

Living With Pain and Loss:

A Manual on Grieving



THE JOHN HOWARD SOCIETY OF MANITOBA, INC.
2003©



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Special thanks to the Remand Centre Literacy Participants
for their input in producing this workbook.

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LIVING WITH PAIN & LOSS:
A Manual on Grieving

LIVING WITH PAIN AND LOSS: A Manual on Grieving was developed for The John Howard Society of Manitoba's Basic Literacy Program. It contains twenty lessons on issues related to the different losses that cause people to grieve, understanding what grieving is, recognizing how others grieve, dealing with the changes that result, finding the help that may be needed, and taking care of yourself.

Each of the lessons is followed by an exercise designed to build basic literacy skills and to reinforce materials contained in the lesson. While all can benefit from the use of this workbook, it is especially suited to low-level readers.

Words that are underlined within the lessons are defined in a glossary at the end of LESSON #20.

OUTLINE

- 1. What is Grief?**
- 2. Understanding Grief**
- 3. True or False?**
- 4. Different Kinds of Loss**
- 5. The Grieving Process**
- 6. Shock and Denial**
- 7. Strong Feelings**
- 8. Longing and Regret**
- 9. Accepting the Changes**
- 10. Changing With Loss**
- 11. Ceremonies or Rituals**
- 12. Grief Within a Family**
- 13. A Prisoner's Grief.**
- 14. Children and Grief**
- 15. Sharing Their Feelings**
- 16. Other Help for A Grieving Person**
- 17. Staying Healthy**
- 18. Knowing Yourself**
- 19. Counsellors**
- 20. Support Groups**

LESSON #1
What is Grief?

Welcome The Mourning

Alone
Abandoned
The connection lost
How can this be?
What once was
Will never be again
How can I cope with the pain?
The grief, the guilt, the anger, the fear
The mourning comes and I sort through
The changes in my life.

Alone
Abandoned
The connection lost
But through the loss comes gain
I gain an understanding
Of the important things in my life
The mourning comes and
Changes my life
The morning comes.

-G. Reddoch

As you live your life each day, you develop ties or bonds with everything that is near and dear to you. You bond with your home, your neighbourhood, your pet, your belongings, your children, your friends and your spouse. Then, your pattern of living gets changed by an event that you cannot control, such as having your TV

stolen, breaking up with your partner, or the death of a friend. Often, this is when you realize how important that person or thing was in your life. The person or thing that was lost to you was part of who you are. When you lose someone or something close to you, you experience a loss. Sometimes you can get back what you lost. Other times you cannot.

People react to losses in many different ways. Some people are angry and blame others for their loss. Others may feel sadness, guilt, or loneliness. There are many different feelings that can result from a loss. How each person reacts will depend on how deeply they were attached to the person or thing that they lost.

When a person has lost something or someone with whom they have a bond, they feel grief. Grief is not a disorder, a disease, or a sign of weakness. All of the feelings of sadness, loneliness, guilt, hopelessness, rage, panic, and fear are included in grief.

Sooner or later, everyone will lose somebody or something dear to them. This is why it is important to understand grief. The only cure for grief is to grieve.

EXERCISE #1

Part One: Answer the following questions.

1. Name three people or things that are important to you.

2. Why are they important? What part do they play in your life ?

Part Two: Multiple choice

1. Grief is caused by _____.

- a. a disorder
- b. a disease
- c. a loss
- d. all of the above

2. The only cure for grief is to _____.

- a. run away
- b. forget about it
- c. grieve
- d. party

3. You can grieve for:

- a. a failed marriage
- b. a loved one who has died
- c. your freedom when it is taken away
- d. all of the above

LESSON 2

Understanding Grief

For many people, grieving is hard to talk about. It might not seem mature to admit that you care about and miss a person, place, or thing. People find it hard to express their feelings about a loss because they feel it will make them appear weak and out of control. You may have feelings of anger, rage, helplessness and fear. Some people feel that they have to be strong. But you need to grieve to be healthy. Crying is not a sign of weakness. Crying is a sign of grief. Men grieve too and they may need to cry to work through their grief.

Sometimes the loss may be a death. People don't like to talk about death. It is difficult because death is something that is unknown. It brings an end to a relationship in the way that you have known it. Some people don't like to think about death because it reminds them that one day they too will die. But grieving doesn't have to be a discussion about death. Grief can be a time for reflecting and understanding how you feel about your loss. Someone does not have to die for you to grieve.

The beliefs of many cultures move past the idea of death. Many religions have beliefs about life after death. Heaven is one of those beliefs. Others believe that you

will come back to life in another form after you die. This is called reincarnation (re-in-car-NAY-shin). Aboriginal cultures believe that your spirit still exists after you die. These may be helpful ways of thinking about death without denying that your loss happened.

Talking about your grief is not an easy thing to do. It may be painful to re-live the loss you have already gone through. Some people believe it is just best to forget about a loss. But where does your pain go after that? The answer is that it is still there.

The best thing to do when grieving is to express yourself and understand your feelings. Try to get answers to the questions you may have. Talking about your grief and thinking about how you feel will help you work through your difficult time.

EXERCISE #2

True or false: Answer the following questions. Place a “T” to answer true or an “F” to answer false.

- _____ 1. Talking about your feelings is easy.
- _____ 2. After a loss you need to grieve to be healthy.
- _____ 3. Crying is a way to grieve.
- _____ 4. Boys need to cry.
- _____ 5. Talking about your grief will only make you feel more pain.
- _____ 6. If you just forget about your grief it will go away in time.
- _____ 7. Understanding your feelings will help you grieve.
- _____ 8. Grief causes you to think about the past.

List the people and things
that you have lost:

Write the feelings you had when you lost
these people and things:

LESSON #3
True or False?

Many of us have learned things about loss and grief that are untrue. Here are some of those false ideas followed by what is true.

False: Every loss you have will cause you to have the same feelings.

True: All losses are not the same. Each loss will affect you differently because you have different relationships with many things. People also react to losses and grieve in many different ways.

False: People will be the same after a loss as before it happened.

True: Most of the time we cannot change things back to how they were before the loss. You can only adjust yourself to the changes that are caused by a loss. The pain will go away, but the changes can be life long. Always remember that adjusting to loss takes time and effort.

False: Your relationship with a loved one you have lost is over.

True: You will always have a relationship with a loved one even if that person has died. It may not seem like it at first, but you will adjust to a person not being there.

This does not mean that you stop loving them. It just means that the kind of relationship that you had with them has changed. Your relationship can last and even grow through your memories and your faith.

False: It is better to put painful things out of your mind and just go on with life.

True: Putting things out of your mind will only make the pain last longer. Accepting your grief is the first step to coping with it. Grief that isn't expressed can harm your emotional and physical health when you have to work so hard to hide your feelings from everyone else. If you grieve you will come to accept your loss, though you do not have to be glad that it happened. A loss may cause many changes in your life but, in time, you will adapt.

False: You should be strong for those around you. Crying makes you seem weak.

True: There are many emotions that people feel when they grieve. You don't need to be strong for your friends and family. Covering up how you feel after a loss can hurt you. It can set a bad example for children too. Showing your inner emotions will help your grieving and theirs. Crying is a normal response to grief. It is not a sign of weakness.

EXERCISE #3

Part One: Fill in the Blanks

1. You will _____ have a relationship with someone you have lost.
2. Each person will have _____ emotions over the same loss.
3. Grief that isn't _____ can harm your _____ and _____ health.
4. _____ your pain is the first step to feeling better.
5. Crying is not a sign of _____.
6. Crying is a _____ response to _____.

