

Grief and life transitions

Ten original resources for More Than Therapy. Choose a page that fits the client's priorities and review the clinical notes before use. The materials support professional care and are not validated assessments.

GRF01 Naming What Has Changed

Worksheet | 10 to 15 minutes

GRF02 A Plan for Grief Waves

Worksheet | 10 to 15 minutes

GRF03 Remembering in My Own Way

Worksheet | 10 to 15 minutes

GRF04 Preparing for a Difficult Date

Worksheet | 10 to 15 minutes

GRF05 Sharing the Practical Load

Worksheet | 10 to 15 minutes

GRF06 Words I Have Not Said

Worksheet | 10 to 15 minutes

GRF07 Making Room for Different Grief

Handout | 5 to 10 minutes

GRF08 Listening Without Rushing Grief

Clinician script | 10 to 15 minutes

GRF09 A Session for Grief Support

Session guide | 50 minutes

GRF10 Writing Through a Life Change

Journal prompts | 10 minutes

Fillable responses work in compatible PDF readers. Save each completed worksheet separately in an approved record system.

Clinical notes

Grief and life transitions

GRF01 Naming What Has Changed

Include death and nondeath losses while avoiding assumptions that they are identical. Use the client's preferred words and cultural context. Do not require a detailed account of traumatic circumstances to complete the exercise.

GRF02 A Plan for Grief Waves

Distinguish tolerable grief intensity from acute safety concerns or severe dissociation. Offer grounding and choice without framing emotion as a problem to eliminate. Adapt for workplace, school, caregiving, and cultural mourning practices.

GRF03 Remembering in My Own Way

Offer memory work only with consent. Be attentive to abuse, estrangement, traumatic bereavement, and cultural or religious restrictions. Avoid implying that connection, forgiveness, or a memorial ritual is necessary for healing.

GRF04 Preparing for a Difficult Date

Do not assume anniversaries are uniformly distressing. Ask about family, faith, financial, and cultural expectations. Check whether boundary setting could create interpersonal danger and adapt to available safety and support.

GRF05 Sharing the Practical Load

Help prioritize without taking over. Consider executive functioning, language access, disability, and available resources. Refer legal and financial questions appropriately rather than giving specialized advice outside your role.

GRF06 Words I Have Not Said

Offer this as an optional reflective activity, not trauma processing. Screen for overwhelm and respect a refusal. Do not encourage sending a letter to an unsafe person or assume reconciliation is desired.

GRF07 Making Room for Different Grief

Avoid normalizing away significant impairment or risk. Assess duration, functioning, cultural expectations, depression, traumatic stress, and prolonged grief when indicated. Individualized evaluation is needed; no single emotional pattern establishes a diagnosis.

GRF08 Listening Without Rushing Grief

Use cultural humility and avoid imposing beliefs about death, forgiveness, or continuing bonds. Assess safety and impairment directly when indicated. Silence can be supportive when chosen collaboratively rather than used to avoid difficult questions.

GRF09 A Session for Grief Support

Do not force emotional expression or equate completing a task with grief progress. Assess severe impairment and risk. Seek appropriate consultation or referral for traumatic bereavement, prolonged grief, or concerns beyond competence.

GRF10 Writing Through a Life Change

Allow mixed or absent emotions without interpretation. Offer alternatives for literacy, disability, or cultural fit. Reflection should not replace assessment when grief is accompanied by significant impairment, suicidality, or escalating substance use.

Naming What Has Changed

Grief and life transitions | Adults | 10 to 15 minutes

Recognize the main loss and the everyday changes surrounding it.

A loss can change more than one relationship or role. It may affect routines, identity, finances, community, or a future you expected. This page helps you name what has changed without requiring you to explain every detail or feel a particular way.

Map the changes

Start with the loss in the words you prefer. Then consider changes that came with it: who checks on you, who handles a task, where you belong, or what a familiar place now feels like. Some changes may seem small to others and still matter deeply to you.

Choose one area for support

You do not need to address every change today. Circle one that is especially difficult or one where help feels possible. Separate what needs emotional company from what needs practical assistance. For example, missing a shared meal may call for companionship, while paperwork may call for concrete help.

The loss or transition I want to name today is

Changes in my routines, roles, or expected future include

One change other people may not notice is

The kind of support I want first and whom I might ask are

A Plan for Grief Waves

Grief and life transitions | Adults | 10 to 15 minutes

Prepare flexible choices for moments when grief becomes especially intense.

Grief may be quieter at one moment and strong at another. A reminder can arrive unexpectedly. This plan is about giving yourself options when feelings rise; it does not ask you to stop grieving or make your feelings follow a schedule.

