

COPING WITH LOSS

A 12-Week Bereavement Program

Facilitator Guide

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COPING WITH LOSS: A 12-Week Bereavement Program

Facilitator Guide

*This program is adapted from **Coping with Loss Workbook, 2nd Edition** by Cassie Jewell and has been expanded to include new assessments, group exercises, and facilitator resources.*

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BEFORE GETTING STARTED

Group Goals

The primary goals of this group are to provide validation and support while helping participants adjust in healthy ways after a loss. Desired outcomes include reducing the intensity of grief-related distress (to lower the risk of developing prolonged grief disorder), improving overall daily functioning, strengthening both perceived and actual social support, and increasing the use of effective coping strategies. Progress toward these goals will be measured by administering a standardized assessment at the start and end of the group to track changes in grief symptoms, functioning, and coping.

Group Advertisement

This group may be advertised using a multi-method approach to reach individuals who may benefit from participation. Outreach strategies include:

- **Posted flyers** in common areas, waiting rooms, and community bulletin boards (flyer template included in the Appendix)
- **Social media posts** to raise awareness and encourage referrals
- **Word of mouth referrals** from clinicians, case managers, and other staff who work directly with individuals experiencing grief-related challenges

A combination of strategies will help ensure that information about the group is widely accessible to potential participants and referral sources.

Screening

(See Screening Guidelines)

Group Format

This program is designed as a 90-minute weekly closed group. Because grief work can be sensitive and evoke strong emotions, a closed group helps create a stronger sense of safety and trust among participants. Each session builds on the previous one, so consistent attendance is important for the group to be effective.

Facilitation

This program is best delivered by two facilitators. In a co-facilitation model, one facilitator leads the session while the other observes group dynamics and monitors nonverbal communication. If a participant becomes distressed or escalated and needs individual support outside the room, one facilitator can step out with them while the other continues leading the group. Co-facilitators should debrief after each session to share observations and insights, which can strengthen future sessions. Having two facilitators also increases the likelihood that important verbal or nonverbal cues will be noticed, as one person may catch something the other might miss.

Facilitators should be licensed mental health professionals or certified grief counseling specialists with experience in both group therapy and grief counseling. While no formal training program is required to run this group, facilitators are expected to have a solid understanding of grief theories and to thoroughly review the curriculum in advance, including practicing through role-play to build confidence and preparedness.

Confidentiality Forms & Limits of Confidentiality

Group participants must sign a confidentiality agreement form prior to group participation. (See *Confidentiality Agreement Form*.) Confidentiality forms should be signed and collected during the screening process.

Time of Day

Evening sessions often work best for participants who work during the day, but keep in mind that people may arrive tired or stressed.

Fee Structure

Decide whether the group will be offered free of charge or if there will be a participation fee. If charging a fee, consider offering a sliding scale to make the group accessible to individuals with financial constraints.

Childcare

- Determine whether you are able to provide childcare services.
- If childcare is not available, decide whether young children may remain with parents during the group, understanding this may affect the group dynamic.

Transportation

- Consider accessibility: Is the group location near public transportation?
- If feasible, explore offering bus tokens, passes, or cab vouchers to participants without reliable transportation.

Group Space

Create a safe, comfortable, and soothing environment.

Suggestions:

- ☐ Decorate the room with calming colors (e.g., soft greens and blues).
- ☐ Consider offering coffee, tea, or light refreshments to create a welcoming environment.
- ☐ Arrange enough comfortable chairs for all participants in a circle or semi-circle to promote equality and connection. Position facilitators across from each other, not side by side.
- ☐ Ensure a table (or tables) is/are available for activities and materials, plus refreshments.
- ☐ Stock the room with pillows, tissues, and bottled water for participant comfort.

- ☐ Ensure the room has enough outlets and space for audio/visual equipment, such as a large-screen smart TV or a blank wall for a projector. If standard equipment isn't available, consider using a mini projector that connects to a phone to display the videos.
- ☐ Have a large whiteboard with dry erase markers.

Participant Workbook Binder

Prepare participant workbook binders with numbered tab dividers (one for each session). Include the participant workbook cover, group flyer, copy of signed confidentiality form, group rules/regulations, scored pre-test, and all group materials (assessments, handouts, worksheets, journaling pages, and other materials) organized in the corresponding sections (see Appendix for additional and bonus materials).

Instruct participants to bring their binders to every session. **Facilitators may either assemble the binders in full before the group cycle begins or distribute materials weekly to prevent participants from working ahead.**

ANATOMY OF A SESSION: GROUP STRUCTURE & FORMAT

90 minutes (including a 10-15-minute break)

2-3 minutes	Review guidelines and provide brief overview of session
15-30 minutes	Group members check in by responding to structured check-in questions (limit sharing to 2-3 minutes per person, depending on the size of the group) Structured Check-In: (Questions pre-written on the board or posted in group room/included in binder) <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. <i>One word for how I'm feeling right now</i>2. <i>One high and/or low point this past week</i>3. <i>One coping strategy I tried—helpful or not</i>4. <i>If my grief had a voice today, it might say... or share another thought that feels true right now</i>
5-10 minutes	Video (or multimedia component)
10-15 minutes	Break
15-20 minutes	Education with handouts and/or group exercise
15-20 minutes	Open discussion (processing)
10 minutes	Safety check and wrap-up

At least one facilitator should remain available after each session in case a participant is feeling unsafe, overwhelmed, or retraumatized and requires additional support. This time can be used for grounding, brief check-ins, or providing referrals if needed. Whenever possible, both facilitators should stay so that one can attend to an individual while the other manages any logistical tasks or group follow-up.

TIPS & TROUBLESHOOTING

1. **Use a timer during check-ins.**

Set it to play a soothing tone or sound once the time is up as a gentle reminder that it's time to wrap it up. This helps keep the group on schedule without putting facilitators in the role of "cutting people off."

2. **Address dominating or guideline-breaking behavior early.**

If a participant is dominating discussion or disregarding group guidelines, address it gently and immediately. Politely interrupt—acknowledging the interruption—and explain that your role is to protect the group's safety and balance. Calmly describe the behavior you're noticing and link it to the specific guideline being overlooked. This not only redirects the behavior but also builds trust with other group members, showing that the space is actively safeguarded.

