

Grieving in A 'Get Over It' and 'Move On' World

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Grief Speaks

www.griefspeaks.com

My 4 Blessings



The 3 Boys


“More Like You” by Freebo



Our Fast Acting World



Fast Acting Grief?

- ▶ “Get over it! Move on!”
 - ▶ “Put it behind you.”
 - ▶ “Live in the moment.”
 - ▶ “You had your 3 days off, why are you still grieving?”
 - ▶ “It has been months. You aren’t over it yet?”
 - ▶ “Here try these medications. This will help you to feel all better quickly.”
 - ▶ “You just need to get out, get busy, get on with your life.”
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"Brief Grief Therapy"

"BRIEF" THERAPY: A GRIEF COUNSELING METHOD FOR MANAGED CARE...



1. "HI."

One of the shortest, friendliest words in our language. "Hi" develops instant rapport and acknowledges the mourner efficiently. (Avoid polysyllabic "Hellos" or "Good afternoons"; they consume too much time.)

2. "WHO DIED?"

THIS CLOSED-ENDED QUESTION GETS STRAIGHT TO THE POINT, ALLOWING THE MOURNER TO (QUICKLY) TELL HER STORY. ENCOURAGE THE MOURNER TO STRING TOGETHER ALL THE PERTINENT FACTS INTO ONE SENTENCE: "MY 42-YEAR-OLD HUSBAND OF 10 YEARS, FRED, DIED OF CANCER THREE MONTHS AGO, LEAVING ME TO CARE FOR OUR 6-YEAR-OLD SON JACK AND 8-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER HANNAH." AVOID ASKING THE OPEN-ENDED "HOW ARE YOU?" - TALK ABOUT A PANDORA'S BOX OF THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS.

3. "I'M SO SORRY"

This phrase communicates empathy and concern. You are sorry, after all. Look meaningfully into the mourner's eyes as you say this and if you've done a good job of building rapport in your 5 minutes together, reach out and pat her hand.

4. "THERE, THERE."

A USEFUL PHRASE WHEN THE "I'M SO SORRY!" LINE ELICITS WEeping. "THERE, THERE" DIPLOMATICALLY SAYS "AGAIN, I'M SORRY, BUT YOU DON'T HAVE TIME TO WASTE CRYING IN MY OFFICE, SO STOP."

6. "TAKE CARE."

A COMPASSIONATE YET FIRM CLOSER FOR THE SESSION. SOUNDS POLITE AND EMPATHETIC, BUT THIS PHRASE ALSO SUBTLY PUTS THE BURDEN OF HEALING BACK ON THE MOURNER, AS IN "YOU TAKE YOUR CARES AND WORK ON THEM ON YOUR OWN, BECAUSE WE'RE FINISHED HERE."

5. "TIME HEALS ALL WOUNDS."

This useful cliché promises the mourner that she will heal from this loss, giving her hope for the future. However, healing takes time and time is something the two of you don't have together, so move on to step 6.

"BRIEF" THERAPY, as described above, is economical, efficient and healing therapy for mourners in the managed care setting. TOTAL SESSION TIME: 10 MINUTES.

Dominoes



Grief occurs in a culture of nomadic existence

- ▶ Here today and elsewhere tomorrow (19% of Americans move each year)
- ▶ The decline of the village and phenomenal growth of new suburbs
- ▶ The loss of community: in shared space and shared story
- ▶ The American fascination with individualism
- ▶ “There is an accompanying shift from the strong sense of community of sacred obligations toward others to a notion of self-reliant individuals who choose to form voluntary alliances with others.” ~ Thomas Long

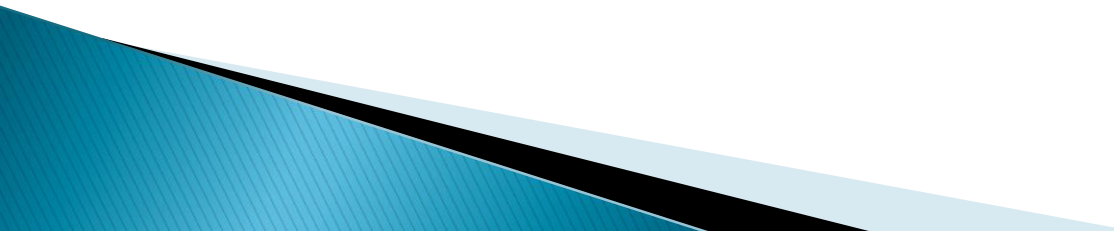


Grief is Strongly Affected by Corporate Influence

- ▶ How many corporate relocations does it take to displace an individual/family?
- ▶ Corporations– not individuals– define bereavement leave
- ▶ Corporation bereavement policies inadequately address new relationships, particularly step–relationships and blended families



Grief is Influenced by the Realities of Contemporary Families

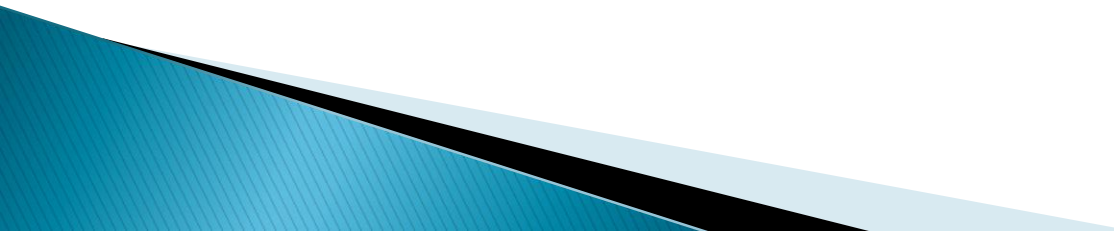
- ▶ How do we define family?
 - ▶ How is a geographic and emotionally scattered family to gather for grief work?
 - ▶ Family secrets sabotage griefwork.
 - ▶ Previous experiences of grief influence current grief.
 - ▶ The dysfunctional family faces grief issues
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Show me a functional family

A dysfunctional family is any family with more than one person in it.