Notice your own signals

Choose a recent manageable example. Notice the reminder, what happened in your body or thoughts, and what you needed. Possible responses include company, privacy, an ordinary task, a brief pause, or practical help. Different moments may call for different responses.

Offer two choices

Prepare one option for when you want connection and another for when you want space. A brief phrase can help: I am having a hard grief moment; could you sit with me? Decide how you will rejoin your day when ready, without requiring the feeling to disappear first.

A reminder or early signal I sometimes notice is

When I want connection, I can ask or do

When I want space, I can safely

A gentle way to return to the next part of my day is

Remembering in My Own Way

Grief and life transitions | Adults | 10 to 15 minutes

Choose an optional way to acknowledge a meaningful relationship or life chapter.

Remembering can bring comfort, pain, mixed feelings, or little feeling at all. You decide whether this exercise fits today. You may honor a person, a place, a role, or a chapter of life without presenting the relationship as perfect.

Select one small expression

Possible choices include a song, a meal, a drawing, a story, a private phrase, or keeping an ordinary object. Choose something that matches your beliefs and circumstances. You may also decide that setting an object aside or taking a break from reminders is the caring choice today.

Keep your own meaning

Name what this expression means to you, including any complicated parts. Decide whether it will be private or shared. If others participate, tell them what would feel supportive and what would not. The exercise does not require forgiveness, gratitude, or a positive interpretation of harm.

What I want to acknowledge or remember is

My chosen expression, or my choice to pause, is

The meaning and mixed feelings I want to make room for are

I want this to be private or shared with; afterward I may need

Preparing for a Difficult Date

Grief and life transitions | Adults | 10 to 15 minutes

Plan support and flexibility around an anniversary, holiday, or other meaningful date.

A date can carry memories, expectations, and pressure from other people. You can plan ahead while leaving room to change your mind. This page helps you decide what you want to do, what you want to decline, and who can support you.

Consider the whole day

Think about the period before, during, and after the event. Include transportation, meals, company, rest, and an exit option. Choose a smaller version of the plan in case your energy is low. You can participate for part of an event or mark the date privately.

Communicate a flexible boundary

Try: I would like to come for an hour, and I may leave early. Or: I am keeping this day quiet; please check on me tomorrow. Other people may grieve differently. You can respect their choices while asking them to respect yours.

The date or event and what it may bring up are

My preferred plan and a smaller backup version are

A boundary or request I want to communicate is

My support before, during, and after the date will be

Sharing the Practical Load

Grief and life transitions | Adults | 10 to 15 minutes

Identify a practical burden after loss or transition and ask for a specific form of help.

Life tasks can keep arriving while your attention and energy are stretched. This page focuses on one practical burden. Asking for help does not require you to explain all your feelings or prove that you are struggling enough.

Sort what needs attention

List a few current tasks, then mark one as urgent, one as able to wait, and one as able to be shared. Use actual deadlines when you know them. If a task involves legal, financial, or medical decisions, identify the qualified person who can answer your questions.

Turn help into a clear request

Choose a task someone can understand and complete. For example: Could you sit with me while I sort these letters for twenty minutes? Tell the person what decisions remain yours. A specific offer can be easier to accept than a broad instruction to ask if you need anything.

One urgent task, one task that can wait, and one I could share are

The person or service I could ask and the exact request are

A choice or boundary I want to keep control of is

My next small action and when I will take it are

Words I Have Not Said

Grief and life transitions | Adults | 10 to 15 minutes

Create a private space for unfinished thoughts without requiring a response or resolution.

Some words remain after a death, separation, or life change. You can write to a person, a past version of yourself, or the situation itself. The writing is for you. It does not need to be sent, saved, or shared.

Choose a manageable beginning

Begin with one sentence: What I wish you understood is; What I miss is; What still hurts is; or What I need now is. Select a small part of the story rather than its most overwhelming detail. You can use fragments, drawings, or spoken words.

Decide how to close for today

You do not need to reach closure, forgiveness, or a final conclusion. End with a present need, then notice your surroundings and choose what comes next. Decide whether to keep, put away, or dispose of the page. Pause if writing becomes too activating.

The person, situation, or version of myself I am addressing is

What I want to say today is

What I need after writing and what I will do with this page are

Making Room for Different Grief

Grief and life transitions | Adults | 5 to 10 minutes

Explain that grief varies while identifying when additional support may be useful.

Grief can involve sadness, anger, numbness, relief, longing, confusion, or changing combinations. People in the same family may respond differently. Your relationship, culture, beliefs, resources, and circumstances all affect what loss means to you.

There is no required sequence

You do not need to move through a fixed set of stages or demonstrate a particular emotion. Enjoying an ordinary moment does not cancel your loss. Having a difficult day after a better one does not erase what has helped. Let support fit your actual experience.