3. **Handle recurring behavior privately.**

If a behavior becomes a recurring issue, arrange a private meeting to discuss the participant's fit for the group. For example, if they consistently dominate, validate their need to share while suggesting they may benefit from additional individual counseling where they can receive more time and attention. If their behavior is disruptive or inappropriate for the setting (e.g., sharing sexually explicit content, insulting others, or using the group to preach or give unsolicited advice), approach the conversation with curiosity and empathy, but clearly explain that they may need to pause their participation until they are able to follow the group's guidelines.

4. **Normalize silence.**

Some participants may be quiet or reluctant to speak. Gently invite—but never pressure—they to contribute. Let the group know that listening can be just as valuable as sharing and that silence is welcome.

5. **Redirect side conversations.**

If participants start whispering or talking over others, pause and kindly remind them of the guideline that one person speaks at a time to ensure everyone feels heard.

6. **Manage time creep during discussions.**

Discussions can run long when emotions are high. Use gentle time cues (e.g., "Let's take two more comments, then we'll move on") to keep the group on track while still validating input.

7. **Prepare for emotional overwhelm.**

If someone becomes tearful, panicked, or dissociates, pause the discussion. Offer grounding techniques (deep breathing, sensory grounding) and ask if they'd like to step out briefly with a facilitator. Always have crisis resources on hand.

8. **Debrief after sessions.**

Always debrief with your co-facilitator after group. Discuss any dynamics you noticed, concerns about specific participants, and what went well or could be improved for next time.

PRINTING & ASSEMBLY OF MATERIALS

Suggested materials:

- ☐ 1.5" or 2" 3-ring binders with clear cover insert
- ☐ Numbered tab dividers (1-12) for each binder

Suggested *Participant Workbook* binder contents and order:

Front of binder:

- ☐ Participant workbook cover placed in clear cover insert
- ☐ Group flyer with group time and location
- ☐ *Group Rules* (see Appendix)
- ☐ *GROUP HANDOUT 1: How Do Grief Therapy Groups Help?*
- ☐ Signed confidentiality agreement (optional)
- ☐ Scored *Pre-Test Assessment* (optional)

Section 1

- ☐ *Assessment 1.1 Expressions of Grief*
- ☐ *Check-In Questions* form
- ☐ *Session 1 Notes* form
- ☐ *GROUP HANDOUT 1: How Do Bereavement Therapy Groups Help?*
- ☐ *HANDOUT 1: Grief Misconceptions*
- ☐ *WORKSHEET 1: LOSS EVENTS CHECKLIST*
- ☐ *GRIEF SUPPORT & CRISIS HELPLINES*
- ☐ Journal pages

Section 2

- ☐ *Check-In Questions* form
- ☐ *Session 2 Notes* form
- ☐ *Assessment 1.2 Where Am I In My Grief?*
- ☐ *HANDOUT 2: DYING FROM A BROKEN HEART*
- ☐ Journal pages

Section 3

- ☐ *Session 3 Notes* form
- ☐ Journal pages

Section 4

- ☐ *Check-In Questions* form
- ☐ *Session 4 Notes* form
- ☐ *Handout 3: THEORIES OF GRIEF: Stage Theories*
- ☐ *HANDOUT 4: The 5 Stages of Dying & Grief*

- ☐ *GROUP EXERCISE HANDOUT: "Grief in Common" (Optional)*
- ☐ Journal pages

Section 5

- ☐ *Check-In Questions* form
- ☐ *Session 5 Notes* form
- ☐ *Assessment 1.3 Grief, Depression, PTSD, or Prolonged Grief*
- ☐ *HANDOUT 5: DIFFERENT TYPES OF GRIEF*
- ☐ *HANDOUT 6: GRIEF VS. DEPRESSION*
- ☐ Journal pages

Section 6

- ☐ *Check-In Questions* form
- ☐ *Session 6 Notes* form
- ☐ *HANDOUT 7: TASKS OF MOURNING*
- ☐ Journal pages

Section 7

- ☐ *Check-In Questions* form
- ☐ *Session 7 Notes* form
- ☐ Journal pages

Section 8

- ☐ *Check-In Questions* form
- ☐ *Session 8 Notes* form
- ☐ *Assessment 1.4 Grief Self-Care Assessment*
- ☐ Journal pages

Section 9

- ☐ *Check-In Questions* form
- ☐ *Session 9 Notes* form
- ☐ *GROUP HANDOUT 2: Meditation Script & Resources*
- ☐ Journal pages

Section 10

- ☐ *Check-In Questions* form
- ☐ *Session 10 Notes* form
- ☐ *HANDOUT 8: THEORIES OF GRIEF—The Continuing Bond Theory*
- ☐ Journal pages

Section 11

- ☐ *Check-In Questions* form

- ☐ *Session 11 Notes* form
- ☐ Journal pages

Section 12

- ☐ *Check-In Questions* form
- ☐ *Session 12 Notes* form
- ☐ Journal pages

End-of-Workbook Materials

- ☐ *GRIEF SUPPORT & CRISIS HELPLINES*
- ☐ Video List
- ☐ Bonus materials
- ☐ *Resources*
- ☐ Acknowledgements
- ☐ References

REQUIRED MATERIALS BY SESSION

SESSION 1:

- Name tags (optional)
- Pens/markers
- Small colorful sheets of paper or index cards
- Group “Hope Jar” (or large container)
- Copies of *Assessment 1.1 Expressions of Grief*
- Copies of *GROUP HANDOUT 1: How Do Bereavement Therapy Groups Help?*
- Copies of *HANDOUT 1: GRIEF MISCONCEPTIONS*
- *Group Activity 2.1 Hope Jar (Facilitator Guide)*
- Copies of *WORKSHEET 1: LOSS EVENTS CHECKLIST*
- Copies of *GRIEF SUPPORT & CRISIS HELPLINES*
- Video: *Group Therapy: What You Need to Know* <https://youtu.be/a7tsLHKuQCU> (3:08 minutes)
- Video: *Helping with Grief & Loss* <https://youtu.be/Rkod3n-ottM> (4:09)