Part Two: Check the items that say what you learned about loss and grief when you were growing up.

- ___ Showing your sadness is okay.
- ___ Adults should not cry.
- ___ Try to get over your loss with alcohol, drugs, or overeating.
- ___ Talking about memories helps you to grieve.
- ___ Share your sadness with others.
- ___ Hide your sadness as much as possible.
- ___ It is not shameful for boys and men to show feelings.
- ___ You should not have any fun for a long time after someone dies.
- ___ It is important to blame somebody for what happened.

Now put a "T" beside the sentences you think are true.

LESSON #4

Different Kinds of Losses

There are many types of loss. Each type of loss affects each person in different ways. Loss can also affect the lives of many people around you. For example, you may have to move from your childhood home to a new city or country. You will miss your old home or worry about the different people you have to live with. The friends and family that you leave behind will miss you.

Here are some examples of loss that can cause grief. Some of these losses may have affected you in the past. You may have suffered other types of loss that are not listed.

You might suffer a loss of a job. You might have to leave a job, have to change positions, or you might get fired. This is a loss that brings sadness and grief. Loss can also occur in relationships. You may break up with your girlfriend or boyfriend. A loss of a parent could occur because of divorce or separation. The relationship that ends could be with a child, spouse, friend, parent, or pet.

You could also experience loss of your health. You could have grief over finding out about a disease or a medical condition that keeps you from doing what you are used to doing. You would grieve if you lost your leg in an accident or part of your eyesight because of diabetes.

If you lose your job or a relationship there is a loss of identity. You start asking yourself, "Who am I and why am I here?" The roles of parent, brother or friend help define who we are. If you lose a child or a sibling, you might feel lonely or feel there is no reason to keep going.

You could also experience a loss of belongings. If your house burned down or was robbed you may lose personal belongings that mean a lot to you. This might be something that can't be replaced like a picture of a grandparent or a handmade gift from a friend.

You may also suffer a loss of freedom and privacy because of incarceration or another living arrangement. A loss of freedom means that you are not able to do what you want to do. Prison is a loss of freedom. Losing your independence may result when you lose your ability to walk and are no longer able to spend time alone.

You may only have to deal with one loss. Others may experience many losses at the same time. When you suffer many losses at the same time we call them multiple losses. It is important to admit to all the losses that have happened to you. Each loss, large or small, is important and needs to be worked through. A counsellor or elder is needed to help you focus on the loss that is affecting you the most. You will then need to go on to grieve for each loss you have experienced.

The next few lessons will take you through the steps that are taken in grieving for a loss.

EXERCISE #4

Find the words in the word search.

F	B	B	S	R	E	R	H	O	E	I	U	S	I	I
R	L	Y	T	U	G	H	S	F	E	T	I	M	H	E
E	B	L	A	M	E	I	G	E	H	H	D	B	E	C
E	I	B	I	U	O	F	O	C	T	E	E	E	E	H
D	T	A	E	G	G	R	I	E	F	A	N	L	E	A
O	E	R	O	L	R	A	R	L	U	L	T	O	D	N
M	E	C	G	G	I	S	O	E	A	T	I	N	G	G
N	L	F	A	U	U	L	O	I	U	H	T	G	S	E
I	L	L	E	E	R	O	Y	N	O	G	Y	I	L	L
L	E	E	E	I	H	L	C	S	S	O	L	N	I	D
E	A	A	A	E	H	E	A	L	O	V	E	G	Y	G
A	G	U	I	L	T	R	U	E	L	L	E	S	E	E
T	I	U	I	O	R	G	S	G	S	S	A	E	C	E
M	U	L	T	I	P	L	E	L	O	S	S	E	S	I
G	R	E	L	A	T	I	O	N	S	H	I	P	L	D

Words to Find:

Loss	Grief
Relationship	Change
Love	Heal
Health	Guilt
Blame	Belongings
Freedom	Identity
Multiple Losses	

LESSON #5

The Grieving Process

Grieving is a process of adapting to change. Sometimes this process is called mourning. Adapting, or learning to live with the changes that come with a loss, can take a lot of time. The time it takes to get over a loss is different for everyone. Grief can not be measured by using a calendar. There is no timetable for when your grieving will end. Nobody can tell you when to stop grieving. An important thing to remember is that you need to heal at your own pace even if others seem to be dealing with a loss much "better" than you are.

Grieving can be broken down into different stages. The following is a list of the different stages. These stages will be talked about in more detail in the next few chapters.

Stage 1- Shock and Denial

This stage happens when you first experience a loss. You are not able to think or feel anything. You may just feel numb or in shock. At first, it may seem like a loss is too big to be real. You may think it's a bad dream or you may talk to others to find out if it really happened. The loss is too painful to think about so you deny that it ever happened.

Stage 2- Yearning

During this stage a person wishes for things to be different. You may try to think about how you could have stopped the loss from happening. This longing for things to return to the way they were is called yearning (YUR-ning).

Stage 3- Strong Feelings

In this stage, you start to feel the emotions caused by your loss. It feels like the weight of the world is on your shoulders. You feel angry, depressed, lonely, helpless, afraid, guilty, hopeless or full of rage.

Stage 4- Adjusting

This stage is a time where you start to understand what your loss means to you. You will start to adjust to the changes in your life.

These stages are different for everyone. Some people may move back and forth between different stages. A year ago Jill lost her baby girl because of a car accident. It has been a long time and really hard to cope with the sudden loss. She feels like she is adjusting to this big change but there are many days when she yearns to hold her

baby like she did when she was still living. Jill wants to have that good feeling back again. Sometimes she thinks she can hear her baby crying for her.

Jill is moving back and forth between three stages of adjusting, yearning, and denial. This is how her grief works. Some days she feels better than others. This is a natural part of the grieving process. There is no set path that you can take to work through your grief.

EXERCISE #5

In each of these stories, someone is grieving for a loss. Read the story and then answer the questions.

1. Sue just received a phone call from her brother. Rob says that their parents have been in a car accident and that their father has died. Sue's legs begin to feel like jelly. Sue tells Rob that she doesn't think his prank phone call is funny and hangs up on him.

What did Sue lose? _____

In what stage of grieving is Sue? _____

What could she be feeling? _____

2. Juan lost his arm in a construction accident. He hates the way he looks without his arm. He feels weird when he goes to the store because people stare at him. He is not looking forward to summer when everybody is wearing sleeve-less shirts. Juan wishes the accident never happened or that it happened to someone else.

What did Juan lose? _____

What stages of grieving is Juan going through? _____

What could Juan be feeling? _____

3. Tamar's relationship with her boyfriend of four years ended a few months ago. At first, it was a big shock. She did not want the relationship to end but knew Rick's drug use was driving them apart. A few months after the break-up, she still feels depressed because she doesn't have someone to love and talk to. She feels bitter when she sees other couples talking and holding hands.

What did Tamar lose? _____

What stages of grieving is Tamar going through? _____

What could Tamar be feeling? _____

4. John is an alcoholic. Once when he was drunk, he got into a fight with his brother, Dean. He hurt Dean and he was charged with assault and battery. He had a record and he was sentenced to two years in jail. After several months, John started going to AA in jail. It took some time, but now he doesn't crave alcohol anymore and he feels healthier. He has also written letters to his brother and they are starting to understand each other. But John still yearns for the freedom he had before all of this happened.