Mary Karr, *The Liars' Club*

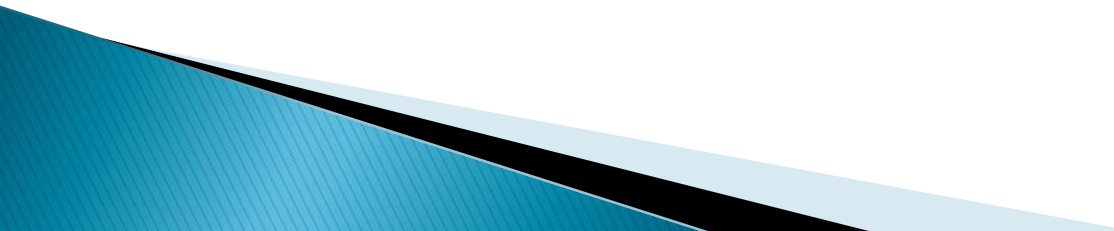
Attitudinal Changes Toward Death, Dying and Bereavement Rituals

- ▶ Growth of ritual “lite” mentality
 - ▶ Limitations of social obligations in ritual participation
 - ▶ Celebration of the life vs. traditional funerals or memorial services
 - ▶ Impatience with grief
 - ▶ Emergence of post-death rituals
 - ▶ Emergence of “private” family only ritual
- 

Celebration of Life: Pros and Cons



Significant Changes in Funeral Service Professions

- ▶ Funeral service in a consumer-oriented economy
 - ▶ Growth of corporate chain funeral homes
 - ▶ Growth of Funerals R Us! Concept
 - ▶ Development of “aftercare”
 - ▶ Significant growth of “direct disposal”
 - ▶ Growth of cremation
 - ▶ Cyber influence on ritual
- 

Green Burials



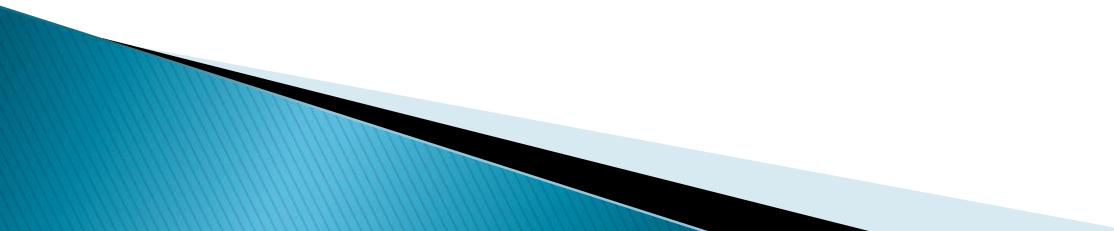
Influence of Women on Grief

- ▶ Women are predominant caregivers
- ▶ Women are predominant ritual planners and decision makers
- ▶ Movement of women into workplace influences griefwork structures and influences volunteer pool



About 44 million adults are caregivers to a family member, friend or neighbor (more than 1 in 5 households).**

3 Needs of the Griever

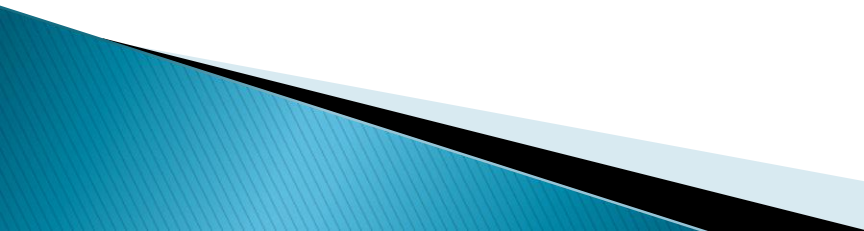
- ▶ To find the words for the loss
 - ▶ To say the words aloud &
 - ▶ To know that the words have been heard
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Quote by Robert Neimeyer

“Our world is forever transformed by loss. We will not return to some pre event state following a ‘recovery.’”

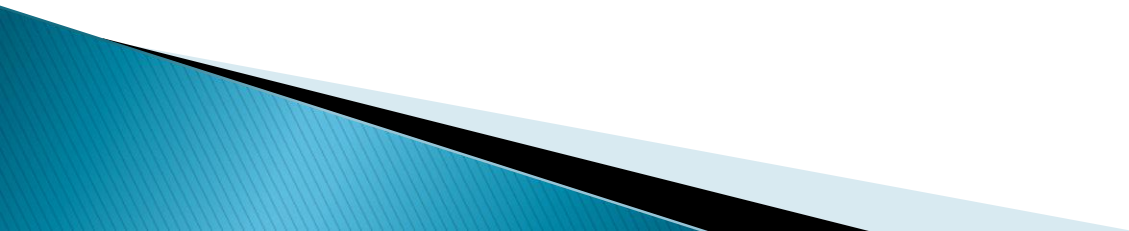


Loss, Grief and Mourning


- ▶ Loss of relationships
 - ▶ Loss of possessions
 - ▶ Loss of environment
 - ▶ Loss of work
 - ▶ Loss of identity
 - ▶ Loss of intangibles: hopes, dreams, future
 - ▶ Ambiguous Loss, Disenfranchised Grief
 - ▶ Liberating Loss
 - ▶ Sudden vs. Anticipated Loss
 - ▶ Violent Loss (suicide, homicide, accident)
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Every Loss is a New Experience

“When you enter a new experience, all that requires healing rushes to the surface... You have to pause.”
— Iyanla Vanzant



Grief

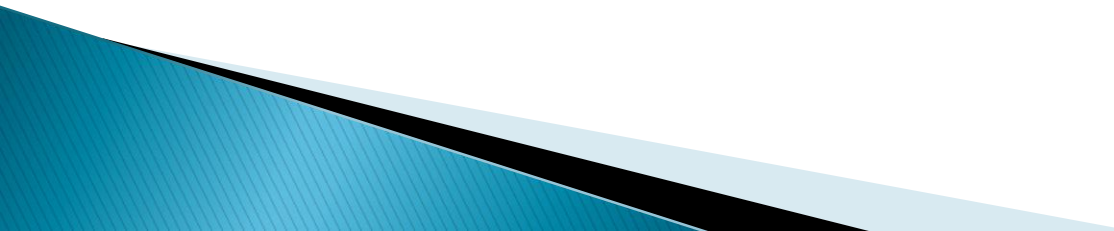
- ▶ The normal and natural reaction/response to a loss situation.
 - ▶ Disenfranchised Grief (Doka, 1983)
 - ▶ Grief is not pathological, yet our society treats it as such.
 - ▶ Grief is a range of conflicting emotions such as: anger, sadness, confusion, fear, relief, guilt, loneliness, yearning, aching, numbness
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Myths about Grief

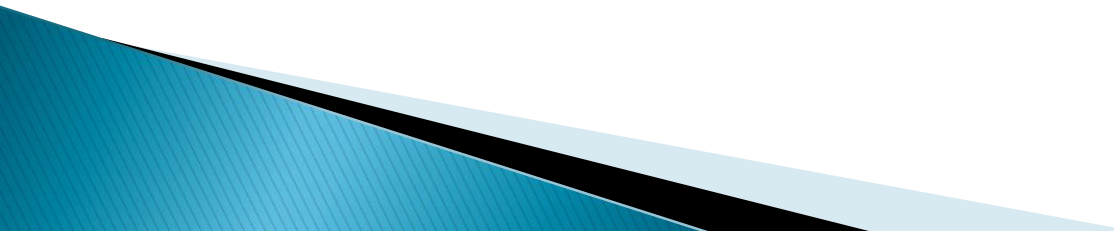
- ▶ Don't feel bad
- ▶ Replace the loss
- ▶ Grieve alone
- ▶ Just give it time
- ▶ Be strong for others
- ▶ Keep busy