SESSION 2:

- Pens
- Copies of *Assessment 1.2 Where Am I In My Grief?*
- Copies of *HANDOUT 2: DYING FROM A BROKEN HEART*
- *Group Activity 2.2 Memory Circle (Facilitator Guide)*
- Video: *How Grief Affects Your Brain and What to Do About It* <https://youtu.be/eEcaUhxAH2g> (3:08)
- Video: *Broken Heart Syndrome: The Physical Symptoms of Grief* <https://youtu.be/WqJnoEb2f00> (8:01)

SESSION 3:

- Large sheets of cardstock paper (enough for each group member)
- Magazines
- Scissors
- Glue sticks (or rubber cement)
- Markers
- Stickers
- *Group Activity 2.4 Coping Collage (Facilitator Guide)*
- Video: *The Grieving Process: Coping with Death* <https://youtu.be/gsYL4PC0hyk> (4:12)

SESSION 4:

- Copies of *HANDOUT 3: THEORIES OF GRIEF—Stage Theories*

- Copies of *HANDOUT 4: The Stages of Dying & Grief*
- *Group Activity 2.5: Grief in Common (Facilitator Guide)*
- Copies of *GROUP EXERCISE HANDOUT: Grief in Common*
- Video: *5 Things About Grief No One Really Tells You* <https://youtu.be/8pT6LQ-mZ3k> (6:41)

SESSION 5:

- Copies of *Assessment 1.3 Is It Grief, Depression, PTSD, or Complicated Grief?*
- Copies of *HANDOUT 5: DIFFERENT TYPES OF GRIEF*
- Copies of *HANDOUT 6: GRIEF VS. DEPRESSION*
- Video: *What Is Depression?* <https://youtu.be/z-IR48Mb3W0> (4:28)
- Video: *What Is Complicated Grief* <https://youtu.be/wJgviSyPz6I> (1:05)
- Video: *What Are the Different Types of Grief & Loss?* <https://youtu.be/HDSOVwrc4bl> (2:04)

SESSION 6:

- Copies of *HANDOUT 7: TASKS OF MOURNING*
- *Group Activity 2.6 Memory Box (Facilitator Guide)*
- Small cardboard or wooden boxes (one for each participant)
- Colorful slips of paper
- Markers
- Pens
- Stickers
- Twist ties
- Short pieces of thin ribbon or string
- Video: *What is the Tear Model of Grief? The 4 Tasks of Mourning in Grief* <https://youtu.be/QA24RGXPBiE> (15:34)

SESSION 7:

- *Group Activity 2.7 Shifting Roles Map (Facilitator Guide)*
- Pens/markers
- Sticky notes
- Video: *5 Ways GRIEF Can Actually HELP You Rediscover Yourself* <https://youtu.be/t1Xh6b3Q8k8> (9:24)

SESSION 8:

- Copies of *Assessment 1.4 Grief Self-Care Assessment*
- *Group Activity 2.8 (Facilitator Guide)*
- Dry erase markers
- Pens/markers
- Colored index cards

- Stickers
- *Group Activity 2.9 (Facilitator Guide)*
- Copies of *WORKSHEET 2: SELF-CARE IMPROVEMENT PLAN*
- Video: *THE CHOICE (Short Animated Movie)* https://youtu.be/_HEnohs6yYw (3:27)
- Video: *How To Practice Self-Care During Grief* <https://youtu.be/P0UhAO2tEJo> (5:47)

SESSION 9:

- Copies of *GROUP HANDOUT 8: Meditation Scripts & Resources*
- Video: *Why Mindfulness is a Superpower* <https://youtu.be/w6T02g5hnT4> (2:43)
- Video: *RAIN and Grieving with Tara Brach* <https://youtu.be/-aMbHk3qILU> (10:48)
- Video: *10-Minute Mindfulness Meditation—Letting Go* https://youtu.be/syx3a1_LeFo (10:35)
- Audio only: <https://www.mindful.org/a-10-minute-guided-meditation-for-working-with-grief/> (12:37)

SESSION 10:

- Copies of *HANDOUT 9: THEORIES OF GRIEF—The Continuing Bond Theory*
- *Group Activity 2.11 Legacy Stones (FACILITATOR GUIDE)*
- Smooth stones with flat surfaces (enough for each participant)
- Paint markers or permanent markers
- Video: *Continuing Bonds: Ideas for Cultivating an 'Inner' Relationship with Our Deceased Loved Ones* <https://youtu.be/KIFNMK8vp0E> (3:12)

SESSION 11:

- Copies of *GROUP WORKSHEET 2: Building My Support System*
- Video: *For Those Feeling Grief and Loneliness* <https://youtu.be/eG58uupYFWM> (9:45)
- Video: *4 Level of Loneliness a Human Could Experience* <https://youtu.be/KmXfKX9e4Q4> (7:04)
- Video: *Social Connection* <https://youtu.be/x1EYcVpQeeE> (2:56)

SESSION 12:

- Copies of *Coping with Loss: Post-Test Assessment*
- *Group Hope Jar* (with goals from Session 1)
- Video: *Understanding Post-Traumatic Growth* <https://youtu.be/CQflb5FdmvA?feature=shared> (8:18)
- Video: *Grief, Loss, & Post-Traumatic Growth* <https://youtu.be/vtzyou0RcUg> (38:40)
- Copies of *Post-Program Satisfaction Survey*

SCREENING GUIDELINES

This group is for individuals grieving the loss of someone or something significant—such as the death of a loved one, the end of a relationship, changes in health or ability, or other major life transitions—who would benefit from structured support. It is especially appropriate for those experiencing persistent or intense grief, emotional isolation, or difficulties with daily functioning. Participants should be open to exploring their grief in a group setting, practicing new coping strategies, and helping create a supportive environment where members can find validation, understanding, and hope.

Group size: Limit to **6–12 adult participants** for optimal interaction and support.