What did John lose? _____

What stages of grieving is John going through? _____

What could John be feeling? _____

5. Ahmed had many money problems in the past. A year ago, people came and took all of his belongings away. The bank even took his house. Ahmed was very depressed and angry. Now, he has learned to budget his money. He lives in a small apartment and takes the bus or cycles to work. Ahmed is happy that he doesn't have the stress of all those bills anymore. In the spring, he is planning to go back to school so that he can become a construction foreman.

What did Ahmed lose? _____

What stages of grieving is Ahmed going through? _____

What were Ahmed's feelings? _____

LESSON #6

Shock and Denial

When a loss occurs, the first reaction most people have is shock and/or denial. This is especially true for losses that happen suddenly. Shock is body's reaction to a sudden change. It could mean that you feel numb or that you don't feel anything. You might feel dazed. It could also mean that you can't think, speak or hear for a short time. Denial is not believing that the loss has happened. If you lose someone close to you might expect them to come home at the usual time or think it is a bad dream.

Paul is in the hospital. It was just two days ago that he fell when he was working on a construction site. Paul's doctor told him that he broke his back. His doctor said that he will never walk again. Paul can't move his legs but he can sometimes feel pain in his legs. His doctor says that this is normal. His body is adjusting to his injury. Paul doesn't believe his doctor. He truly believes he will walk again.

Paul's denial helps him deal with the problem of his loss. Shock and denial are healthy reactions that help us cope with strong emotions in the early stages of our loss. They help to cushion the blow of the loss. Shock and denial separate the loss from the person who is suffering.

Shock and denial are helpful, but they can also be hurtful. If shock lasts too long, a person can get very sick. If denial lasts too long, it can stop the changes that must happen after a loss. Paul must face the truth about his loss. If he denies his loss for too long, Paul may direct all his energy into walking again instead of adjusting and accepting his situation. His denial will keep him from getting into a wheelchair and moving on with his life.

EXERCISE #6

For each story, state whether the feeling is shock, denial or both.

1. When Odessa was first told that her house had been broken into she couldn't believe it. She thought she was dreaming. Odessa is feeling _____.

2. Vicki got laid off from her job because of cutbacks. Even though she is no longer getting a pay cheque, she is buying new expensive clothes with her credit card. Vicki is in _____.

3. Sidney's son, Eduardo, was taken away from him by Child and Family Services. Sidney as sure Eduardo would be back by the end of the week. Sidney knew he had some problems in his life but he kept thinking that they must have the wrong person. Sidney is using _____ to protect himself from the pain he feels from his loss.

4. Do you know someone who went through shock or denial when they lost a friend or family member? How did they behave during that time?

LESSON #7

Strong Emotions

Grieving can involve strong feelings or intense emotions. These feelings can come out in both emotional ways or in physical ways. Each person grieves in a different way and feelings can change as time passes. These feelings can include anger, sadness, depression, guilt, regret, fear, and longing. You may be able to think of other feelings that you have had after a loss.

Anger: You might blame someone for a loss and feel anger or rage toward this person. This may even include feeling resentment toward the person who died and toward God who let it happen. Maria's deep anger toward her ex-boyfriend kept her from sleeping at night. Maria was in love with Manuel and couldn't understand why he would leave her. She felt unfairly treated. She questioned if he ever loved her or if he had been seeing someone else all along. She felt deeply betrayed by Manuel and by God.

Sadness: Part of grieving is feeling sadness which is often expressed by crying. Sadness or depression may feel like there is a big hole in the centre of your life. You

may feel that everything about which you have ever felt sad, is coming back to you all at once.

Guilt and Regret: You may feel guilty because you think the loss was your fault or that you could have stopped it from happening. Sherry felt that if only she had picked up her son from school, he wouldn't have been beaten up by those bullies. She blamed herself even though the bullies were at fault. It is normal for people to feel guilt over a loss even if they were not responsible. You may feel regret or guilt for not being able to say good-bye to someone if they died very suddenly. You may feel guilty for feeling relieved that someone died after a long illness. You may feel regret about an argument you had with a loved one before they moved away.

Fear: When you lose something, you may fear the new responsibilities that come after a loss. Sometimes you might fear that you are losing your mind. Your fear may include feelings of worry, panic, or helplessness. Jack's house was broken into while his girlfriend was there and he was at work. Jack was afraid for himself and his girlfriend and that it would happen again. They had lost their sense of safety and felt fear even in their own home.

Whatever your feelings are, remember there are no right or wrong feelings. You may have these feelings more strongly, or not as strongly, as others. It is important to express your feelings by talking, writing, crying, doing art or exercising. Find people who are willing to listen to your feelings without judging you. If you are feeling depressed for a long time, you should see a doctor or other health care provider.

EXERCISE #7

Part One: Read each of the stories. For each story, state what each person lost.

Then state the feelings you think that they might have.

1. Soni's bicycle was stolen. He rode his bike every day and depended on it to get him around. When he sees someone on a bike, he always takes a close look to see if it might be his. If Soni sees someone riding a bike like his, he wants to beat them up.

What did Soni lose? _____

What feelings do you think Soni had? _____

2. Shauna is an artist and makes ink drawings. Recently, Shauna developed a painful disease in her hands called arthritis (arth-RITE-is). It hurts so much, she has to give up drawing. Shauna is grieving because her drawing was her life.

What did Shauna lose? _____

What feelings do you think Shauna has? _____

3. Josh is in jail. He can't be himself because he has to dress the same as everybody else and has little privacy. He loves the outdoors, but he can only go

outside for 45 minutes per day. Josh misses his family and friends.

What did Josh lose? _____

What feelings do you think Josh has? _____

Part Two:

Tell about a time when you lost something or someone.

What were you angry about? _____

What made you sad? _____

What did you feel guilty about? _____

What did you long for? _____

What were you afraid of? _____

LESSON #8
Longing & Regret

Once the feelings of shock and denial pass, the reality of your loss begins to sink in. You begin to feel the intense emotions talked about in the last chapter. You wish for things to be different or that they never happened. If the loss was a death or an accident involving someone close, you may wish that it happened to yourself or somebody else. You may feel that you could have stopped the loss from happening. This will lead you to feel guilt or to blame yourself. You think about the times before your loss and how they were better. You feel depressed and sad. When you long for things to return to the way they were before the loss, you are yearning (YUR-ning). Yearning is part of the grieving process.

Angela's daughter, Malaika, was placed into her ex-boyfriend's custody. After the judge's decision, Angela felt so dazed, her mom had to lead her out of the court room. Angela didn't get out of bed or eat meals for weeks after Malaika went to live with Brent.

When the shock ended, Angela started remembering what happened. She kept thinking about the times when she would play checkers or dominoes with Malaika. She remembered the sound of Malaika's laugh and how they teased each other.

Angela feels depressed and lonely without Malaika. She wishes that she had never started drinking. She feels guilty. Angela blames herself and her parents who are also alcoholics. Angela wishes she could show Malaika that she still loves her.

Accepting that the loss happened is part of the grieving process. You start to do this when you yearn. You wish that you had done things differently to avoid the loss. You may wish you could have said goodbye. These thoughts are called regrets. Try to focus your grief on what you have lost rather than on what you or others could have done to prevent it.