Support can be emotional and practical

You might want someone to listen, share a memory, help with a task, or simply stay nearby. You may also want privacy. Explain the kind of company that helps when possible. Cultural and spiritual practices may offer meaning, but participation remains your choice.

When to reach for more help

Consider professional support when distress feels unmanageable, daily functioning is seriously affected, substance use increases, or you feel persistently disconnected. In the U.S., call or text 988 for crisis support; call 911 for immediate danger. A clinician can assess grief alongside other concerns without using this page as a diagnosis.

The kind of support I would welcome right now is

Listening Without Rushing Grief

Grief and life transitions | Clinicians | 10 to 15 minutes

Support a grief conversation with permission, specificity, and room for complicated feelings.

These prompts help the clinician remain present without offering a timeline or a lesson. Use the client's name for the person or loss when invited. Ask what kind of conversation would be useful before choosing an exercise.

Ask what would help

Clinician: Would you like to talk about what happened, what life is like now, or something else today? Client: I am tired of telling the story. Clinician: We can leave the story alone. What has been hardest about getting through this week?

Make room for mixed feelings

Client: I feel relieved, and then I feel guilty. Clinician: Both feelings are here. What does the relief connect to, and what does the guilt say you should be feeling? Avoid assuming relief means the relationship did not matter. If the client becomes overwhelmed: Would you prefer a pause, a change of subject, or some company while we sit?

Invite a concrete preference

Clinician: When people try to help, what do they do that fits, and what makes things harder? What would you like them to understand? If appropriate, offer GRF04 for a difficult date or GRF05 for a practical burden. Close with: What do you need for the period after this session?

Client preferences, helpful language, and a support request to remember

A Session for Grief Support

Grief and life transitions | Clinicians | 50 minutes

Structure a 50 minute session around the client's current grief needs and one supportive action.

Intended outcome: the client names a current loss related need, chooses a coping or support option, and leaves with a manageable plan. Use this structure flexibly; telling the loss story or completing a worksheet is optional.

Minutes 0 to 15

0 to 5: Check current wellbeing, safety, and the client's preference for talking, practical planning, or quiet reflection. 5 to 15: Use GRF01 to identify the loss and secondary changes that matter today. Follow their language and avoid assuming a particular emotional response.

Minutes 15 to 40

15 to 30: Choose GRF02 for intense reminders, GRF04 for a meaningful date, or GRF05 for practical burdens. Complete only the relevant parts. 30 to 40: Practice one support request or coping choice. Ask whether the plan respects cultural practices, privacy, energy, and the client's relationships.

Minutes 40 to 50

40 to 45: Notice the client's current level of activation and offer a pause or orientation to the room if desired. 45 to 50: Ask what they are taking from the session and what they need next. Agree on one optional practice and a check in plan. Address any referral or safety needs before ending.

Current need, selected support action, and follow up plan

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Writing Through a Life Change

Grief and life transitions | Adults | 10 minutes

Reflect on what has changed, what remains meaningful, and what support is needed now.

Choose a prompt that fits your loss or transition. Write for a short period you choose, or answer aloud. You can hold appreciation and anger, uncertainty and hope, or no clear feeling at all. Nothing here requires a positive ending.

Follow your own language

A life change can affect who you are, how your days work, and what you expected next. Write about one part at a time. If a prompt does not fit your experience, change it. You do not need to make the experience meaningful for anyone else.

Return to the present

End by naming one current need and one ordinary action available to you. This might be eating, resting, contacting someone, or returning to a routine. If writing brings more distress than you want to manage alone, pause and bring the page to a trusted support or clinician.

A change that is difficult for others to see is

Something I miss, something I do not miss, or a feeling I am unsure about is

A part of myself or my life I want room for now is

What I need from others, and what I want to keep private, are

Clinical foundations

These sources inform the general clinical concepts. The original resources in this collection are not validated instruments or publisher-endorsed protocols. Links checked October 26, 2026.

S04 Doing What Matters in Times of Stress An Illustrated Guide

World Health Organization | 2020

Stress coping, present moment awareness, values, and kindness. Original exercises in this library are separate from the WHO guide.

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240003927>

S09 Coping With Grief and Loss

National Institute on Aging | n.d.

Individual grief experiences, practical support, and seeking additional care when needed. Transition exercises are original extensions for reflection.

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/grief-and-mourning/coping-grief-and-loss>

S16 988 Crisis Support and Suicide Prevention

SAMHSA and the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline | n.d.

U.S. crisis contact guidance and urgent help for immediate danger.

<https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/suicidal-behavior/prevention>

<https://988lifeline.org/get-help/>