Group composition: Aim for a diverse group that includes participants of varying ages, cultural backgrounds, and different types of loss. A mix of experiences enriches group discussion and mutual support.

Screening Method

Intake interview (15–30 minutes): Conduct an in-person assessment using a structured checklist (*Loss & Bereavement Intake Form*) along with open-ended questions to evaluate appropriateness, readiness, and overall fit, as well as to screen for risk factors. During this meeting, review confidentiality guidelines and limits, and obtain a signed confidentiality agreement. This is also the time to discuss fees, childcare, transportation, and any other logistical considerations.

Critical Elements

Timing of loss

- For death-related losses, participants should be *at least* six months past the loss before joining.
- **Exceptions:** Individuals grieving the death of a child or a senseless/violent death often require individual, trauma-focused treatment before they are ready for a group setting and may need to be referred out.
- For non-death losses (e.g., divorce, breakup, job loss), participants may be eligible once at least one month has passed since the loss.

Clinical considerations

Facilitators should carefully screen potential participants to determine group appropriateness and reduce the risk of harm. Caution is warranted when individuals:

- Have experienced a **very recent loss**, as grief counseling within the first year may interfere with the natural grieving process
- Have experienced **multiple or traumatic losses**, which may require more individualized support
- Present with **major mental health disorders** that could impede group participation
- Present with **personality disorders** (particularly narcissistic, antisocial, histrionic, or borderline traits), as they may be more vulnerable in this setting *or* prone to disruptive or manipulative group behaviors

- Have individual sign authorization for emergency contact and develop individualized safety plan

LOSS & BEREAVEMENT INTAKE FORM

(To be completed by clinician)

Client Information

1. Name: _____
2. Date: _____
3. Phone/Email: _____
4. Emergency Contact (name/relationship/phone):

Loss History

1. Who or what are you grieving? (Name and relationship)

2. Date of loss: _____
3. Cause of death/loss:

4. Was the loss expected? ☐ Yes ☐ No
5. Were you present at the time of death or loss? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, please describe:

Impact of Loss

1. Rate the impact of this loss on your daily life (0 = none, 10 = extreme):
☐0 ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7 ☐8 ☐9 ☐10
2. How has this loss affected your emotions, thoughts, or behaviors?

3. Have you experienced other significant losses?
☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, please list (relationship or loss, approximate year):

Coping & Supports

1. What have you found helpful in coping so far?

2. What makes coping more difficult?

3. Who do you turn to for support (e.g., family, friends, faith, professional support, etc.)?

4. Do you feel you have enough support right now?
☐ Yes ☐ No
Explain:

Mental Illness & Risk

1. Have you ever been diagnosed with depression, anxiety, **panic attacks**, **PTSD**, or another mental health condition?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Have you ever experienced **hallucinations** or **delusions**?

- ☐
- Yes
- ☐
- No

Do you use alcohol, drugs, or medication to cope with your grief?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

In the past two weeks, how often have you had **thoughts of harming yourself**?

- ☐
- Not at all
- ☐
- Sometimes
- ☐
- Often
- ☐
- Daily

- ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, how and when?

- ☐ Emotionally ☐ Physically ☐ Sexually ☐ Violently assaulted ☐ Other: _____

- ☐
- Yes
- ☐
- No

Goals for Group Participation

2. _____

- ### Clinician Notes

[illegible]

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT FORM

As a member of this group, I agree to: (Initial)

1. Keep group discussions private.

_____ I will not share what other members say in group outside of group meetings.

_____ I may talk about my own experience in group, but not the details of anyone else's story.

2. Respect each member's privacy.

_____ I will not take photos, screenshots, or recordings of any group materials, members, or sessions.

_____ I will not post about other group members on social media or in public forums.

3. Maintain a safe and supportive space.

_____ I will listen with respect and without judgment.

_____ I understand that giving advice is optional, not required.

Limits of Confidentiality

While confidentiality is essential, there are some situations where facilitators are legally or ethically required to break confidentiality:

- **Risk of harm to self or others** (suicidal intent, threats of violence, etc.)
- **Suspected or confirmed abuse or neglect of a child, elder, or vulnerable adult**
- **Court order or legal requirement** that compels disclosure
- **Medical emergencies** where information is necessary to protect health or safety

In these cases, facilitators will share only the minimum necessary information with the appropriate authorities or emergency services. Whenever possible, facilitators will discuss this with the individual first.

Acknowledgment

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read and understood this confidentiality agreement. I agree to maintain the privacy and safety of all group members.

Name

Signature

Date

COPING WITH LOSS: PRE/POST TEST ASSESSMENT

Participant name: _____ ☐ Pre-test ☐ Post-test

(Clinician-administered and scored)

Purpose:

To measure (1) grief symptom intensity, (2) level of functioning, (3) coping deficits, and (4) perceived supports across the group cycle.

Instructions: Administer prior to Session 1 (pre) and at the end of Session 12 (post).

Scale (0–4): 0=Not at all | 1=A little | 2=Sometimes | 3=Often | 4=Nearly every day

(Reverse-score items marked R: 0=4, 1=3, 2=2, 3=1, 4=0)

Part A: Grief Symptom Intensity (6 items)

- _____ 1) I feel waves of intense sadness.
- _____ 2) I feel emotionally numb or detached.
- _____ 3) I experience yearning/longing for who/what I lost.
- _____ 4) I'm preoccupied with the loss (and find it hard to think of other things).
- _____ 5) Reminders trigger strong distress (e.g., tears, panic, shut down).
- _____ 6) I feel guilty, angry, or "stuck" about the loss.

