

# Teen Grief Group

**Age Group:** Teens

**Format:** 6 sessions / 40 mins each

**Goal:** Participants will be given the opportunity to reflect upon the topic of loss, understand its impact on our lives and learn coping mechanisms all through discussion and activities.

**Objective:** Students will be able to define Loss and Grief, name at least 3 coping mechanisms, and define a support network to go for more support.

**Setup:** A circle of chairs or one large table where participants can see each other.

## **Handouts:**

- Grief - A Tangled Ball of Emotions (2nd Session)
- Healthy Coping Ideas (3rd Session)
- Journaling Ideas (4th Session)
- Dear Me (6th Session)

## **Material:**

- Pen/Pencil (2nd - 6th Sessions)
- Paper (4th - 6th Sessions)

## **Other:**

- Key points of each session are underlined.
- Italics are Discussion questions/points.
- Bolded items refer to Handouts.

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## 1st Session

The goal of the first session is to understand the purpose of the group, set rules, and define Loss and Grief.

1. Purpose
  - a. Participants will be given the opportunity to reflect upon the topic of loss, understand its impact on our lives and learn coping mechanisms all through discussion and activities.
2. Rules
  - a. Confidentiality can never be guaranteed in a group, yet we can each promise that what is discussed in the group is sacred and is to remain within the group.
  - b. The group is considered safe; if there is concern about your safety or someone else's, we'll take action to get you help.
  - c. Participating is vital; while you'll never be required to share, you'll get even more from the group experience when you do.
3. Loss
  - a. Something, someone leaves or changes
  - b. Death, Moving houses/schools, a pet dies, losing friendships, Incarcerations, Deportations, etc.
  - c. Everyone experiences Loss! We are never alone in this.
4. Grief
  - a. The natural human response to Loss
  - b. You are a human designed to feel. And your emotional response to Loss is in your Grief.
  - c. Grief is both an emotional and physical response oftentimes impacting all areas of our lives.
  - d. Everyone experiences Grief! We are never alone in this.
5. Discussion
  - a. Encourage each participant to share what Loss or Losses they have experienced in their lives, so answering the question *Why are you here with us in this group?*
    - i. Note that this sharing will take the majority of the 1st session because most participants are eager to share; make sure each is given the opportunity.
  - b. If time permits...
    - i. *What does your Grief look like?*
    - ii. *Do you have someone close to you whose Grief looks differently than yours? How?*
6. Closing
  - a. Next session we'll talk about the emotions of Grief.

## 2nd Session

The goal of the second session is to discuss Grief emotions.

**Handout:** A Tangled Ball of Emotions

**Material:** Pen/Pencil

1. 1st Session recap
  - a. Loss - Something, someone leaves or changes
  - b. Grief - Natural human response to Loss
  - c. *Since our first session, do you have anything to share that you discovered about loss and grief?*
2. Rules Reminder
  - a. Confidentiality can never be guaranteed in a group, yet we can each promise that what is discussed in the group is sacred and is to remain within the group.
  - b. This group is considered safe; if there is concern about your safety or someone else's, we'll take action to get you help.
  - c. Participating is vital; while you'll never be required to share, you'll get even more from the group experience when you do.
3. Grief Emotions
  - a. Grief comes in many shapes and forms. Grief looks and behaves differently for each of us.
  - b. The **A Tangled Ball of Emotions handout** shows how our feelings can be a deep entanglement
4. Activity
  - a. Ask participants to review the handout quietly for a few minutes and circle/color the emotions that they are currently experiencing.
5. Discussion
  - a. *Will you share an emotion that you circled?*
  - b. Facilitate discussion with the group as they share with the goal to find similarities amongst participants with the idea that we're never alone! There are others who feel similar even when our Losses may look different.
6. Closing
  - a. Ask participants to practice noticing their emotions in the days before the next session.
  - b. Next session we'll discuss the ways we can cope with Grief.

## 3rd Session

The goal of the third session is to define ways to cope.

