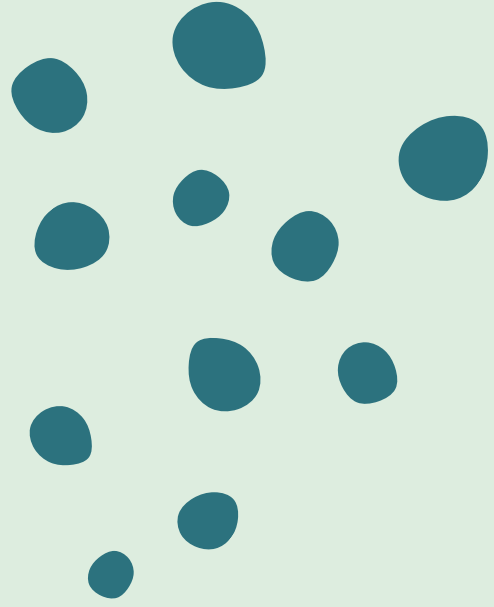


How does Grief feel?

PSYCHOEDUCATION
SESSION PLAN FOR
EXPLORING GRIEF
EMOTIONS AND
HOW THEY BEHAVE
OVER TIME

Accompanies SeeSaw resource book
'Living after a loss: a grief guide for young people'





INTRODUCTION TO GRIEF EMOTIONS AND HOW THEY BEHAVE

Before starting this session(s), practitioners should familiarise themselves with pages 5-6; 11-13; and 43 of SeeSaw's 'Living after loss' book for young people, particularly Stroebe & Schut's 'Dual Process Model' of grief.

These sessions can be used and adapted for group work with young people, one to one with a young person, or as a family session with young people and their parent(s)/carer(s)/sibling(s).

You may have already completed a 'grief emotions' exploration activity; the first part of this session will revise what learners have remembered about the range of grief emotions.

However, you can use this as a stand alone activity about grief emotions, if you preface the tasks with a brief intro discussion:

1. what is the main feeling people most commonly associate with grief?
2. do we think there might be a bigger range of feelings a person might experience after someone important to them has died?

You may want to break the following objectives and activities into a series of sessions, or complete in one longer one.

SESSION OBJECTIVES

- To be able to identify a range of grief emotions
- To understand how healthy grief behaves in the moment and over time.
- To understand the impact of grief getting 'stuck'
- To be able to identify a range of coping strategies when dealing with difficult emotions

RESOURCES REQUIRED

YOU WILL NEED:

- FLIP CHART/WHITE BOARD AND PENS
- YOU COULD USE A PROJECTOR IF YOU HAVE ACCESS TO ONE
- POST IT NOTES, PAPER, AND PENS FOR PARTICIPANTS
- PRACTITIONERS MAY WANT TO PRINT AND USE THE ACTIVITY SHEET ON PAGE 43 OF SEESAW'S 'LIVING AFTER LOSS' WORK BOOK
- YOU MAY WISH TO PREPARE AND PRINT A BLANK STORYBOARD WORKSHEET WITH 6 FRAMES (ACTIVITY FOUR, OPTION 2).
- MUSIC AND SPEAKER FOR OPTION ONE OF ACTIVITY 4: 1 SONG FAST-PACED, BUSY/FOCUSED INSTRUMENTAL; 1 SONG SLOW AND DEPRESSIVE INSTRUMENTAL. EG:
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_jaBBd3Z4w
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vZmNJF5WC_8
- SeeSaw 'Growing Around Grief' activity sheet

HOW DOES GRIEF FEEL? HOW DOES GRIEF BEHAVE?

You will need a blank copy of the dual process model drawn out large on a flip chart or white board - simply, 2 empty circles side by side. You will populate it during the session. Distribute post its and pens to participants. Alternatively, you may print out the activity sheet on page 43 of SeeSaw's resource book and use this instead.

ACTIVITY ONE (15 mins approx):

Label left hand circle 'Grief Emotions'.

Ask participants to write down as many grief emotions as they remember on separate post it notes; bring up to stick into left hand circle. Group similar/same suggestions together and fill in any gaps.

EVALUATE: You may want to highlight that 'sad' is just one feeling - often the one people most commonly associate with grief - but there is a far bigger range of grief emotions than most people first think.