Subscale score: Sum of items (range 0–24) _____

Interpretation: Higher scores=more intense grief symptoms

Part B: Level of Functioning (6 items)

- _____ 1) I keep up with basic self-care (sleep, food, hygiene). (R=_____)
- _____ 2) I can focus well enough to do daily tasks. (R=_____)
- _____ 3) My energy is too low to get through the day.
- _____ 4) I miss or avoid important responsibilities (work, bills, errands).
- _____ 5) My social functioning is impaired. (I withdraw/isolate).
- _____ 6) I engage in things that are enjoyable (even small moments) daily. (R=_____)

Subscale score: Sum of items (range 0–24) _____

Interpretation: Higher scores=greater impairment (reversed items reflect better functioning)

Part C: Coping Deficits (6 items)

- _____ 1) I use at least one healthy coping skill daily (walk, journal, breathing). (R=_____)
- _____ 2) I can identify what I feel and name it without judgment. (R=_____)
- _____ 3) I avoid or numb my feelings with substances, food, or screens.
- _____ 4) I practice grounding or self-soothing when overwhelmed. (R=_____)
- _____ 5) I ruminate or replay "what if" thoughts that keep me stuck.

____ 6) I schedule small, doable actions that support healing. (R=____)
Subscale score: Sum of items (range 0–24) _____

Interpretation: Higher scores=coping deficits Lower=improvement, healthy coping

Part D: Perceived Supports (6 items)

____ 1) I feel emotionally supported by at least one person. (R=____)
____ 2) I can ask for help when I need it. (R=____)
____ 3) People minimize or dismiss my grief.
____ 4) I have access to community/professional support (church, therapy). (R=____)
____ 5) I feel alone in my grief.
____ 6) I know specific supports I can use this week (who/what/when). (R=____)
Subscale score: Sum of items (range 0–24) _____

Interpretation: Higher scores=low perceived support Lower=improvement, supports in place

Single-Item Anchors (Report separately)

Overall grief distress today (0–10): _____
Confidence I can cope this week (0–10): _____

Scoring & Interpretation

Total score=A + B + C + D (range 0–96) _____

Higher scores=more distress/impairment with deficits in coping and support

- Expect total to decrease from pre- to post-test during the group cycle.
- Meaningful change (rule of thumb):
 - Subscale score decreases of 3–4 points indicate significant change in that area.
 - Total score decreases of 8–10 points indicate overall significant improvement.

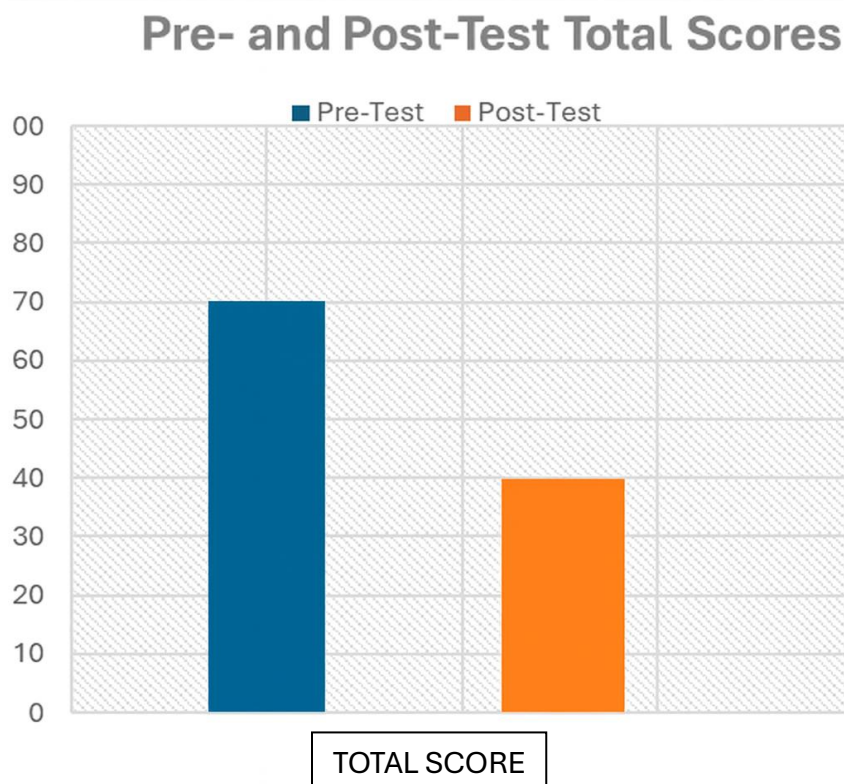
Scoring Profile Instructions:

On the post-test assessment form Scoring Profile page:

- 1. Plot pre- and post-test subscale scores:**
 - Use a blue marker for pre-test scores and red for post-test.
 - Connect the pre- and post-test points for each subscale to create a line graph.
- 2. Depict total score change:**
 - Create a bar graph with two bars: one for the total pre-test score (blue marker) and one for the total post-test score (red marker).
 - Label each bar with its corresponding score. (See example.)
- 3. Indicate single-item anchor changes:**
 - Create a second bar graph showing the pre- and post-test scores for each single-item anchor.
 - Place pre- and post-test bars side by side for each item for easy comparison.