EXERCISE #8**Part One:** True or False

- ___ 1. Yearning is wishing that things would get better or go back to the way they were.
- ___ 2. Yearning is part of the grieving process.
- ___ 3. Wishing that you had something back is selfish.
- ___ 4. Feeling pain from a loss doesn't help you.
- ___ 5. Wishing that you had acted differently is called regret.
- ___ 6. Regret is part of the grieving process.
- ___ 7. Blaming others for a loss will help you grieve.

Part Two:

1. Make a list of five things for which you have longed or yearned.

Here are some examples:

- a job that I like
- health for my grandmother
- a quiet apartment block
- a good relationship with my dad
- my brother to stay out of trouble

Now write five longings of your own.

3. Make a list of five things for which you feel regret. Here are some examples:

not spending more time with my child
taking drugs
not getting my high school education
being on welfare
disrespecting my partner

Now write five regrets of your own.

Choose one of the things you listed and allow yourself to feel sad about it. Share your feelings with a friend, elder, or counsellor, or write about the feelings in a journal.

LESSON #9
Accepting the Changes

The feelings that you have when you start grieving will not go away quickly. Be patient with yourself. As you yearn for the past, you will start to realise that you cannot change what has happened. You may still long for what you have lost, but life has to go on. You may have to go back to work, take care of your children and make important decisions.

Carrying on with life does not mean that you stop grieving. Life will be different after a loss. You will need to adjust to life without something that is important to you or without someone you care about. These changes could happen right away or over a period of time. These changes will remind you about the loss much of the time.

You might feel afraid of the changes that have to be made. You might feel lonely, angry, or bitter. Talking or writing about your feelings will help you to accept and work through them. Make time to think about the changes that you have to make or have made because of your loss.

Acceptance of your loss could mean changing your relationship with the person you have lost. For example, Drew lost his best friend, Chris, to murder three

years ago. They were friends for 20 years. Drew was crushed. He loved his friend deeply and was used to him being around. Chris played a big role in his life. When he died, Drew didn't know how he would continue on with his life. It felt like he had lost a part of himself. For many months, he couldn't stop thinking or talking about Chris. Many more months later, Drew realized Chris was truly gone. Even though he was beginning to accept Chris' death, Drew still wanted to keep Chris' memory alive.

Every year on Chris' birthday, Drew goes to their favourite fishing spot with another close friend. It was a place that Chris always loved to visit. Every visit brings back happy memories and Drew lets himself laugh at the thought of them. Instead of focussing on the pain of Chris' death, Drew is remembering his life and their friendship.

The bond between Drew and Chris changed. The pain of separation turned into positive energy that let Drew extend his friendship to others.

EXERCISE #9**Part One:**

Put a checkmark beside the ideas below that you think would help you to accept your loss. Add ideas of your own.

___ Talking about your loss with a friend or family member

___ Having a memorial event on the anniversary of the loss

___ Writing your feelings in a journal

___ Joining a support group

___ Setting goals to help get your life back

___ Becoming closer to your faith

___ Making art that expresses how you feel

___ Remembering what it was like before your loss

___ Setting time aside to think about your loss

___ Other: _____

Part Two:

Think of one loss, large or small, that you have experienced. What were the changes that took place? Under the headings below, write what things were like before the loss, and what things were like after the loss. Instead, if you wish, make drawings to show the changes.

Before	After

LESSON #10

Changing with Loss

Grief describes a wide range of emotions that result from a loss. But grieving also describes a process of accepting your loss. Grieving helps us to change our relationship to the things that we have lost. Grieving is part of adapting to a loss. Adapting means that, in time, we will learn to live with these changes.

There is an old Chinese story about a woman whose only son died. In her grief, she went to the holy man and said, “What can you do or say to bring my son back to life?” Instead of sending her away or judging her, he said, “Bring me a mustard seed from a home that has never known sorrow.” The woman set off at once to find that mustard seed.

She came first to a big mansion, knocked at the door, and said, “I am looking for a home that has never known sorrow. Is this the place?” The lady of the house told her, “You have certainly come to the wrong place” and started to tell the woman about the awful things that had happened to her family in the last year.

The woman said to herself, “Well, I can understand their sorrow since I have had sorrow of my own. Who is better able to comfort these people than myself?” So she stayed to comfort them, and then went on in her search of a home that had never known sorrow. But wherever she went, to the slums and the palaces, she heard

story after story of sadness and grief. With time, she became so involved in comforting other people in their grief that she forgot about her search for the magical mustard seed. Her searching had driven the sorrow out of her life.

A more recent story is about Jeff who had to move to a city in another province. He had lived on the same reserve for all of his life. He missed his family and friends greatly. He longed to be home but was also enjoying his new job. Jeff felt his homesickness would never go away. He often talked to his friends on the phone and after he hung up, he would feel deep sadness.

In a few months, Jeff started getting used to the changes that moving brought. He still phoned his friends, but it was becoming less painful. He realized they were still his friends but their relationship had changed. He even began liking the city that he moved to and the people he was meeting.

Jeff was starting to feel connected. In fact, Jeff found that he knew exactly how lonely other newcomers to the city felt. He could help them to feel connected as well. He invited them to his apartment for a simple meal or took them for coffee at his favourite coffee shop and introduced them to his new friends. Jeff was finding that helping others was healing his own grief.

EXERCISE #10

1. Fill in the blanks:

_____ is a way of working through your feelings about a loss. It may take a long time but you will _____ to the change. Grieving is a process of _____ your loss. Adapting means that we learn to _____.

2. Name one or more losses in your life that have been hard to accept or adapt to.

3. There is a Chinese proverb that says: “You can’t keep birds of sorrow from flying over your head, but you can keep them from building nests in your hair.” Write this proverb in your own words.

LESSON #11

Ceremonies and Rituals

All cultures have ceremonies or rituals (RIT-choo-uls) that help people deal with the reality of a loss. For example, a **funeral** (FYOO-nur-rul) is a ceremony to help the family and friends accept the death of a loved one. In Aboriginal cultures, there is a **sacred fire** where friends and family bring offerings for the spirit of the person who died. In Jewish culture a mourning period, called a **shiva**, is held. A shiva is a ceremony where the family spends several days inside their home mourning the loss of their family member. Friends and other members of the community show respect by bringing the family food. Other cultures have a feast or wake to celebrate a life and to grieve together.

All these ceremonies are different, but they are also similar in many ways. They are all traditions that different cultures use to help people accept a loss. They help friends and family come to terms with a loss. These ceremonies are held to help us remember and pay respect to the person who died. These ceremonies bring together people who share a loss and allow them to support each other.

All of these examples of ceremonies deal with death. Not all grief is caused by a death. The healing qualities of ceremonies don't just apply to deaths either. For

example, you could plant a tree in memory of a lost pet or you could talk about memories of your homeland over coffee with a friend. Keep in mind that in order to accept a loss, we need to remember the way life used to be and recognize how it has been altered. Ceremonies are times to get support and give support to those that are affected by the loss.

Holidays and other special dates such as birthdays and anniversaries are often the most difficult days for someone who is grieving. You may want to plan for a ceremony for these days to make them less upsetting and give them a new meaning. If you are attending a church service or a sweat lodge, you may want to ask for a song or poem to be dedicated to your loved one. You could spend the day volunteering at a food bank or other community project in memory of your friend.

EXERCISE #11**Part One:** True or False

- ___ 1. Many cultures have ceremonies that try to help people deal with the reality of a loss.
- ___ 2. All ceremonies mean the same thing.
- ___ 3. Ceremonies allow people who have suffered a loss and those close to them a place to grieve and support each other.
- ___ 4. You will only grieve if someone close to you dies.
- ___ 5. The healing qualities of ceremonies are only used when someone has died.