You may also want to explore the emotions 'guilt' and 'relief' and where these might come from:

1. Blaming oneself in some way for the death
2. For serious illness death, the feeling of relief that a long period of illness and physical and emotional suffering is over (this is normal!)
3. Regretting things said/not said/done/not done

Normalise these more uncomfortable/potentially shame-inducing emotions.

ACTIVITY TWO (15 mins approx):

Label right hand circle 'Everyday Life'.

Ask participants to write down as many day to day activities on separate post it notes; these should include meals, tasks, learning, jobs, chores, self-care, hobbies, and leisure activities.

Bring up to stick into right hand circle. Group similar/same suggestions together and fill in any obvious gaps (e.g. who doesn't wash?! Clean their teeth? Get dressed?! - space for humour).

EVALUATE: How hard can it be to get on with these things when you're experiencing the grief emotions on the left?

How do most people manage? We bounce between circles - switching between experiencing tricky grief emotions, then putting them aside so we can get on with our lives, interests, and responsibilities, but switching back and forth across a day/week/month at our own pace.

DRAW ZIG ZAG LINE LINKING CIRCLES TO ILLUSTRATE HOW 'HEALTHY' GRIEF MOVES BACK AND FORTH.

ACKNOWLEDGE AND REMIND THAT GRIEF CAN FEEL ANYTHING BUT 'HEALTHY', BUT THAT IT IS A NORMAL HUMAN REACTION TO SOMETHING SAD HAPPENING AND NOT A MENTAL HEALTH 'PROBLEM'

WHEN CAN GRIEF GET MORE TRICKY?

You will need your completed dual process diagram from the previous sessions for these activities - if easier, you could project or print out the infographic on page 13 of SeeSaw's resource book. If there has been a gap since last session, remind participants of what was discussed in last sessions and remember to emphasise that **HEALTHY GRIEF MOVES**.

ACTIVITY THREE (5-10 mins approx):

Ask participants 'If healthy grief MOVES, how might more problematic grief behave?' Participants will usually identify that it 'gets stuck'.

VOTE: which side do participants think it gets stuck on? You could use 3, 2, 1: quick show of hands to poll the room, or write LEFT or RIGHT on a postit and hold up.

EVALUATE: Some participants usually identify that it's possible to get stuck on either side - they are correct. Activity Four will explore what the impact of that is (e.g. being overly busy to distract in order to avoid difficult feelings; or becoming stuck in low mood, so much so that everyday life and relationships suffer).

ACTIVITY FOUR (30 mins approx):

OPTION ONE: Drama Activity

Split group in half. Each half given one side of the Dual Process model to explore. Both halves to devise a **MIME SEQUENCE** to explore what getting stuck in that 'mode' would look like.

MIME SEQUENCE: communicating through action, no speech.

Think about: body language, facial expression, gesture, movement, pace and levels/proximity to others.

Play part of each song so groups can hear their music. Work with each group to explore and expand their response, linking a sequence of actions and moods.

Bring together and perform sequence to music for each other.

EVALUATE: What do we think happens if you get stuck on each side for too long? (Your own physical and emotional health suffers or you save up grief feelings for a bigger explosion later on). **REMEMBER:** healthy grief switches modes and lets out emotions in shorter, more manageable regular bursts.

ACTIVITY FOUR Ctd (30 mins approx):

OPTION TWO: Storyboard

Individuals to storyboard (simple stick men will do if not artistic) life unfolding on each side of the diagram, if stuck there.

STORYBOARD: a series of illustrative pictures

Think about: speech bubbles and/or captions to illuminate - like a comic strip.

OPTION THREE: Discussion

Simply talk through together what might happen to your mental and physical wellbeing if you spent too long on each side of the Dual Process Model.

HOW CAN WE MANAGE OUR GRIEF NEEDS?

You can acknowledge that spending some time on the right side of the Dual Process Model is one of our healthy coping strategies and that grieving people are still allowed to get on with life and shouldn't feel guilty for doing this, or for having fun or experiencing lighter moments. Getting stuck on either side can be more tricky: life is always about balance and spending time on each side of the model is healthy; we should aim to be able to feel, recognise, name, and express a RANGE of emotions over time.