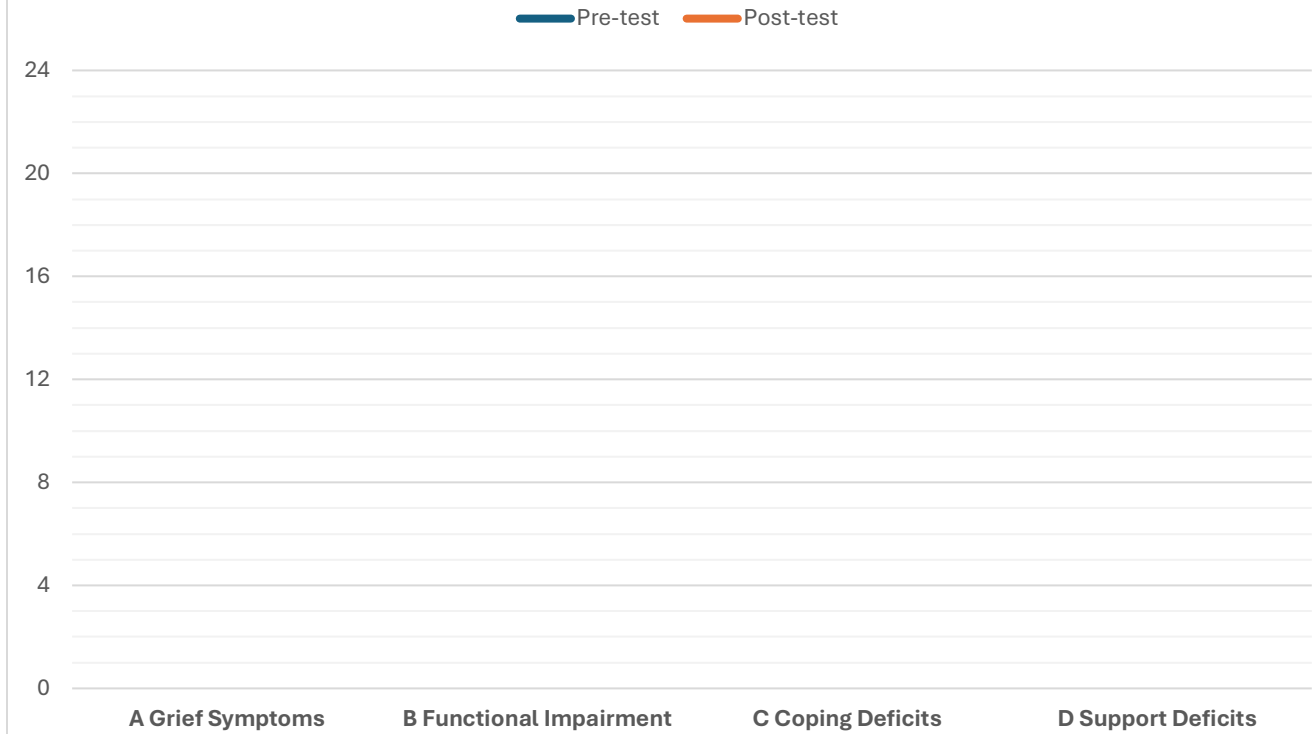
Notes:

**Sample bar graph with a pre-test score of 70 and a post-test score of 40
(indicating significant improvement):**

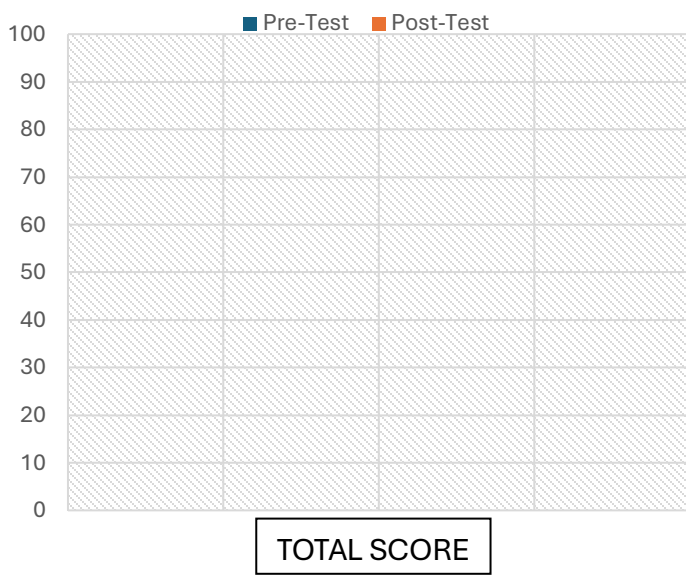


SCORING PROFILE

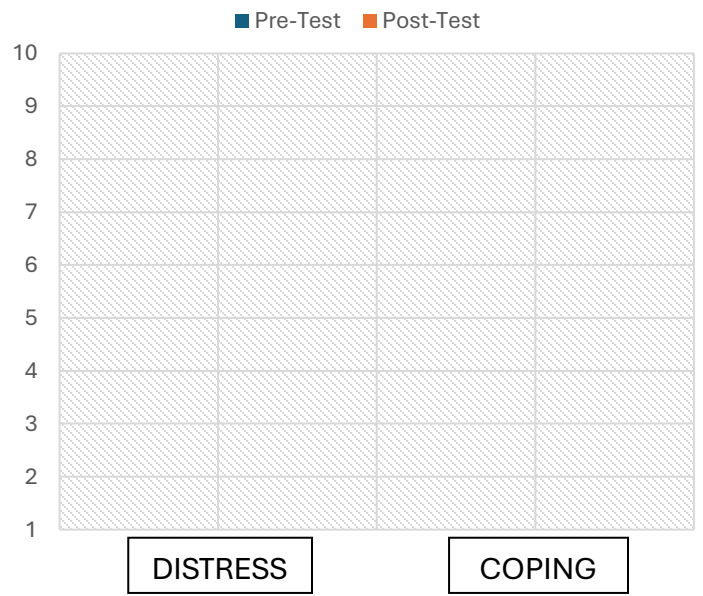
Pre- and Post-Test Sub-Scores



Pre- and Post-Test Total Scores



Anchor Scores



FACILITATOR PREP CHECKLIST (START OF GROUP CYCLE)

Start Date: _____ **Day of the Week and Time:** _____ / _____

- ☐ Session scheduled at a convenient time for participants (e.g., evenings).
- ☐ Group information (location, date, time, and other pertinent information) emailed or mailed to participants (at least one week prior to the first session)

Refreshments (Coffee, tea, water, packaged snacks)

- ☐ Facilitator-provided for first group (coffee and/or K-cups, bottled water, packaged snacks)
 - ☐ Coffee maker or Keurig in group room? Working outlet?
 - ☐ Consider asking for volunteers to bring refreshments for successive groups?
- _____

Fees

- ☐ Free ☐ Fee-based ☐ Sliding scale
- ☐ Fees communicated clearly to participants and collected (if applicable) during the screening interview

Childcare

- ☐ Childcare provisions in place (if applicable)
- ☐ If young children are permitted in the group space, this must be clearly communicated to all participants during the screening process
- ☐ Books and quiet toys available in the group room if young children will be present

Transportation

- ☐ Cab vouchers, bus tokens available (if applicable)

Group Space

- ☐ Enough chairs for all participants
- ☐ Room decorated with calming colors (light greens, blues)
- ☐ Soft lighting (no overhead fluorescent lights); lights can be dimmed or turned off for video visibility
- ☐ Table(s) available for snacks/activities/exercises
- ☐ Comfort items available: pillows, tissues, water
- ☐ Designated break room and/or smoking area accessible