Part Two:

A. Name a ceremony that you have attended and describe what happened. Do you think it helped you deal with your grief? How did it help you?

B. A close friend of yours has moved to another province 1500 miles away. To help you grieve you have decided to do something in his memory. Write down what your memorial or ceremony would be like.

Idea Bank

Plant a tree in memory of your friend. Say a thank you prayer for all the good times you had.

Frame a picture of your friend. Every time you look at it say a prayer for him/her.

Make a memory book using pictures and stories of things that you did with your friend.

Save some money every month for a cause that both you and your friend could support such as helping other people or saving the environment.

Decide to continue a project that your friend/ loved one has started.

LESSON #12
Grief Within a Family

Grief over a loss affects the whole family. It also affects each family member differently. Some family members may feel left out or isolated from the grieving process. Isolation may happen when a person's feelings do not get expressed or get ignored by other family members. This often happens with small children, disabled people, or others who have difficulty expressing themselves.

When Laura had to spend time in the hospital being treated for depression, her whole family was shocked. Her mom and dad visited her twice a day. Laura's mom cried much of the time. Her dad was at the hospital more than anyone. He was either with Laura or talking with Laura's doctors. Whenever Laura's dad was home he was trying to make Laura's mom feel better. Laura's younger sister, Anna, was fifteen. Because of Laura's problem, Anna had to stay home and baby-sit her baby brother a lot. She also had to clean the house more because everybody else was too busy with Laura. Her Dad told her that he really needed her help right now and that she should be strong for the whole family.

Anna was beginning to get angry about all the extra work she had to do. She didn't want to seem selfish but she wanted some time for herself too. She was mad that she had to be the strong one. She wanted to cry, but she felt that she would let

everybody down. She had feelings about Laura too. After all, they grew up together. But she felt that nobody cared what she thought. She felt isolated because she wasn't allowed to feel for the loss of Laura's health too.

The isolation that Anna felt was the result of her not having permission to grieve. In a family situation where a loss has occurred, everybody should be encouraged to grieve. Talking about your own emotions and listening to other family members feelings is a good start.

The added stress caused by Laura's depression was felt throughout the whole family. But all of the added work was being placed on Anna and her dad. These added stresses keep people from grieving and can isolate members of a family unit. Family members need to support one another, but it is also good to get outside help from a counselor, elder, minister and friends to deal with the added stress that a loss brings. If you don't know such people in your community, check the yellow pages under "counselors" or "social service organizations".

Laura's dad started to see that Anna was having trouble at school. She didn't seem to talk to her friends anymore. She was often angry. All these things were not normal for Anna. Her dad started to see all the extra work that Anna had been doing. Anna had only seen Laura once in the past three weeks. Laura's dad decided to get

some help. He called his three brothers and they all agreed to come in one day a week to cook and clean. Laura's dad made sure that from now on, visits to see Laura would be for the whole family, even the baby. Laura's mom and dad sat down and talked to Anna. They listened to how she felt and they apologized for putting too much stress on her. Anna began to feel included and was able to grieve.

EXERCISE #12

1. Name three different ways that a family can support each other when they suffer a loss.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

2. Think of a time in your life when you needed support. Did you get support? If so, list all of the things that people did to try to support you.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

3. Now put a check-mark beside one thing that helped you the most at that time and explain why you feel this was most helpful for you.

LESSON #13

A Prisoner's Grief

If you are a prisoner, there are different losses that you experience. The loss of your freedom keeps you from going where you want to go and doing what you want to do. You are separated from your family, friends, your partner, and your children. You lose the ability to continue relationships as you were used to: sharing emotions, thoughts, physical activities and sex. You may lose your job or school year because you are in jail. You may lose belongings such as clothing and furniture, as well as your apartment. You lose interaction with people in your community and miss out on important events such as the birth of a child, weddings, and funerals.

You may also lose the sense of who you are because you have to wear a uniform. You are not able to act the way you are used to because you have little privacy. You are not allowed to do things that you enjoy or that add meaning to your life. This is called a loss of identity.

In jail, you are experiencing some or all of these losses at the same time. When one person suffers many losses they have **multiple losses**.

Because you are separated from the people who support you, prison makes loss and grieving harder to deal with. You might feel that you have to be tough just to survive your time in prison. It may be hard to express how you are feeling because

you can't appear to be weak in front of inmates or guards who can take advantage of you. The pain that you feel in this situation may seem unbearable.

It is still possible to grieve in prison. You could keep a journal to express your feelings. If you worry about others reading your journal, write your feelings down and then tear up the paper. You will at least have expressed your feelings. You may find a person that you trust and communicate with them. You may find that their pain is similar to yours and that they can understand you and share your feelings with you. There are counsellors in prison who can help you deal with your grief. If there is a sharing circle, try attending it. Sharing circles are made up of people who are open to sharing their thoughts and feelings. The rule in a sharing circle is that "what you say in here stays in here". If you don't want to talk you can "pass".

You may risk having your phone call monitored or your letters censored, but it is important to stay in touch with your family, if at all possible. Ask them to visit you in person if they can. Ask a chaplain or elder to arrange a contact visit for your family members.

This time of loss and grief may be a time for you to get in touch with the Creator or Higher Power. Your spirit is hurting and you need the help and care that

only a Power beyond yourself can give. Write or say a prayer or ask an elder or chaplain to pray for you.

Your time in prison may even help your grief if it takes you out of a bad situation. Some people say they feel “lucky” to be in jail because of their drug or alcohol addiction. They were avoiding making changes in their lives by not facing the facts. Often, these addictions lead up to loss and grieving. If the person continued with their addiction, there would be more losses and more grieving. Some other workbooks from the John Howard Society that can help with looking at some of the root causes of different losses are:

- Staying Sober
- Overcoming Cocaine Addiction
- Getting Along: A Guide to Healthy Relationships
- Get Out & Stay Out
- Hurting People: A Victim Awareness Manual
- Adult Survivors of Child Abuse

EXERCISE #13

1. Name four losses that may occur when a person is incarcerated:

2. Name three ways in which prisoners can help themselves work through their grief.

3. Do the losses in your life point to a root cause? Check-mark the items on the list below that may be leading to loss and grieving in your life.

- bottled-up anger
 alcohol addiction
 drug addiction
 lack of education
 childhood sexual abuse
 disrespectful relationships
 joblessness
 other: _____

LESSON #14
Children and Grief

Mohammed is six years old. He just found out that his Dad has gone to jail. Mohammed isn't really sure what prison is. All he knows is that Dad is not around any more. His mother and older sister tell him that Dad did something bad and that he had to go away. Mohammed misses his dad and wishes he could see him. He doesn't understand why someone would send his Dad away because he was bad. When Mohammed is bad, his mom sends him to his room. He's allowed to come out after an hour or two. He begins to think that if he is bad he might go to jail. He is scared that his mom will go to jail to be with his dad. Then who will take care of him?

Children experience the same emotions that adults do when they are grieving. But there is a big difference between adults and children in how they understand loss. Mohammed doesn't understand what jail is or what his dad did that caused his incarceration. Mohammed can't see the whole picture. His imagination is filling in the part he doesn't understand. In his dream, his dad is a monster in a cage with no windows.