Mourning

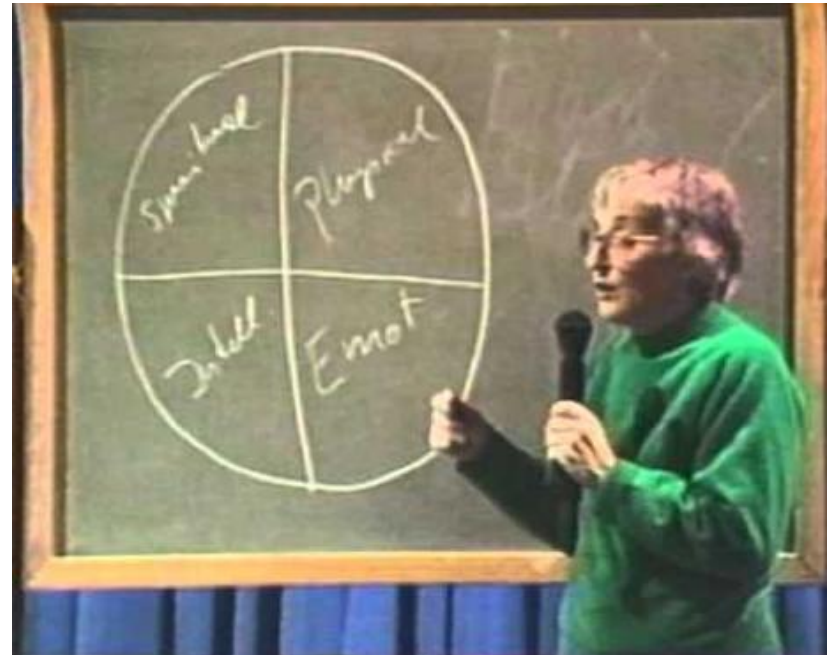
- ▶ “Grief gone public”
 - ▶ Everyone grieves yet everyone doesn’t mourn.
 - ▶ Healthy expression of the internal grief
 - ▶ Our society finds ways to distract, avoid, numb, and stuff our grief.
 - ▶ Grief will erupt eventually if not mourned.
- 

Attitudes toward death, dying and grief

- ▶ Growth of ritual “lite” mentality
 - ▶ Limitations of social obligations in ritual participation.
 - ▶ Celebration of the life vs. traditional funerals or memorial services.
 - ▶ Impatience with grief
 - ▶ Emergence of post death rituals
 - ▶ Emergence of “private” family only ritual.
- 

Grief Affects Us in Many Ways

- ▶ Physical
- ▶ Intellectual
- ▶ Emotional
- ▶ Spiritual



Elisabeth Kubler Ross, the 4 quadrants of grief

What About Stages of Grief?

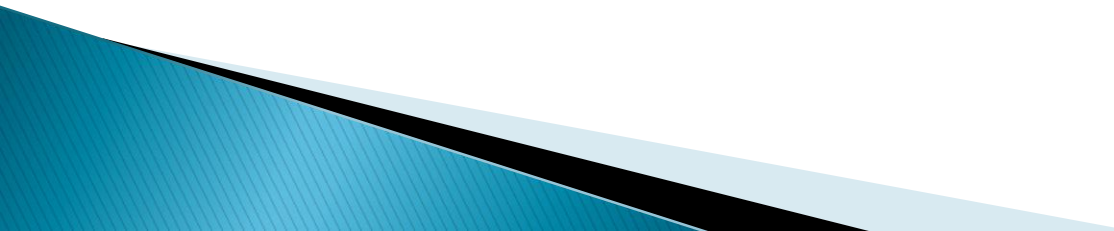
- ▶ Elisabeth Kubler Ross and the stages of dying and grief
- ▶ Inadequacies of stages




Steel Magnolias



Stages of Grief?

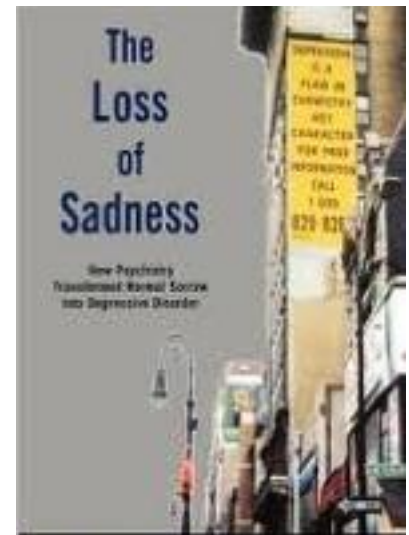
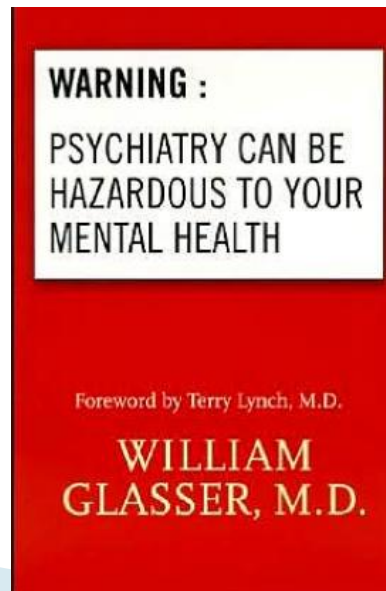
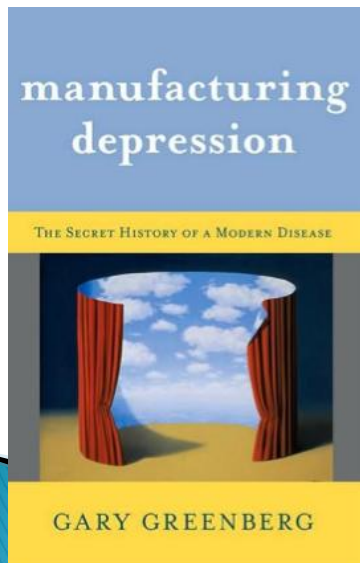
- ▶ “Stages of grief” is simplistic and complicates griefwork.
 - ▶ Goal of grief work is to integrate the loss
 - ▶ To discover a “new normal”
- 

Medicalization of Grief

- ▶ Grief in a “don’t feel bad, here’s a cookie” culture
 - ▶ Pop a pill
 - ▶ Use and abuse of Numbers
 - ▶ S.T.E.R.B.S. (Short term energy relieving behaviors)
 - ▶ Using food, alcohol, substance, work, isolation, screen time, sex, shopping...
 - ▶ Impact of substance abuse on griefwork and rituals
- 

Grief and the Pharmacological Influences

- ▶ Grief in a pop-a-pill culture
- ▶ Widespread medicalization of grief
- ▶ Widespread use-and abuse-of numb-ers.
- ▶ Impact of substance abuse on griefwork and rituals



Three Needs of Grievers

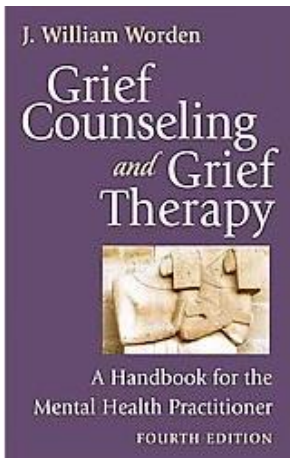
To find words for the loss

To say the words aloud &

To know that the words have been heard.