Audio/Visual

- ☐ Equipment tested and in working order
- ☐ Outlets available and extension cords if needed

GROUP SESSION CHECKLIST

Space Preparation

- ☐ Enough chairs for all participants and facilitators
- ☐ Chairs arranged in a circle or semi-circle
- ☐ Table(s) set up for activities/materials
- ☐ Tissues, water, and comfort items
- ☐ Room temperature adjusted for comfort
- ☐ Calming environment (soft lighting, soothing colors, minimal distractions—blinds closed if windows in the room)
- ☐ Restrooms, break room (if applicable), and smoking area clean and accessible
- ☐ Books or quiet toys if young children may be present in the group room

Materials & Handouts

- ☐ Session outline and facilitator notes
- ☐ Handouts, worksheets, or other materials printed, hole-punched, and organized
- ☐ Pens/markers, dry erase markers, sticky notes, index cards
- ☐ Structured check-in questions pre-written on whiteboard or posted in group room/included in binders
- ☐ Rules posted in group room
- ☐ Folders or binders for participants to organize their group materials

Facilitator Readiness

- ☐ Session plan reviewed
- ☐ Facilitator(s) grounded and relaxed
- ☐ Agreement of who will lead the session (or plan to co-lead)
- ☐ Cell phones silenced and placed out of sight
- ☐ One or both facilitators planning on remaining after the group to provide support and/or referrals as needed

Refreshments

- ☐ Coffee prepared (or Keurig set up with plenty of K-cups) and snacks arranged in an appealing manner; napkins, paper cups, and trash container available
- ☐ Space clean before participants arrive

Confidentiality & Safety

- ☐ Crisis hotlines or other safety hotlines posted (see Appendix)
- ☐ “Do Not Disturb” sign for door to prevent disruptions (if needed)

Audio/Visual

- ☐ Equipment set up and tested

☐ Audio/visual materials queued and ready to prevent disruptions

FACILITATOR GUIDE Session 1: Introduction

Session Objectives:

- To orient participants to the group process
- To normalize grief reactions and emphasize that participants are experts in their own grief experiences
- To encourage peer support and connection
- To set goals and expectations

Materials:

- Name tags (optional)
- Pens/markers
- Small colorful sheets of paper or index cards
- Group “Hope Jar” (or large container)
- Copies of `
- Copies of *GROUP HANDOUT 1: How Do Bereavement Therapy Groups Help?*
- Copies of *HANDOUT 1: GRIEF MISCONCEPTIONS*
- *Group Activity 2.1 Hope Jar (FACILITATOR GUIDE)*
- Copies of *WORKSHEET 1: LOSS EVENTS CHECKLIST*
- Copies of *GRIEF SUPPORT & CRISIS HELPLINES*
- Video: *Group Therapy: What You Need to Know* <https://youtu.be/a7tsLHKuQCU> (3:08 minutes)
- Video: *Helping with Grief & Loss* <https://youtu.be/Rkod3n-ottM> (4:09)

Preparation

- Make copies of group materials and hole-punch them for participants
- Post *Group Rules* (see Appendix) in the room
- Write the structured check-in questions on the whiteboard where everyone can see them
- Prep videos for viewing

5-10 minutes

→As participants arrive, pass out *Assessment 1.1* and ask them to complete it quietly before the session begins. Participants should keep their completed checklists to use for talking points during the group discussion.

Sample Facilitator Script: “Welcome—I’m glad you’re here. As you arrive, please take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. It’s not a test—there are no right or wrong answers. It’s simply a way to notice what your grief feels like today. We’ll refer back to it later. If any item feels too difficult, skip it. If you’d like feedback,* you can turn it in after group; otherwise, it’s yours to keep.”

→ Provide brief overview of today's session objectives and explain the consistent 90-minute group format, which includes check-ins, open discussion, audio/visual content, a 10–15 minute break, group activities (skills and processing), and a safety check/wrap-up. Remind participants that sharing is always optional.

→ Provide copies of **GROUP HANDOUT 1** to participants

Facilitator sample script: *"Thank you again for being here. We'll start by reviewing our group agreements—guidelines to help us create a safe, respectful, and supportive space. Remember, you are the expert on your own grief; everyone's experience is unique, and your voice matters here. Today, we'll explore common grief reactions and talk about what you hope to gain from this group. But first, let's go around and introduce ourselves by first name only."*

Introductions (Name tags optional)

→ After participant introductions, facilitators briefly introduce themselves and share their qualifications, their connection to the program, and—if they feel comfortable—a brief personal experience with grief.

→ Facilitators review **GROUP HANDOUT 1** (with guidelines), pausing after each guideline, inviting participants to share what it means to them or how they interpret it.

Sample facilitator prompts:

"What does this rule look like in practice?"

"Why might this rule be especially important in a grief group?"

*When participants submit written work, facilitators should return it the following session with feedback. Whenever possible, provide written comments so participants have something tangible to reflect on between sessions. Feedback should be supportive, validating, and constructive, highlighting strengths while offering gentle suggestions for further exploration. (See *Participant Feedback Form*.)