The people around Mohammed try not to say too much about his dad in front of Mohammed. They want to spare him from the pain that they feel. Many adults

will try to protect their children because they believe children are too young to learn the facts. Adults also want to protect children from the pain they might experience. We sometimes downplay or tell “white” lies about a loss to protect children. But if a child’s questions don’t get answered, their imagination will fill in the gaps. Let the child know that s/he will continue to be cared for.

It is important to realize that children need to grieve. White lies hide understanding from children and keep them from grieving. Tell them as much as they want to know about the loss. Children need to learn to grieve, and they learn by watching adults share their feelings. Be there to answer any questions that they may have. If you find it too difficult to talk about, ask another adult with whom the child feels comfortable to talk with them.

If children want to, they can attend ceremonies like a funeral or a wake. Explain what is going to happen before you go. Tell them what a funeral is for and that they will see people cry. Tell the child that the person died, not that the person fell asleep and won’t wake up. This would make the child afraid of sleeping. If children know what to expect, they won’t be afraid or shocked at the strong emotions that may be expressed.

Mohammed's mom sees that Mohammed is acting very strange lately. He follows her around all day and doesn't want to play with other kids. When she asks him what's wrong he says that he is scared that she is going to have to go to jail like his dad. He thinks that if he's around his mom she won't be able to leave him. He also says that he misses his dad. Mohammed's mom tells him that his dad did not want to leave him. She says that his dad still loves him. She explains as much as Mohammed wants to know about what jail is and why his father went to jail. She sets up a visit where Mohammed can visit his dad. Before they go, Mohammed's mom tells him what he will see. Because he knows what to expect, Mohammed just enjoys seeing his dad during the visit. He looks forward to when his dad gets out of jail and they can be a family again. For now, Mohammed sends his dad drawings and letters in his own printing.

EXERCISE #14

Multiple Choice: Circle the best answer.

1. People tell “white lies” to children...
 - a. so they don’t have to deal with the child being sad
 - b. because they want to protect the child from pain
 - c. because they don’t think that the child will understand what has happened
 - d. all of the above

2. Lies are not helpful because...
 - a. they help children grieve
 - b. they don’t help children grieve or feel cared for
 - c. they help children accept a loss
 - d. none of the above

3. It is important to help children learn to grieve because...
 - a. it will help them to understand grief in later life
 - b. it will show them that they have to be tough so they don’t get hurt
 - c. they learn that if they don’t care about anything they won’t have to grieve
 - d. it will help them understand that a loss is part of life
 - e. both “a” and “d” are correct

4. The healthy way to help a child deal with a loss is...
 - a. to explain the truth to them and be there to answer their questions
 - b. to explain to them the truth and tell them never to talk about it again
 - c. don’t explain anything to them and buy them things to keep them busy
 - d. all of the above

5. When taking a child to a grieving ceremony you should...
 - a. explain what they will see before hand
 - b. leave it as a surprise
 - c. explain it as it happens
 - d. you should never take a child to a grieving ceremony

LESSON #15

Sharing Their Feelings

If you know someone close to you who is grieving, you will wish you could do something to help them. The first thing you want to do is to understand their grief. How would you feel if their loss happened to you? Feeling along with someone is called empathy (EM-pith-thee). Empathy is when you try to put yourself in another person's shoes. You won't be able to feel exactly like them, but you might understand some of their pain. Remember that every person grieves differently, and you can't grieve for them.

Here are a few examples of how you can help someone who is grieving:

Send them a homemade card or flowers- It will tell them that they are not alone and that you are thinking about them.

Be a good listener- Let them tell you how they are feeling. They may keep repeating what they tell you. Keep listening. People need to express their feelings and listening without interrupting is one of the most important things you can do for them. Help the person to realize that their pain about their loss is natural. You might want to tell them that others feel pain about the loss, too,

so that they will know that they are not alone. You may want to share experiences that you have had that caused you to grieve. If they don't want to talk, sometimes just being there to silently support them is enough.

You should not do the following:

Don't tell them what you think they should be doing. This is called being **judgmental**. Telling someone how to grieve is not helpful because everybody grieves in different ways.

Don't tell them that you know just how they feel. Remember everybody has different experiences and different feelings.

Don't tell them to just let it go or that they are holding on to their loss. Remember that grieving is different work for each person.

Kathy spent a lot of time with her grandfather before his accident. She sat for hours watching him make his carvings and even went with him on his trap-line. Kathy and her grandpa seemed to understand each other even though they didn't talk a lot.

Kathy's mom, Anne, was confused as to why Kathy cried easily even though it was a year since Grandpa died. She never knew Kathy loved her grandpa so deeply. Anne used to have big disagreements with him. But Anne asked Kathy to tell her what she loved best about Grandpa and held her when she cried. Together, they made a book of stories and pictures about Grandpa. They left some pages blank so they could add more stories as they remembered them.

EXERCISE #15**Part One**

Name three things that you can do for someone who has experienced a loss.

Name three things that you shouldn't do or say to a person who is grieving

Part Two

It can be hard to spend time with someone who is in deep pain. This is partly because we care for that person and also because we are afraid to feel pain ourselves. List the names or initials of three people who you know that are grieving a loss.

LESSON #16

Other Help for a Grieving Person

There are other ways that you can help someone who is grieving. Sometimes our lives are so busy that people don't have as much time as they need to grieve. Your assistance in everyday chores can help. It will give a person who is grieving time to deal with a loss. Recovery takes time and any help from others is important. Here are a few things that you can do to help a grieving person.

- Cook dinner, or have them over for dinner.
- Baby-sit or take their children to school.
- Run errands to the store.
- Help them with their laundry or house cleaning.
- Help with sorting through the belongings of a loved one who died.
- Make phone calls to inform friends about the loss.

These are just some ideas. Rather than **asking them** if there is anything you can do, **offer** to do one or two specific things for them. Tell them the times when you can help them and ask which of these times suits them. The chores may seem small, but they will allow the grieving person the time and space they need to deal with their pain.

EXERCISE #16

After each story, write two ways that you think you could help out the person with the loss. One of the two ways that you choose should help them with their feelings.

1. Your daughter goes to school with her friend named Assita. Your family also knows Assita's parents. A couple of days ago, Assita found out that she is going to need surgery. The doctor told her that she may be in the hospital for six months after the operation. Assita is worried that she won't be able to keep up with school and is sad because she will miss her friends.

I could help Assita with her feelings by: _____

Another way I could help Assita would be to: _____

2. A friend of yours, Mak, has recently lost his wife. Your son, Mike, and Mak's son, Vuthana, play soccer together. Mak took a lot of time off work to get over his loss. Now that he is back at work he has to work 10 hour days to catch up. Vuthana is often home alone until Mak comes home late in the evening.

I could help Mak with his feelings by: _____

Another way I could help Mak would be to: _____

3. Bob and June are two friends of yours. Their house was destroyed in a fire. They feel horrible that they lost all their photos and wedding gifts from friends. You have been friends with Bob and June for most of your life. You have many pictures of them when you went on camping trips with them and their friends.

I could help Bob and June with their feelings about their loss by: _____

Another way I could help Bob and June would be to: _____

LESSON #17

Knowing Yourself

When you are grieving you have many things to think about. In order to heal you must learn to live with the changes that are caused by a loss. This means learning to know how you are feeling and adjusting to the change that has occurred. Knowing yourself is called **self-awareness**.