PRACTICAL TIPS

ACTIVITY FIVE: POSTER/LEAFLET DESIGN

SETUP (5-10 mins approx):

We are going to explore some **coping strategies** to help us if we feel 'stuck' on one side of the model or the other, and realise we might need to make more space, time and energy to step into the other side in order to process and experience a RANGE of emotions.

Split group in half. Using the headings below, each side to design and make a **PRACTICAL TIPS** poster(s)/leaflet(s) with self-care ideas for people experiencing feeling stuck and wanting to change things. Work with groups to draw out ideas - there are some suggestions below to get you started, but the list is not exhaustive.

ACTIVITY FIVE - GROUP ONE (30 mins approx):

FEELING STUCK? EXPERIENCING LOW MOOD AND LOW ENERGY? NEED TO RE-ENERGISE?

Why not try...

- Taking a warm bath or shower
- Putting on clean clothes
- Buying or preparing a nutritious meal
- Warm drink & crunchy biscuit
- Tidying one drawer or surface (manageable)
- Listening to some energising, upbeat music
- Limiting screen time
- Getting outside for a walk/gentle exercise
- Weighted blanket
- Talking to a trusted person
- Practising deep breathing

ACTIVITY FIVE - GROUP TWO (30 mins approx):

FEELING STUCK? AVOIDING DIFFICULT FEELINGS? STRESSED, RUNNING AT MAX CAPACITY AND NEED TO SLOW DOWN?

Why not try...

- Taking a warm bath or shower
- Making time to talk to a friend one to one
- Listening to some calm, relaxing music
- Don't be afraid to say 'no' to more plans
- Getting outside for a walk/gentle exercise alone
- Putting work/jobs down in favour of watching TV/reading/gaming/ listening to music
- Drinking through a straw
- Practising deep breathing
- Physical tasks/weight-bearing work

EVALUATE: Share across the groups. Are some pieces of advice on each side similar? What do they have in common? (They are about self-care and sensory regulation - when we are stuck in one side or the other, we are **DYSREGULATED** and need to help our brain realise we are safe and calm - see pp15-17 of SeeSaw resource book).

GRIEF OVER TIME: WHAT TO EXPECT

Once young people have understood how grief can feel 'in the moment', through understanding the Dual Process Model, they often think (and worry) about how grief will look and feel as time goes on...

Refresh your memory about Lois Tonkin's 'Growing Around Grief' model on page 12 of the SeeSaw 'Living after loss' resource book. Use the supplemental SeeSaw 'Growing Around Grief' activity sheet to help you plan your chosen activities with your young person/people.

PRACTICAL TIPS

You will need to source and make a resources pack for your chosen activities and participants will need their list of grief emotions written out.

ACTIVITY SIX: MAKING A GRIEF BALL (30-40 mins approx):

There are several ways to make your own 'grief ball' in a session, should you want to take the time to explore this creatively. Young people completing this activity will need their clear list of grief emotions to colour code.

If they have recently completed the activities above, they will not need to repeat the exploration of the range of grief emotions task again, as included in the 'Growing Around Grief' activity sheet.

You may choose not to do this activity as a group - you may choose to get a series of different sized balls and containers ready prepared to explore the theory that helps illustrate how grief behaves over time.

ACTIVITY SEVEN: EXPLORING GRIEF OVER TIME (15 mins approx):

Using the grief ball(s) participants made - or that you have provided if Activity Six not completed - use the ideas in the 'Growing Around Grief' activity sheet to explore the way grief behaves over time.

EVALUATE: Why might it be comforting that our grief doesn't shrink? (Because grief lasts as long as love lasts and people can hold on too tightly to their grief for fear of forgetting their special person - knowing they will always love and miss them, but will grow in confidence and new experiences, can be a comforting thought).

REMEMBER: the Dual Process model still applies over time - we might just change the time we spend/pace we move between halves as time goes on.

IF YOU HAVE A YOUNG PERSON STRUGGLING WITH BEREAVEMENT, DON'T HESITATE TO GET IN TOUCH WITH SEESAW FOR MORE IDEAS AND SUPPORT