5 minutes

→ Introduce video

Sample facilitator script: *"This short video explains how group therapy works—what makes it different from individual therapy, how sessions are structured, and how group support can be especially powerful."*

Video: *Group Therapy: What You Need to Know*

<https://youtu.be/a7tsLHKuQCU> (3:08 minutes)

	<p>➔After the video, ask participants for initial reactions or if they have any thoughts/feedback.</p>
15-30 minutes	<p>Group members check in by responding to structured check-in questions (limit sharing to 2-3 minutes per person, depending on the size of the group)</p> <p>Structured Check-In: (Questions pre-written on the board or posted in group room/included in binder)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>One word for how I'm feeling right now</i> 2. <i>One high and/or low point this past week</i> 3. <i>One coping strategy I tried—helpful or not</i> 4. <i>If my grief had a voice today, it might say... or share another thought that feels true right now</i> <p>➔Introduce second video</p> <p>Sample facilitator script: “Before going on break, we’re going to watch another short video that offers simple, compassionate ideas about how to support someone—or yourself—when grief comes into your life.”</p> <p>Video: <i>Helping with Grief & Loss</i> https://youtu.be/Rkod3n-ottM (4:09)</p>
10 minutes	Break
15-30 minutes	<p>➔Review HANDOUT 1 and facilitate discussion on grief expressions and grief misconceptions. Invite participants to glance at their assessments and notice what they’re experiencing in the moment. Make the key point that grief looks different for everyone as it’s influenced by culture, relationships, circumstances, personality, and timing. There is no single “right way” to grieve. There are unhelpful or unsafe ways to cope (e.g., chronic isolation, substance misuse, reckless behavior).</p> <p>Sample facilitator script: “Let’s look at a few common myths about grief. As you review the handout, compare it with your own assessment—what are you feeling right now? Grief can show up as tears, numbness, anger, laughter, or quiet—and all of it is valid. What we do want to watch for are coping habits that can make things harder over time, like using alcohol to numb emotions or withdrawing from others and losing support. Our goal isn’t to ‘grieve the right way’—it’s to grieve in ways that are safe, supportive, and sustainable.”</p> <p>Optional questions for discussion:</p> <p>➤ <i>When you hear the word “grief,” what comes to mind for you?</i></p>

- *How has grief surprised you so far?*
- *What's one thing people often misunderstand about grief?*
- *What's been the hardest part of day-to-day life since your loss?*

Group Activity 2.1 Hope Jar

Group Activity 2.1 Hope Jar (FACILITATOR GUIDE)

Instructions: Hand each group member a colorful sheet of paper or index card and a marker or pen. Ask participants to write what they hope to gain from the group. They can place their hope in the group “hope jar” to be revisited at the end of the group cycle or keep it private.

Sample facilitator script: *“On your paper, write one hope you have for this group. It might be something you’d like to learn, a feeling you want more of, or a way you’d like to grow. You don’t need to share it unless you want to. When you’re done, you can place it in our Group Hope Jar to revisit at the end of our sessions, or you can keep it with you as a reminder.”*

Why it works: This activity helps to foster hope and set goals without pushing for deep disclosure too soon.

5-10 minutes

Safety check and wrap-up

Ask each group member to briefly share:

- *One word about how they’re leaving today, or*
- *One small thing they’ll do to care for themselves after group.*

➔ **Provide each participant with a one-pager with crisis hotlines and other grief helplines. (A more comprehensive resource list should be included in participant binders, see *Resources* section.)**

➔ **Assign homework: *WORKSHEET 1: LOSS EVENTS CHECKLIST***

Sample facilitator script: *“While homework isn’t usually part of this group, you do have one assignment to complete and return next session. This won’t be something you share with your peers—it’s just for you and for me to review. The purpose is to help prepare you for an exercise we’ll be doing next week.”*

➔ **Prep participants for the next session**

Sample facilitator script: *“Before we close, I want to give you a heads-up about next week. I’ll invite each of you to share something about your loss—it doesn’t need to be long or detailed. It could be a story, a memory, or even one word that represents who or what you’ve lost. Share only what feels comfortable; there’s no pressure to go deeper than you’re ready for. The*

goal is to begin learning about each other's experiences and give everyone a chance to have their loss acknowledged."

Facilitator Feedback Form

Name: _____

Date: _____

Assignment: _____

Strengths/Positive Observation:

Reflections/Questions:

Suggestion/Next Steps:

Encouragement/Validation:

Assessment 1.1 Expressions of Grief

Instructions:

Check all the items that reflect your current experience of grief.

There are no right or wrong answers. Grief is unique to each person, and the purpose of this assessment is simply to help you explore what your grief looks like right now. Some of the items you'll see are often experienced soon after a loss, while others may surface later in the grieving process. Simply check the ones that apply to you.

Emotional

- ☐ Agitation
- ☐ Anger
- ☐ Anxiety
- ☐ Apathy
- ☐ Bitterness
- ☐ Blame
- ☐ Fear
- ☐ Guilt
- ☐ Irritability
- ☐ Loneliness
- ☐ Numbness
- ☐ Regret
- ☐ Sadness
- ☐ Shock
- ☐ Spasms of grief
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ Other: _____

Behavioral/cognitive

- ☐ Absent-mindedness
- ☐ Acceptance
- ☐ Accident-prone behavior
- ☐ Acting out
- ☐ Avoidance
- ☐ Bargaining
- ☐ Confusion or "brain fog"
- ☐ Crying spells
- ☐ Denial
- ☐ Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- ☐ Dreaming about the deceased
- ☐ Hallucinating (hearing and/or seeing the deceased)

- ☐ Increased risk-taking, reckless, or self-destructive behavior
- ☐ Intrusive thoughts about the loss
- ☐ Lack of awareness (self and in general)
- ☐ Memory failure
- ☐ Mood swings
- ☐ Passiveness
- ☐ Preoccupation with the loss
- ☐ Questioning or second-guessing decisions made around the loss
- ☐ Repeating a behavior
- ☐ Rumination
- ☐ Searching or calling for the deceased
- ☐ Thoughts of suicide (either to be with the deceased or to escape pain)
- ☐ Using alcohol or drugs to cope with distress
- ☐ Yearning
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ Other: _____

Physical

- ☐ Aches (headache, pain in the body)
- ☐ Changes in appetite
- ☐ Choking sensations or tightness in throat
- ☐ Fatigue
- ☐ Feeling empty
- ☐ Lack of basic self-care
- ☐ Nausea
- ☐ Oversensitivity to noise & light
- ☐ Sensations of heaviness or feeling weighed down
- ☐ Sleep disturbances
- ☐ Weakened immune system
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ Other: _____

Spiritual

- ☐ Feeling abandoned by God or a higher power
- ☐ Greater appreciation for life and relationships (sometimes as part of post-traumatic growth)
- ☐ Questioning faith, beliefs, or life's meaning
- ☐ Searching for purpose or meaning in the loss
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ Other: _____