Becoming self-aware takes time because your feelings about your loss change. Knowing your pain will help you work through your loss. You can gain self-awareness by looking for ways to help yourself. If you suffer a loss or many losses, there are tools that might help you understand how you feel. Here are a few:

Express your feelings out loud. Listen closely to yourself. Think about what you said after you say it. Don't judge yourself for feeling the way you do. Ask yourself what you have learned about yourself from your feelings. What makes you sad? What makes you feel helpless? When do you feel hopeless? Remind yourself that your feelings are what makes you a human being. Your feelings make sense. Accept them.

Accept help. Understanding and support from others can also help you accept yourself and know yourself. Friends, family, support groups and members of the

community can also be a great comfort. Accepting help and comfort from others will mean that they will know you better, both your good side and your dark side. It is comforting to feel accepted, warts and all.

Ask for help. People are willing to help you through these tough times. If you don't think that there is anybody close to you that can understand your emotions, you can try a help line. People at help lines can listen to you and offer advice if your grief gets to be too much for you to handle by yourself.

Keep a journal. Write down how you feel. You don't have to do it every day. You may choose to write only when you are feeling down. You could write about your day, how you felt and why you felt this way. Once you start, you can go back and read what you were feeling yesterday, last week, or even last year. You can look back and see your progress. It will give you hope and self-understanding.

Be patient. Grieving takes a long time. It isn't a race to feel better fast. Just take your time. Try to make time for yourself to grieve. Some days will be better than others. You will be rewarded with a healthy spirit and the ability to better understand other people who are grieving.

EXERCISE #17

True or False: Place 'T' before true statements, and 'F' before false statements.

- _____ 1. Keeping a journal will help you grieve.
- _____ 2. A journal will allow you to look back and see your progress.
- _____ 3. Expressing your feelings out loud will make you look strange.
- _____ 4. Self awareness is always going to be easy.
- _____ 5. Being patient with yourself is good because you can get through grief faster.
- _____ 6. Accepting help will not help you deal with a loss
- _____ 7. Drawing pictures about your grief can help you understand your feelings and needs.
- _____ 8. Support groups will judge you if you talk to them.
- _____ 9. Holding in your feelings is always better than talking about your loss.
- _____ 10. Finding someone you trust with whom to talk about grief is not important.
- _____ 11. Getting through grief may involve change.
- _____ 12. Self awareness helps you to understand your pain.
- _____ 13. Accepting yourself helps you to accept others.
- _____ 14. Only some people have a dark side.
- _____ 15. All people need support at some point in their lives.

LESSON #18 **Staying Healthy**

Staying healthy can mean many things. Expressing your feelings is one way to be healthy because it releases your emotions. Staying healthy in this case means to ease your mind of the troubling thoughts that a loss causes. Grieving can cause **stress** on your body as well as your mind. Grief can cause many problems including headaches, lack of energy, sleepless nights, heartburn, feeling sick to your stomach, shortness of breath, and weight loss. It is important to keep your body healthy when you are grieving. A healthy lifestyle may help you work through your grief with less stress. Here are a few things you can do to help your body while you grieve.

Be alert to your health. Take note of problems in your health such as depression, fears, headaches, sleepless nights or stomach aches. Ask yourself: Are my health problems connected to how I feel emotionally?

Avoid alcohol and drugs. You may feel that you can get away from your grief for a while with a few drinks. Drugs and alcohol will only hide or mask your feelings. The

effects that they have on your body and mind will make grieving harder. In the end, they will add to your grief.

Don't give yourself added stress. Stress is the feeling that you get when you have too much to do. It can also be the feeling that you get when you have a big decision to make. If you are grieving, try to avoid any extra stress. You already have a lot of things to think about with your grief. Try not to make any big decisions just after a loss. It has been said that you should wait at least one year after a loss before you make a big decision such as moving to another place or finding a new partner. Your strong feelings about your loss will keep you from thinking clearly or considering all the options. Too much stress can cause your body to break down. Stress will also take away from your time to adapt to your loss.

Eat well and exercise. Keeping your body fit will give you the strength to deal with your emotions. Eating well will fill your body's needs so you can focus on grieving in a positive way. Eat a balanced diet that includes lots of fruits and vegetables, with less coffee, soft drinks, sugar and fat. Exercise is also a good way to relieve stress

caused by grief. In fact, good food and exercise can help you think and feel more positively.

See your doctor or natural health worker. You do not have to wait until you can't manage before you get professional help. They are there to help you.

EXERCISE #18

Find the hidden words.

The words in the Work Bank can be found written up or down, across, diagonally and backwards within this word search.

X	N	S	T	C	D	D	I	E	T	D	E	L	J	S
R	N	E	S	A	E	P	I	U	A	I	S	E	S	E
C	E	M	O	T	I	O	N	A	L	I	L	C	E	T
T	E	A	O	P	G	E	C	N	E	I	T	A	P	E
D	N	W	X	A	H	I	E	E	T	J	I	H	D	S
O	D	A	D	L	I	Y	A	E	W	O	O	R	R	E
T	O	R	A	E	E	D	S	W	N	U	E	E	A	W
A	C	E	P	R	C	E	T	I	R	R	T	S	W	S
H	T	N	A	T	I	I	T	H	C	N	H	T	I	T
T	O	E	P	S	R	C	S	C	L	A	N	R	N	E
L	R	S	O	A	L	I	I	I	G	L	L	E	G	I
A	S	S	A	S	E	E	N	M	O	T	H	S	E	N
E	E	E	E	X	P	R	E	S	S	N	E	S	W	A
H	U	H	S	T	E	X	E	R	C	I	S	E	I	T
T	S	W	T	T	C	H	C	E	C	R	A	O	E	R

Word Bank

Doctor Exercise Diet Stress Health Alert
 Emotional Physical Decisions Patience Journal Drawing
 Express Awareness

LESSON #19

Counselors

People sometimes have trouble accepting their grief. There are counselors whose job it is to help people understand their feelings. They do this by helping their client know what they are feeling and why they are feeling that way. They work together with people to help them deal with their grief. You can find counselors in churches, hospitals, community centres, or friendship centres.

There are several ways that a counsellor can work with a person to help them through their grief.

Individual counselors work one-on-one with you. Usually, the counselor will ask you questions about your loss. These questions help you to express your feelings and explore the reasons behind them when you answer them.

In **group counseling** a counselor helps a group of people at the same time. All the people will be suffering from grief. Each person in the group will take their turn and share their experiences and feelings with the rest of the group. The whole group will

help each other by listening and sharing. Sometimes this is also called a sharing circle.

In **family counseling** a counselor will work with a family unit to help resolve grief. This type of counseling can help you understand how others who are close to you are dealing with their grief. Then you can work together on your grief instead of working against each other.

You could also phone a help line where people will listen to you and offer advice. Every type of counseling has benefits. They are different in that they focus on different needs that people have when dealing with their losses.

EXERCISE #19

For each question, answer which type of counseling service you think would be the best for the people involved. Then state why you think that this counseling service would be the best.

Pick from the following four types of counseling services:

•**Family Counseling**

•**Individual Counseling**

•**A Help/Crisis line**

•**Group Counselling/Sharing Circle**

1. Joey has felt really down lately. He broke up with his girlfriend and lost his job. He has been drinking and doing a lot of drugs in the past week. Late one night, he decided that he doesn't want to do this anymore. He wants to get back to enjoying life again. Joey is feeling a lot of mixed emotions right now and would like to talk to someone as soon as possible.