–Victoria Alexander

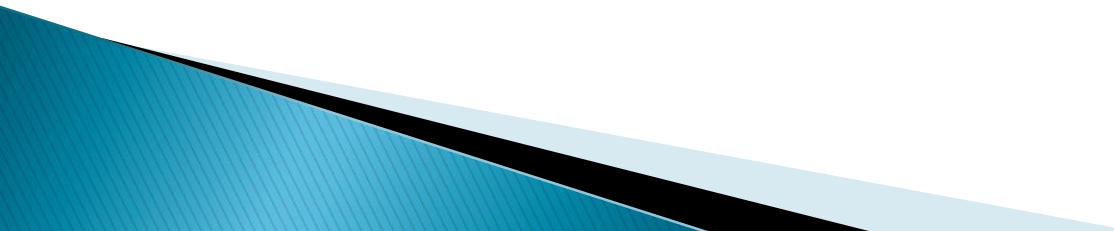




The Four Tasks of Grief

1. To accept the reality of the loss
 2. To work through the pain of the loss
 3. To adjust to environments in which the person/object is missing
 4. To “relocate” and memorialize the loved one.
- (Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy, 2009, J. William Worden)

What Was Lost?

- ▶ It is important to help a griever to figure out what exactly they lost when the person died.
“She was the only one who understood me.”
“He was my rock. He got me through so much.”
“She was my best friend for 40 years.”
“He gave me the best advice.”
“She accepted me with all of my flaws.”
“He was the only one who could make me laugh like that.”
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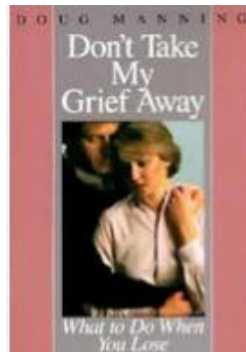
Great Quote

“People must be given the opportunity to hurt out loud.” – Lady Bird Johnson



Don't Take My Grief Away

“Don't let anyone take your grief away from you. You deserve it, and you must have it. If you had a broken leg, no one would criticize you for using crutches until it was healed. If you had major surgery, no one would pressure you to run in a marathon next week. Grief is a major wound. It does not heal overnight. You must have time and the crutches until you can heal.” Doug Manning



Permission to Mourn

**The holder of this certificate,
is hereby entitled to publicly acknowledge
her loss, to mourn openly, to share
narratives of the loss and to recruit social
support in his or her own way and time,
without apology or embarrassment.**

**Tears, memories, silence, uncertainty and
strong emotions are hereby allowed.**

**Please treat this griever with kindness,
compassion and love.**

This certificate has no expiration date

What Do You Think?

The Ten Best and Worst things to someone in grief

Keep in mind, context, timing and who is saying them

The Worse Things to say someone in Grief

1. At least she lived a long life, many people die young
2. He is in a better place
3. She brought this on herself
4. There is a reason for everything
5. Aren't you over him yet, he has been dead for a while now
6. You can have another child still
7. She was such a good person God wanted her to be with him
8. I know how you feel
9. She did what she came here to do and it was her time to go
10. Be strong

Agree or Disagree

The Best Things to say to someone in Grief

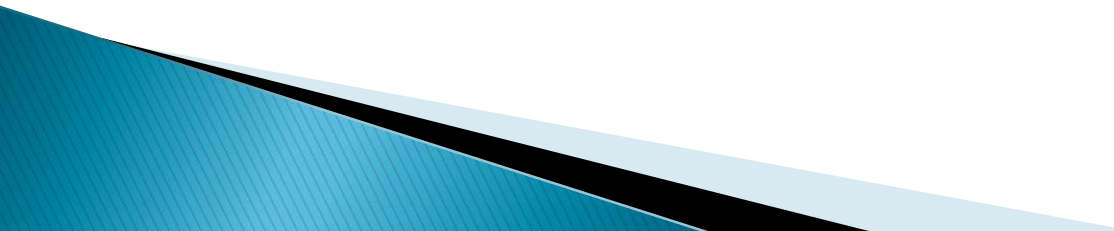
1. I am so sorry for your loss.
2. I wish I had the right words, just know I care.
3. I don't know how you feel, but I am here If can help in anyway.
4. You and your loved one will be in my thoughts and prayers.
5. My favorite memory of your loved one is...
6. I am always just a phone call away
7. Give a hug instead of saying something
8. We all need help at times like this, I am here for you
9. I am usually up early or late, if you need anything
10. Saying nothing, just be with the person

Please

Give Grief a Voice!

Recognize Disenfranchised
Grievors

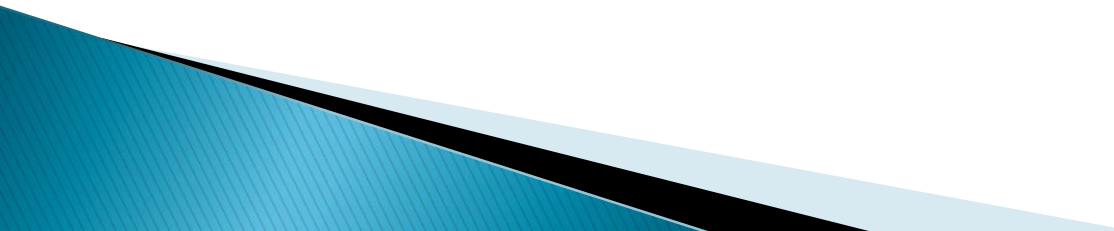
Remember the goal is
integration not “getting over”.



Please Listen

When I ask you to listen to me
and you start giving me advice,
you have not done what I asked.

When I ask you to listen to me
and you begin to tell me why
I shouldn't feel that way,
you are trampling on my feelings.



Please Listen

When I ask you to listen to me
and you feel you have to do something
to solve my problem,
you have failed me,
strange as that may seem.
Listen! All I ask is that you listen.
Don't talk or do- just hear me.

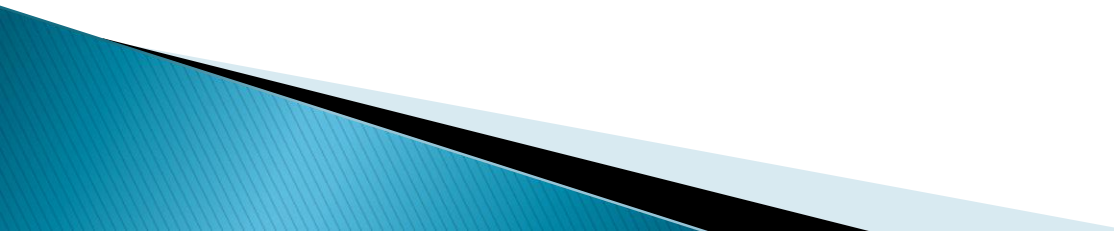
~ Author unknown



Quotes by Alan Wolfelt

“People do not “get over” grief. My personal and professional experience tells me that a total return to ‘normalcy’ after the death of someone loved is not possible; we are forever changed by the experience of grief.”