**Handout:** Healthy Coping Ideas

**Material:** Pen/Pencil

1. 2nd session recap
  - a. We talked last session about the different emotions we feel with Grief and that even when our Losses may look different, we all have similar feelings.
  - b. *Since our last session, what did you notice about your emotions?*
2. Discussion
  - a. We understand we all experience Loss and Grief throughout our lives, so learning to cope is important.
  - b. Unhealthy coping
    - i. Facilitate discussion around the unhealthy ways we can cope with Grief, such as bottling it in, substance abuse, self-harm, etc.
  - c. Healthy coping
    - i. Facilitate discussion around the healthy ways we can cope.
    - ii. Part of healthy coping is knowing who to turn to for support. Facilitate discussion around the importance of a support network.
      1. *Name one person in your life right now that you can lean on for support.*
3. Activity
  - a. Ask participants to review the **Healthy Coping Ideas handout** and circle/share the ones they have tried and/or the ones that work for them and/or the ones that wouldn't work for them plus ones not listed.
4. Closing
  - a. Ask participants to try one new healthy coping idea and reflect on who else they can add to their support network before the next session.
  - b. Next session we'll talk about journaling.

## 4th Session

The goal of the fourth session is to introduce journaling as a healthy way to cope.

**Handout:** Journaling Ideas

**Material:** Paper and Pen/Pencil

1. 3rd session recap
  - a. We talked last session about ways to cope.
  - b. *What new healthy coping idea did you try?*
  - c. *Who did you add to your list of those you can lean on for support?*
2. Journaling
  - a. Communication is an important way for us to understand our experiences. Sometimes when we have no one to talk to or when we prefer not to talk to someone about how we are feeling, journaling can be a great option.
  - b. What's important is that we don't keep our thoughts and feelings inside!
  - c. Expressing feelings through words can be powerfully healing.
3. Activity
  - a. Have participants choose one of the following journal prompts and write quietly for several minutes. (You may wish to write the prompts on whiteboard.)
    - i. When I'm feeling sad, it helps to....
    - ii. My favorite memory is...
    - iii. One thing I wish people understood about me is...
4. Discussion
  - a. Invite participants to share portions of their journal entries.
5. Closing
  - a. Hand out the **Journaling Ideas handout** for participants to take with them, and ask that they write at least 2 entries prior to the next session.
  - b. Next session we'll talk about rituals.

## 5th Session

The goal of the fifth session is to discuss using rituals.

**Material:** Paper and Pen/Pencil

1. 4th session recap
  - a. We talked last session about expressing feelings through words by journaling.
  - b. *Who journaled and would like to briefly share?*
2. Rituals
  - a. A type of ceremony we can perform to honor and remember those who have died
  - b. Rituals are ways that we can stay connected to our loved ones who have died.
  - c. Rituals can be private or public and religious or non-religious.
  - d. Examples of rituals include lighting a candle daily/weekly, saying a prayer, wearing special jewelry, planting a garden, writing/dedicating a song/poem, creating a photo album and writing letters.
3. Discussion
  - a. Invite participants to share thoughts and ideas on what rituals they currently have or wish to establish.
  - b. If time permits, allow several minutes of journaling time.
4. Closing
  - a. *I wonder what you think about last week being our last session.*
  - b. Next session we'll write a letter and end our group.

## 6th Session

The goal of the sixth session is to write a letter and end the group.

**Handout:** Dear Me

**Material:** Paper and Pen/Pencil

1. 5th session recap
  - a. We talked last session about how rituals can help us stay connected to our loved ones who have died.
  - b. *Does anyone have anything to share about rituals that they've thought of since last session?*
2. Discussion
  - a. *The end of our group is a loss that we are experiencing together. I wonder what you think about today being our last session.*
3. Activity
  - a. In our last activity, we're going to write letters to our future selves.
  - b. Thinking about where we'd like to be in a year can be helpful in understanding better what actions we can take today.
  - c. Using the **Dear Me handout**, ask participants to write letters to their future selves reflecting on what they've gained from the group.
4. Closing
  - a. *Any closing words you wish to share with the group?*

## Group Tips

- Leave ample time for the Discussions because participants likely wish to share and this typically takes more time than we initially think!
- Be OK with silence... This is a safe space... So, even if people are quite and hesitant to share, they're still likely engaged and wheels are turning... and 99% will open up with more time in the group and that feeling of safety you help create.