Type of Counselling: _____

Why? _____

2. Alana lost her mother to suicide. She feels a lot of guilt and blame for what has happened. She also knows that her father and two brothers feel the same way. Nobody wants to talk about the loss because they all feel that they are the cause of it. Alana knows that things will never be the same now that her mom isn't there but she feels like she lost her father and brothers too.

Type of Counselling? _____

Why? _____

3. Jakob is a gambling addict. In the last few months he has lost almost everything that he holds dear in his life. His relationship has ended; he lost his job; and the bank took away his house. He has many things to grieve about. He wants to get to the root cause of his grief: his gambling habit. He knows many people like him who gamble. Jakob feels that talking to them about the problems that gambling caused them might help him understand what he has lost and help him to stop gambling.

Type of Counselling? _____

Why? _____

4. Tomoko had a rough childhood. She feels like her family never really cared about her. In her teenage years, she filled this void by joining a gang. She felt accepted by this group of people. But she had to do many crimes to continue to feel that acceptance. Then, she got caught and was incarcerated. Tomoko thinks that her family upbringing is the root cause of all the problems that she has. She wants to talk to someone but she feels her family issues are too personal to talk about with many people around.

Type of Counselling? _____

Why? _____

LESSON #20
Support Groups

Sam and his girlfriend, Lara, had a baby girl a year and a half ago. Julie was their first baby and she was adored by both of her parents. But Julie was born with a mal-formed heart and only lived one month past her first birthday. Sam was shocked and overcome with sadness. Most days, he called in sick to the trucking company where he worked. He lay awake at night, weeping with longing to have his baby girl back. Sometimes, Sam felt rage toward the doctors and nurses who did everything they could but couldn't save Julie. He felt jealous and angry when he saw another dad on the bus talking rudely to his small son.

Sam used to have a coke addiction and still remembered where the dealer lived. On a cold winter day, he found himself walking toward the dealer's house. His ongoing pain from Julie's death felt intense. As Sam was walking, he remembered the years that he spent getting high, and the pain the addiction gave himself and Lara. Now he was thinking of adding to the pain of losing his daughter to possibly losing Lara as well if he went back to this addiction.

Sam thought of the bright orange flyer he had seen at the hospital that told about a weekly support group for parents who had lost their children. He turned

around and went home. Sam phoned the hospital, and asked for the phone number of the support group.

The support group met in the basement of a church. Sam hadn't been in a church for fifteen years. There were all kinds of people here. Across the circle of chairs was a woman with graying hair and a young woman who looked like she was still a teenager. Off to his right were three middle-aged men laughing at a story someone was telling. To his left, a young man with tattoos and a long pony-tail was standing alone, looking lost.

The meeting started with a woman welcoming everyone and sharing a funny story she read in the paper that day. Then they listened to a man read a long poem he had written about memories of his son who had committed suicide three years ago. Together, the group recited a prayer that was printed on a sheet of paper. The woman invited the group to break into groups of four.

In the small groups, each person could tell their name and the name of the child that died and a good memory they had of their child. If someone didn't feel like talking, they could just say their name and say "pass." Some people talked for a long time, and others just said a few words. One man was very emotional. There didn't

seem to be any rules for how long to talk or what to say. Everyone listened and no one interrupted. Sam didn't say anything at this first meeting.

For the next meeting, they were asked to bring an object or picture that reminded them of their child. The meeting after the next one, an art therapist (thay-ra-PIST) was coming who would help them make art that expressed their grief. Sam already knew he was coming back and would ask Lara to come too. He even thought of bringing his older brother, Derek, whose teenage son had drowned six years ago.

Sam saw a sign-up sheet going around for people who wanted to get together to play volleyball at the community gym every other Thursday. This seemed strange for a group of people that were grieving, but since he saw other people laughing, he didn't feel so guilty about thinking of having some fun. It would feel great to take a break from feeling heavy and depressed every waking minute. Both Lara and he loved volleyball.

On his way out of the basement, Sam saw a table covered with books and flyers. He saw a small book that had the title, Good Grief. The guy sitting at the table told him that if he wanted to borrow one of the books, he just had to give a \$3.00 deposit and sign his name and the title of the book on the sign-out sheet. When he returned the book, he could get the money back. Sam thought Lara would be

interested in “Good Grief”, so he decided to take the book and some of the free pamphlets.

Sam wasn't sure yet about sharing his feelings with strangers, but this support group seemed to be a much better option than escaping from his feelings with drugs. He and Lara were definitely not alone. He felt like a dad of whom Julie would be proud.

EXERCISE #20

Check off the places you might look to find a support group for yourself.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> hospita | <input type="checkbox"/> friendship centre |
| <input type="checkbox"/> clinic | <input type="checkbox"/> church |
| <input type="checkbox"/> library | <input type="checkbox"/> community centre |
| <input type="checkbox"/> yellow pages | <input type="checkbox"/> crisis line |
| <input type="checkbox"/> school | <input type="checkbox"/> counselor or elder |
| <input type="checkbox"/> adult education centre | <input type="checkbox"/> social assistance worker |

Sam was attending a bereavement (bur-REEV-ment) group for people whose loved ones died. There are other support groups for different kinds of losses. Here is a list of a few. Can you think of others? What kind of support group could you use? What about asking your counselor or elder to start one up?

- support groups for victims of crime who have lost their sense of safety
- support groups for people who have lost their job
- support groups for people who lost their home and had to move
- support groups for children who have lost a parent to divorce
- support groups for people losing a loved one to murder

___ support groups for people who have lost a life partner

___ support groups for parents who have lost a child

___ support groups for people who have lost their health

___ (other) _____

___ (other) _____

GLOSSARY

Adapting- getting used to change.

Attachments- people and objects that you feel connected to.

Belongings- things that you own that may mean a lot to you.

Bereavement Group- a group of people who have all had someone close to them die. They work together to adjust to their loss.

Counselors- people whose job it is to help you with problems.

Denial- not believing that something happened or not believing that a loss is real

Empathy- to be able to take part in another person's feelings

Funeral- a ceremony where you and friends say goodbye to a person who has died

Grief- feeling that a person has when they lose something or someone close to them

Loss- losing something or someone that is close to you

Mourning- to feel sad over what you have lost.

Multiple Losses- having more than one loss to grieve at one time

Reincarnation- believing that people come back to life in another body after they die

References

Casarjian, Robin (1995) Houses of Healing: A Prisoners Guide to Inner Power and Freedom, Boston: The Lionheart Foundation

Spies, Karen (1990). Everything You need to Know About Grieving, New York: The Rosen Publishing Group

What do you think of this workbook?

What is the title of this workbook?

Did you find this workbook useful? Yes ___ No ___ Why or why not?

Did you learn things that you wanted to know about? Yes ___ No ___

Example: _____

Do you think that you will use any of the ideas in your everyday life? Y ___ N ___

How: _____

Was the reading too easy ___ just right ___ or too difficult ___?

Was the reading boring ___ or interesting ___?

I suggest: _____

Were the exercises too easy ___ just right ___ or too difficult ___?

Were the exercises boring ___ or interesting ___?

I suggest: _____

Did you find any mistakes in this workbook? If so, what and where?

What other topics would you like to learn about in a workbook?

Do you think the workbooks are a good way to learn about these topics?

Yes ___ No ___

Do you think there are other ways to learn about these topics? Do you have any suggestions for us? _____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form.

Please return the completed form to the John Howard Society instructor or send it to:

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