“Remembering the person I loved allows me to slowly heal. Healing does not mean I will forget. Actually, it means I will remember. Gently, I will move forward, never forgetting my past.”



“I will grieve later.” Lisa Beamer

There is no postponement of grief. Sooner or later, everyone does their grief time.

Paying Attention to This Grief:

“Son, remember how our kind handle such things- bury it! If you don’t talk about it, it will go away.” Mother’s advice to a NYC firefighter after 911

Disguising Grief - Discounting Grief - Disenfranchising the Grief

Acknowledge Previous Losses

“Deposits of unfinished grief reside in more American hearts than I ever imagined. Until these pockets are opened and their contents aired openly they block unimagined amounts of human growth and potential. They can give rise to bizarre and unexplainable behavior while causing untold internal stress.” –Robert Kavanaugh

Permission to Grieve

- ▶ “In every society the expression of grief is regulated by conventions and rituals which indicate how, and how much, mourners should speak about the dead and express their feelings. In a sense, grief has always been policed.” Tony Walters



Beware of The Grief Police

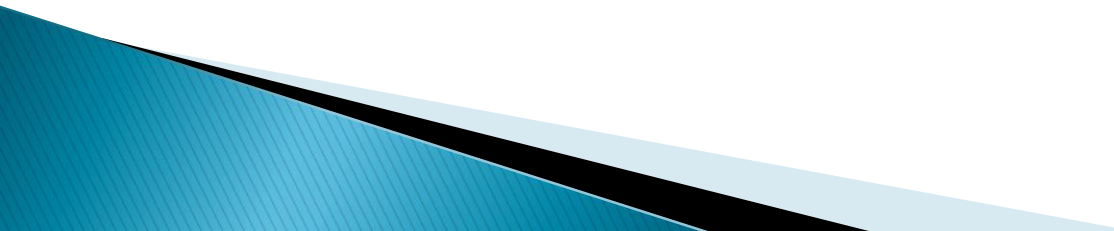
“Asking when mourning is finished is like asking how high is up?”

“One benchmark of a complicated grief reaction is when the person is able to think of the deceased without pain. There is always a sense of sadness when you think of someone that you have loved and lost, but it is a different kind of sadness– it lacks the wrenching quality it previously had.”

– J. William Worden



3 Grieving Styles

- ▶ Intuitive
 - ▶ Instrumental
 - ▶ Cognitive
 - ▶ Blended
- 

Assessing Grieving Styles

Intuitive grievers tend to have tempered affect to a loss. While *intuitive grievers* are more likely to experience their grief as waves of affect, *instrumental grievers* often need to express their feelings and seek the support of others, *instrumental grievers* are more likely to cognitively process or immerse themselves in activity.

Advantages to Both Styles

- ▶ Many different styles of coping with loss.
- ▶ Each has distinct strengths and limitations.
- ▶ Advantages in expressing affect and seeking support. Also strengths in stoically continuing in the face of loss and in seeking amelioration of pain in cognitive and active approaches.



Intuitive Grievers

- ▶ Traditionally thought of as feminine
- ▶ Crying, talking, expressing verbally and emotionally
- ▶ Typically do well in a support group or one to one counseling.
- ▶ Tend to believe it is the “correct” way to grieve in many cultures
- ▶ Tends to get the most support from others



Instrumental Grievers

- ▶ Want to “do something” with their grief
- ▶ Often start a foundation, scholarship, join an organization to raise awareness, put something together for a cause
- ▶ Discharge grief through action (painting, working)
- ▶ Typically thought of as masculine grieving style
- ▶ May clash with intuitive griever if living together



Cognitive Grievers

- ▶ Appear to be “unemotional”, are accused of not grieving
- ▶ Think about the loss a lot
- ▶ They often don’t express it through words or feelings
- ▶ Often don’t enjoy support groups especially if most members are intuitive grievers
- ▶ Can cause difficulty if in relationship with an intuitive griever



Can be difficult

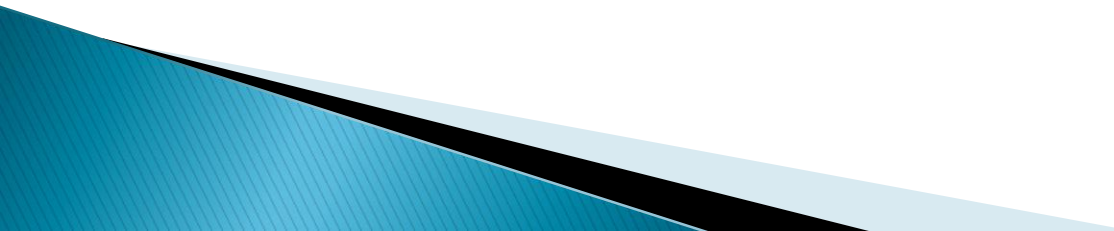


Grievers have needs to:

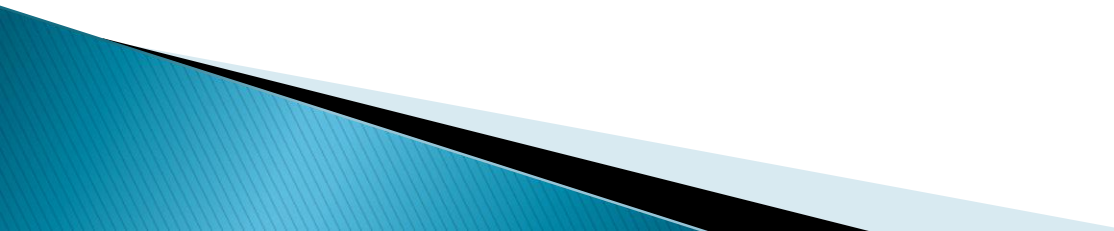
- ▶ To make lament
- ▶ To make account of the loss
- ▶ To voice narratives
- ▶ To re-ritualize
- ▶ To make meaning of the loss

“Millions of well meaning people conclude that the great compassion gift they can offer is to distract the bereaving from their grief. That really means to distract them from the very important work of integrating the loss. H.Smith

