing is understanding where we are in the process. Are we feeling stuck in denial? Are we avoiding painful emotions? Are we waiting for someone else to tell us it's okay to move forward? Taking responsibility doesn't mean rushing healing, but rather making intentional choices to care for ourselves and move toward emotional processing.

Activities:

Grief Self-Assessment:

- Have participants identify their biggest emotional roadblocks.
- Use guiding questions such as:
 - What emotions am I avoiding?
 - What has been keeping me from moving forward?
 - What support do I need right now?
- Discuss strategies to begin taking small, manageable steps toward healing.

Personal Responsibility Reflection:

- Ask participants to write one **specific** action they can take this week to work toward healing.
 - Encourage group sharing for **accountability** and to provide **supportive feedback** to one another.
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Week 6: Listening, Judgment & Navigating Relationships in Grief

 Pages Covered: 12-13

Objective:

- Teach the importance of nonjudgmental listening during grief.
- Help participants assess how grief affects their relationships.
- Explore the concept of relationship levels and appropriate emotional sharing.

Talking Points:

Listening is one of the most powerful gifts we can offer to someone who is grieving. However, many people struggle to listen without offering solutions, minimizing the pain, or comparing it to their own experiences. True listening requires a "heart with ears but no mouth"—being present, without judgment or the need to fix.

Additionally, grief often impacts relationships. Some people may withdraw, while others may overshare with those who may not be emotionally prepared to handle it. Understanding the different **levels of relationships**—acquaintances, casual friends, close friends, and intimate relationships—helps individuals navigate when and where to share their grief.

Activities:

Paired Listening Exercise:

- Pair participants up and give each person 5 minutes to talk about their grief journey while the other person listens without interrupting.
- Afterward, switch roles and repeat.
- Group discussion: "How did it feel to simply be heard? How does this compare to your usual conversations about grief?"

Personal Relationship Map Activity:

- Ask participants to write down 5 key people in their lives and categorize them into **relationship levels** (acquaintance, casual, close, intimate).
- Have them reflect: "Do I feel supported or disappointed by these connections? Do I share my grief with the right people?"

Week 7: Processing Memories – Finding Truth in Relationships

 Pages Covered: 14-15

Objective:

- Recognize **unhealthy attachments to memories**.
- Balance **positive & negative aspects** of lost relationships.
- Help participants work toward releasing regret and resentment while still honoring memories.

Talking Points:

When grieving, it's common to either **idealize** or **vilify** the person or situation that was lost. Some people enshrine the memory of their loved one, remembering only the good while ignoring the difficult realities. Others do the opposite, holding onto anger and blame. Both approaches can prevent healing because they don't allow for an honest, balanced view of the relationship.

By acknowledging both the positive and negative aspects of the loss, we can begin to integrate those memories in a healthy way. This process allows us to hold onto love while also releasing pain, regret, or resentment. Letting go does not mean forgetting—it means making peace with the past so that we can move forward without being trapped by it.

Activities:

"Choose the Person" Reflection:

- Have participants select someone they've lost and write down **three positive** and **three challenging** memories about them.
- Discuss (if comfortable): "How does acknowledging both sides help in healing?"

Letter of Balance:

- Participants write a letter to the person they lost, acknowledging both the **good memories** and the **challenging aspects** of the relationship.
 - The letter should express **gratitude for the good** and **forgiveness or release** of resentment toward the bad.
 - Sharing is optional, but participants are encouraged to reflect on how writing the letter makes them feel.
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Week 8: Acceptance & Moving Forward

 Pages Covered: 16-17

Objective:

- Guide participants toward **acceptance of their grief**.
- Encourage **self-compassion & forward movement**.
- Differentiate between **forgiveness and trust** in healing.

Talking Points:

Acceptance does not mean forgetting, minimizing, or "getting over" grief. Instead, it means integrating the loss into one's life in a way that allows for personal growth and peace. Moving forward does not dishonor the past; rather, it honors the resilience of those who continue to live and heal.

Forgiveness can be an important part of healing, but it does not mean excusing harm or pretending the loss was painless. It means letting go of resentment that may be keeping someone emotionally stuck. Additionally, while forgiveness may be granted, **trust is something that must be earned**—whether in relationships with others or within ourselves as we rebuild after grief.

Activities:

"I Agree To..." Healing Statements:

- Provide sentence starters such as:
 - "I agree that I cannot change the past, but I can _____."
 - "I agree that healing is a process, and I will _____."
 - "I agree to let go of _____ to make space for _____."
- Encourage participants to write their own healing statements and share if they feel comfortable.

Letter to My Future Self:

- Participants write a letter to their future selves, offering encouragement and reminding themselves of their progress.
- The letter can be sealed and revisited at a later date as a personal reflection tool.

Closing Reflection & Ceremony:

- Each participant shares one word that describes how they feel at the end of the course.
- Option to have a small ritual (e.g., candle lighting, a moment of silence, or a shared affirmation) to symbolize the journey of healing and growth.

