



## Grief and Loss

### Materials:

- Worksheet

**Brainstorm:** What do you think the key difference is between grief and sadness?

**Discuss:** The primary element in the experience of an instance of grief is one of an intense experience of loss. Experiencing instances of grief can be different for everyone. Some people might have a really difficult time managing their grief, and others may not. During an experience of grief, people may also experience anger or they might experience some other instance of emotion. All these feelings are normal. There is no "right way" to grieve.

**Dive in!** When we talk about grief, it's important to discuss healthy and unhealthy ways that people deal with their grief. Healthy ways to deal with grief involve strategies that help a person move towards acceptance. Unhealthy ways to deal with grief include self-destructive or dangerous behaviors that a person may use to avoid their feelings, such as using drugs or alcohol. Sometimes people withdraw from the activities and people they once enjoyed being with to isolate themselves from the unpleasant feelings. Anything that can have a negative consequence can be considered an unhealthy way to deal with one's grief.

Given that we will all experience loss at some point in our lives, learning to deal with grief is an essential skill. David Kessler, an expert in grief and loss recommends trying to find meaning in the experience. He suggests:

- Giving yourself some time and accepting the feelings that you experience
- Make the decision to heal from the experience. Healing is intentional... meaning that you have to decide to heal, it doesn't just automatically happen.
- Be optimistic about your future. You have experienced loss but by making meaning from that experience, you can transform your life.
- No one can avoid the experience of loss. The realization that this painful experience is not unique to you can provide comfort.



## High School

**Activity:** Hand out the worksheet. We're going to take some time to think about and write about an experience of grief and loss that we have gone through. Research shows that writing about these difficult experiences can be tremendously helpful! A lead researcher, Dr. James Pennebaker says "By writing, you put some structure and organization to those anxious feelings. It helps you to get past them."

Writing alone is not the magic bullet to wipe away feelings of grief, but finding meaning in the experience is also important.

**Reflect:** In reading over your writing, what meaning can you find within the experience? What can you take away from the experience and move forward?

Fill in the blank: \_\_\_\_\_ (experience) and I realize/understand/learned that \_\_\_\_\_.

### Extend and Enrich:

Making meaning from grief and loss:

<https://youtu.be/H6O-eBIWyq0>

Grief changes you from who you were to who you are now. Looking back from before the loss, draw a picture of who you were. Draw a picture of who you are now. What has been the transformation?

### Professional Development

Spend some time writing about an experience of grief. Is it possible for you to find some meaning in this loss?

### For Further Study:

Center for Loss and Life Transition

<https://www.centerforloss.com/2023/12/helping-teenagers-cope-grief/>

TeensHealth <https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/someone-died.html>

GirlSpring

[https://www.girlspring.com/surviving-grief-as-a-teen/?gad\\_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQjwpNuyBhCuARIsANJqL9MKXtyeYWgy-Q0RYhy\\_obnqf2d2PmvKwqDuhcrKD69fa86-s38aMCwaAqRpEALw\\_wc](https://www.girlspring.com/surviving-grief-as-a-teen/?gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQjwpNuyBhCuARIsANJqL9MKXtyeYWgy-Q0RYhy_obnqf2d2PmvKwqDuhcrKD69fa86-s38aMCwaAqRpEALw_wc)