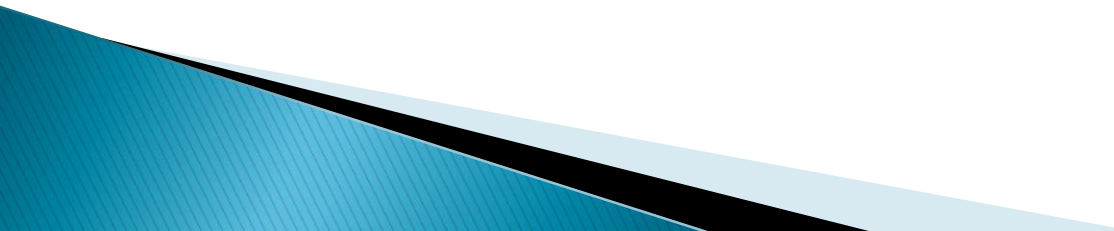
Strategies

- ▶ 1. List the roles this person filled for you. (occupied the bed, walked with me, listened).
 - ▶ 2. Having each role in mind, wrote a paragraph to the person, acknowledge the remembrance and appreciation of the role.
 - ▶ 3. Sit across from an empty chair and read the paragraphs aloud. Do this 3 times in the next couple of weeks.
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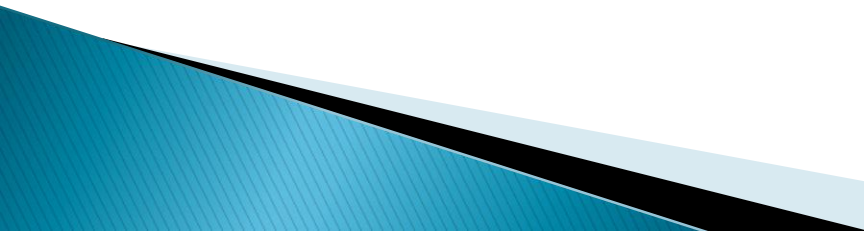
Strategies

- ▶ 1. Review the paragraphs and identify 4–8 emotional, physical and/or spiritual pains you are experiencing due to the losses. (anger, headaches, upset stomach, hopeless).
 - ▶ 2. With each pain, write two strategies you can follow to alleviate that pain.
 - ▶ 3. Post these sheets in home and read 3 times at least.
 - ▶ 4. After a week, begin implementing one strategy for each pain.
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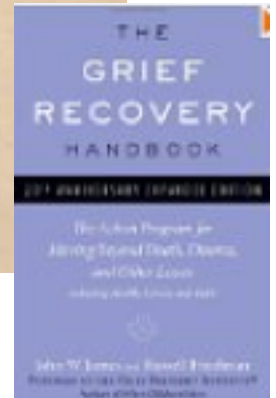
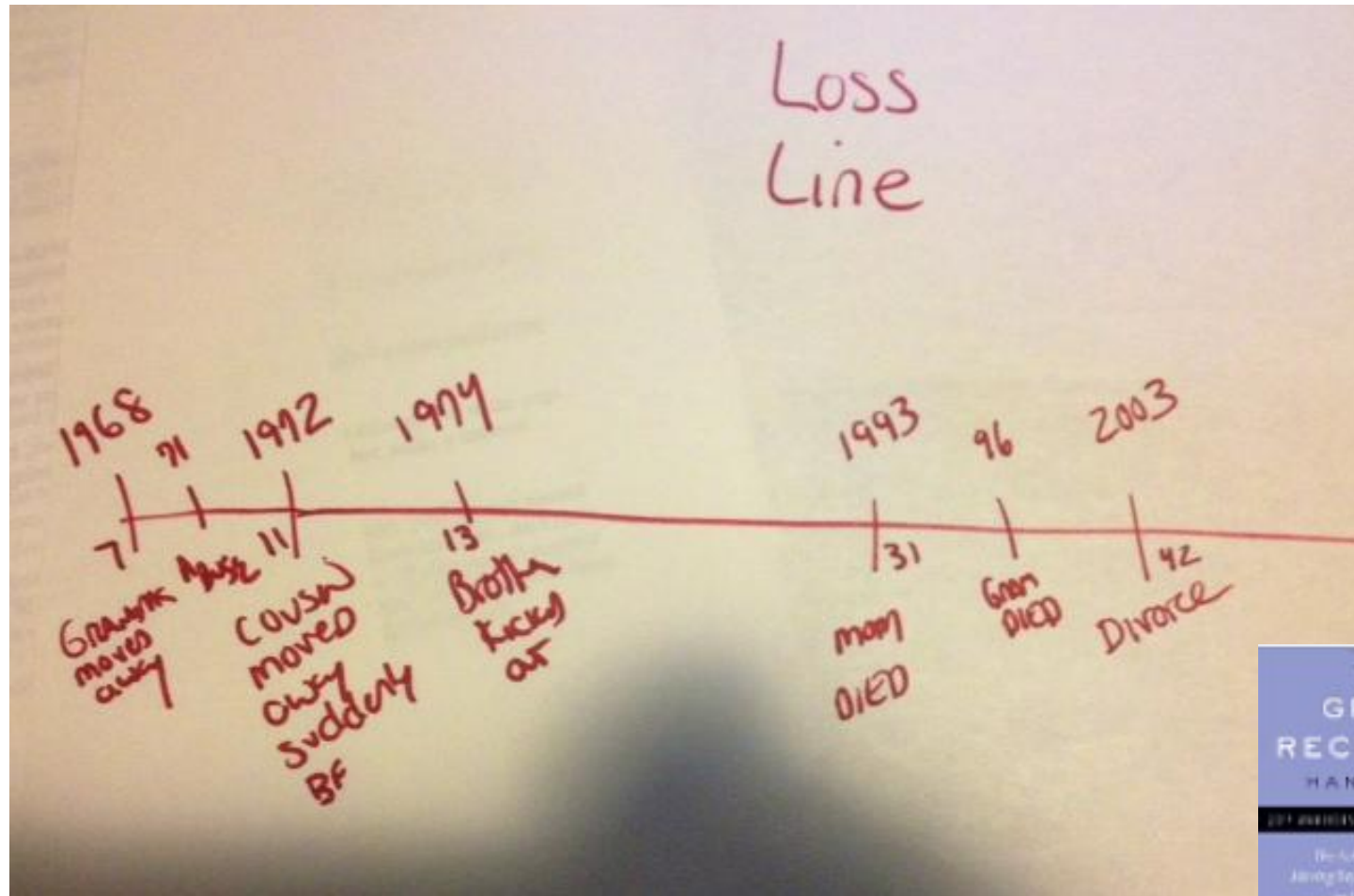
Filling some of the gaps

- ▶ Choose a couple of roles that you or someone else can fill.
 - ▶ Find ways to fill each of these roles that you have identified and begin to have them filled. For example, I will persuade Fred to walk with me on Tuesday evenings and Rebecca on Thursday evenings.
- 

Moving On With Life

- ▶ Develop 2–4 rituals for saying goodbye to your loved one. Each would acknowledge how you benefitted from this person.
 - ▶ Each ritual needs to end with a goodbye.
 - ▶ Examples: write a letter to the deceased summarizing fond memories, ending with goodbye. Gather a couple of objects that remind you of the person, say a prayer or meditation of thanksgiving for the person, then give away or bury objects.
- 

Loss Line



Integrating the Loss

- ▶ “You may have heard, indeed you may believe that your grief’s journey end will come when you resolve, or recovery from, your grief.”
- ▶ **But you may also be coming to understand one of the fundamental truths of grief: Your journey will never end. People do not “get over” grief...a total return to ‘normalcy’ after the death of someone loved is not possible; we are forever changed by the experience of grief.” –Alan Wolfelt**

Enhance Support Networks

Enhancing Support Networks

- ▶ Identify/create a safe place to grieve
 - ▶ Identify those who will provide hospitality to our stories
 - ▶ Recruit practical support in a busy culture
 - ▶ Volunteering may bring a sense of belonging, support, connection and purpose and meaning back to life.
 - ▶ Support Groups
- “The therapist may make up the bulk of a client’s support system.” Willyn Webb

Develop Inner Strength

Auditing previous grief survival strengths

“How have you handled previous losses?”

“How would (friend, family member, hero) handle *this* loss?”

“How would you like others to say you ‘handled *this* loss?’”

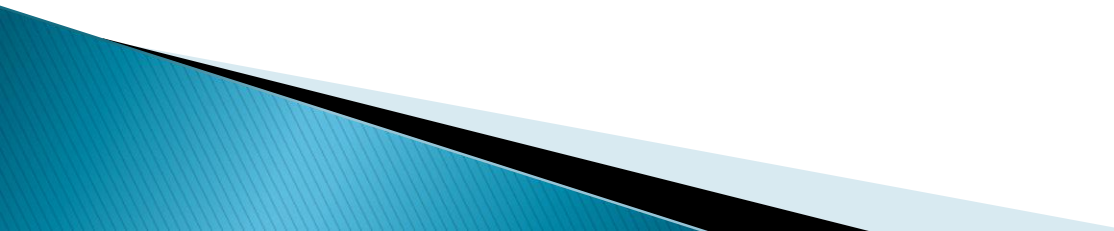
▶ Imagine survival and thriving

“5 years have passed. Who will you be because of this loss?”

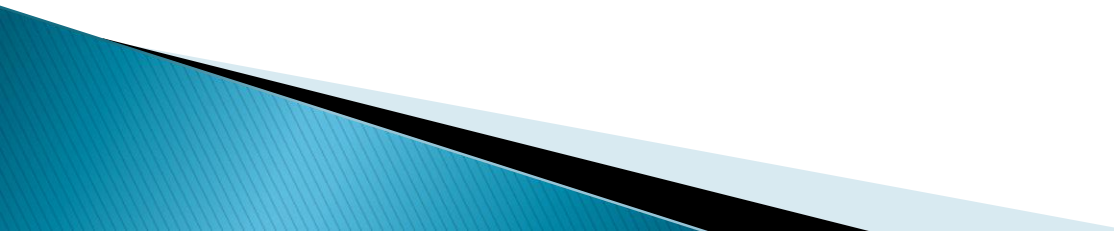
Wounded Healer Resume

- ▶ Wounds can make us better people
- ▶ 1. List all your major past and present wounds, problems, pain and suffering, disabilities, imperfections and shortcomings.
- ▶ 2. After each item, write how it makes you a better person.
 - ▶ A. How does it equip you to handle future wounds?
 - ▶ B. How does it help you to better understand, and address others' wounds?

Wounded Healer

- ▶ C. How does that improve you in qualities, like strength, courage, endurance, faithfulness and hope?
 - ▶ D. How has that item brought forth qualities you did not know you had?
3. Finally, organizing all of the above material, write the resume in a formal form, just like a regular resume.
- ~ Douglas C. Smith
- 

Other Ideas

- Buy a blank book to serve as a grief diary
 - Create a memory book
 - Memory Collage
 - Memory Quilt
 - Memory Jar
 - Become involved in a cause related to loss
 - Start an online support program or group
 - Complete a dream the person had
 - (Father son canoe trip, brother's bike trip)
- 

Write a song

Eric Clapton, Tears in Heaven



Assessing Personal Strength, Peace and Security

- ▶ A. Strength:
 - ▶ 1. What is “strength” for you?
 - ▶ 2. Where can you go to get it?
 - ▶ 3. Who gives it to you?
 - ▶ 4. How can you get more?
- ▶ B. Peace
 - ▶ 1. What is “peace” for you?
 - ▶ 2. Where can you go to get it?
 - ▶ 3. Who gives it to you?
 - ▶ 4. How can you get more?

Security

- ▶ C. Security
- ▶ 1. What is “security” for you?
- ▶ 2. Where can you go to get it?
- ▶ 3. Who gives it to you?
- ▶ 4. How can you get more?

• The Complete Book of Counseling the Dying and the Grieving by Douglas C. Smith



Resources that Facilitate

Collages

“Refrigerator” quote handouts

Children’s books for adults (Tear Soup)

Poetry writing and poetry reading

Pie feelings and heart feelings

Breathing and music

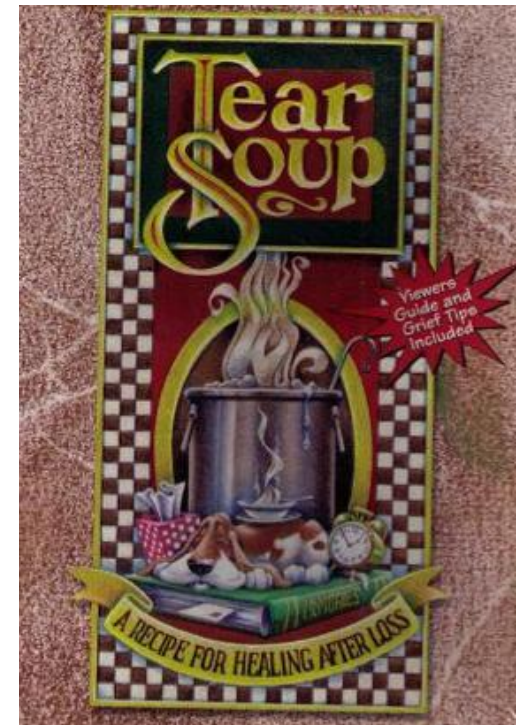
Movies

Song list

Loss Lines

Relationship Graph

Good bye letters



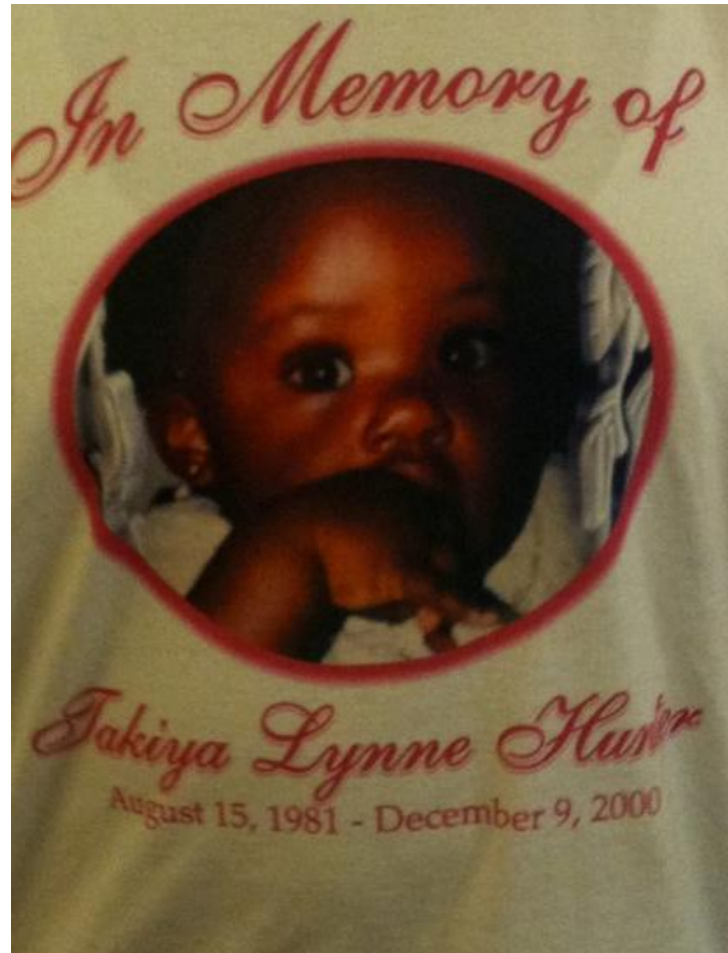
Have groups make a collage



A teenager who lived in a foster family made this in my group



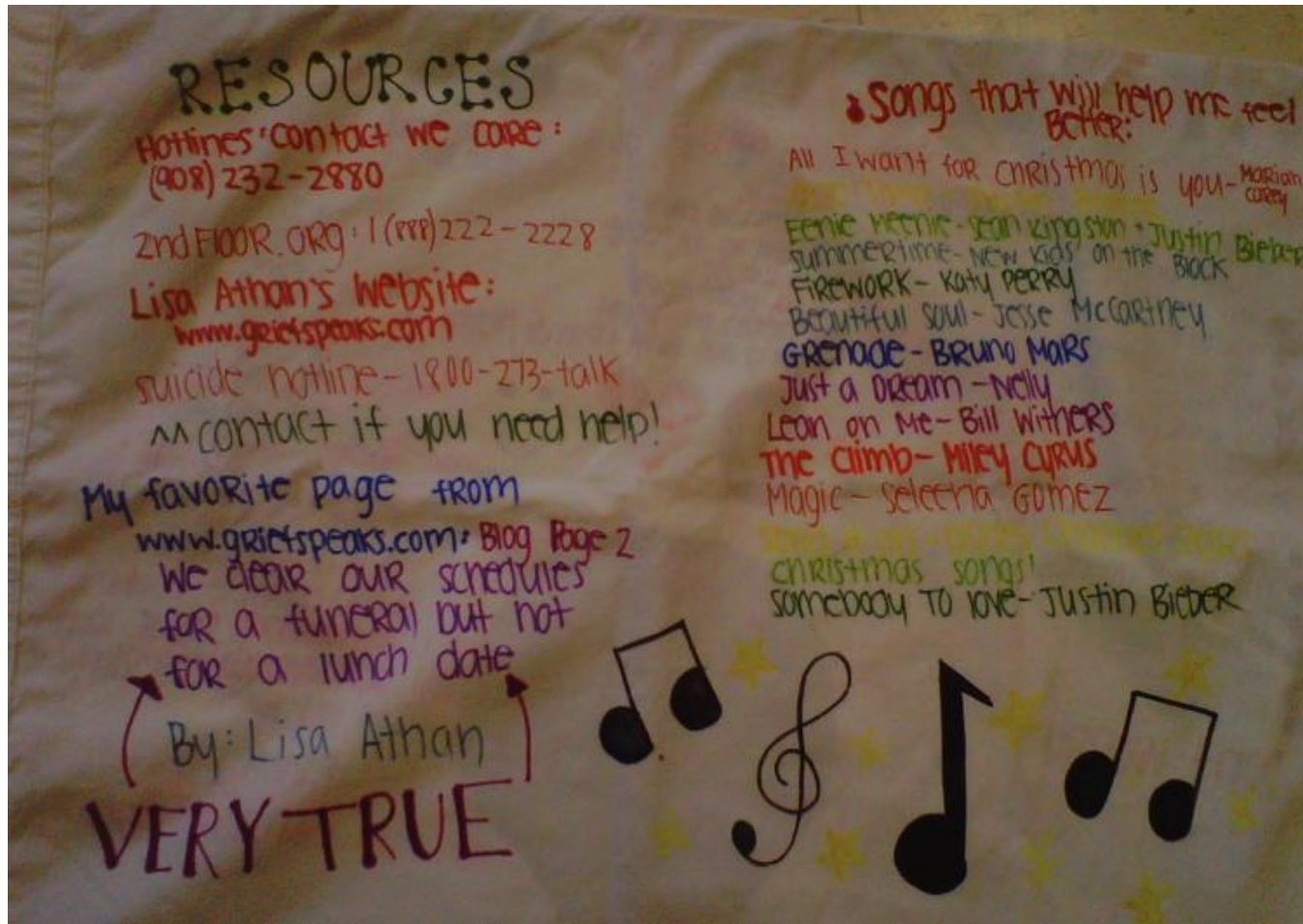
Photo T-shirts in Memory



Balloon Release at Camp Clover



A Resource Pillow Case



A Teen's Tattoo



The Scream Box: Let it Out



Mutual Help Grief Groups

- ▶ Offer a place of comfort and safety
- ▶ Help grievors discover they are not alone
- ▶ Teach grieving people that other grievors can be trusted
- ▶ Teach grievors that the story of another griever may have raw resources for their healing
- ▶ Encourage grievors to honestly express their feelings.
- ▶ Help grievors recognize and process feelings toward God, doctors, medical personnel, the legal system, even the person who died, or people who have failed to appreciate their grief.

Remember and Remember to Forget

“We will have these moments to remember....”

Healing and reconciling with a divorce is not about forgetting. Reconciling is about responsibly remembering and sometimes remembering to forget. On a page: list the things you want to remember and the things you want to remember to forget:

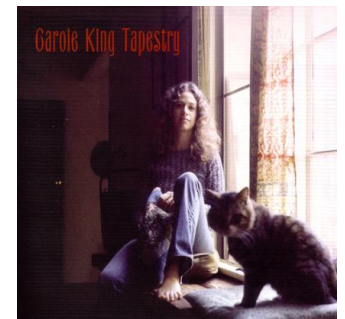
*I will always remember:*_____

I need to remember to forget:_____

*I will always remember:*_____

The Goal

- ▶ The goal is to find ways to accommodate the reality of being “forever changed” by a loss.
- ▶ The goal is not to return to normal but to create a “new normal”.
- ▶ The goal is to reweave the loss into the fabric of our lives.
- ▶ Grief will either make us bitter or better!



Thank You

- ▶ *"Sometimes our light goes out but is nurtured into flame by another human being. Each of us owes deepest thanks to those who have rekindled this light." – Albert Schweitzer*
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