The Grief Recovery Method®

8-Week Group Program

by
The Grief Recovery Institute®

Leader’s Table of Contents and Homework Sheets
Dear Grief Recovery Specialist,

Welcome!

We are pleased that you’re about to begin your 8-Week Grief Recovery Method® Group Program.

After this welcome, the next page of this Leader’s Guide is a simple Table of Contents for the 8-Week Program. You can reference it to know what activities will happen each week. It also alerts you to which weeks you’ll be demonstrating your Loss History Graph, your Relationship Graph, and how to covert the Relationship Graph into the Recovery Components.

Many Specialists pre-make their graph examples on flip-chart paper or poster boards to have them ready to demonstrate.

After the Table of Contents, you’ll find the Special Days Calendar and 18 more pages representing each of the homework assignments you’ll need to hand out to your participants. You can take them out of this section and photocopy them for your group.

You will also be able to download and print the homework sheets from the Specialist Section on www.griefrecoverymethod.com.

A Few Important Notes:
As you have learned in your training, for safety purposes it’s never okay for spouses, family members, or very close friends to be paired in the small group partnerships. Please be mindful of this.

In some circumstances it can be helpful to have a kind of “taxi” service for individuals who cannot drive or don’t have transportation.

Also, over the years we’ve developed a Special Days Calendar. Quite often, the annual dates representing the death of someone important to a grieving person, or chronicling events like birthdays, anniversaries, or other special days, occur within the time frame of our program.

Those days can be painful and isolating, and even more affecting since participation in our group brings more awareness of the absence of someone from our lives. If you choose to use the Special Days Calendar, you will need to ask for volunteers who are willing to call the people who’ve signed the Calendar on those specific days.
Some of our Specialists have found this to be very helpful in reducing isolation and increasing participation for both the volunteers and those receiving the calls. If you use the Special Days Calendar, please make sure to let people know that by signing on, they are agreeing to be called on those days. Also, make sure that the volunteers all know that if something happens during the call that they don’t know how to handle, to get in touch with you.

Please do not initiate the Special Days Calendar calling-contact process until after week two when all the volunteers have read chapters 1, 2, & 3, which address the Six Myths.

You’ll find a template for the Special Days Calendar at the beginning of the homework assignments in this leader’s guide. It has room for nine entries, but you can print more pages.

On page three of the first week’s format, just after the Commitments are made, you’ll find a Leader’s note letting you know that’s the time to introduce the Calendar.

That’s also the time you can offer your group the idea of having a kind of graduation dinner either at the end of the last week of the program or sometime thereafter at everybody’s convenience. It can be a potluck, a barbeque, or at a restaurant.

One last note: when you’re reading the Weekly format, you’ll see highlighted sections, some of which say, “Leader’s Note.” All those highlighted sections are not to be read aloud, but are there to guide you in the actions you’ll do next. Please take the time to read the whole Format so you’ll be familiar with it when you’re actually using it with your group.

And, as always, remember that if something comes up that you’re not sure how to handle, please contact us.

From our hearts to yours and on to your groups,
Russell and John and The Grief Recovery Method Team
Table of Contents 8-Week Group Program – Leader’s Guide

Note: This template is based on a group running from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM. You can run your groups at any time of day or evening that suits you, just modify the reconvening times based on these times.

WEEK ONE: Opening, Commitments, Grief, and Grief Recovery definitions.
- Homework: Read chapters 1, 2, 3 of the Handbook. Make notes.

WEEK TWO: Commitments, Large group – Discuss homework in general.
- Small Groups – Discuss homework chapters.
- Homework: Read chapters 4, 5, 6. Make notes in three areas.

WEEK THREE: Commitments, Large group – Discuss homework in general.
- Small groups – Discuss homework chapters.
- Homework: Read Chapter 8 [okay to skip Chapter Seven]. Make list of STERBs.

WEEK FOUR: Commitments, Large group – Discuss STERBs – Reconvene at 8:15.
- Small Groups – STERBs.
- Reconvene 8:15. Demo Loss History Graph [help them start LHG – finish at home].
- Homework: Read Chapter 9, finish LHG, 4 lists [Misinfo, STERBs, Acc., Illness].

WEEK FIVE: Commitments, Large Group – Discuss LHG homework – Reconvene 8:30.
- Small groups – Each person tells LHG and 4 lists [Misinfo, STERBs, Acc., Illness].
- Homework: Read Chapters 10 & 11. Write Rel. Graph.

WEEK SIX: Commitments, Large group – Discuss Rel. Graph Homework – Reconvene 8:30.
- Small groups – Each person tells Rel. Graph.
- Reconvene 8:30. Debrief Rel. Graph, Demo Rel. Graph into Recovery Components.
- Homework: Read first part of Chapter 12, pages 136-143 [Second part, 144-160 are in Week Seven Homework]. Convert Rel. Graph into Recovery Components.

WEEK SEVEN: Commitments, Large group – Discuss conversion to Components.
- Small groups – Each person reads lists of Recovery Components.
- Homework: The Completion Letter.

WEEK EIGHT: Commitments, Large group – Discuss Letter Writing.
- Small groups – Read Letters.
- Set up group celebratory get-together.
SPECIAL DAYS CALENDAR - SIGN UP
Sign up on this calendar if you’d like to receive a phone call or email from one of our group volunteers on days that have special meaning for you.

Your Name: ___________________________________________________________________
Date: ____________ Significant Event: ____________________________________________
Contact - Phone:_____ - _______ Email:__________________________________________

Your Name: ___________________________________________________________________
Date: ____________ Significant Event: ____________________________________________
Contact - Phone:_____ - _______ Email:__________________________________________

Your Name: ___________________________________________________________________
Date: ____________ Significant Event: ____________________________________________
Contact - Phone:_____ - _______ Email:__________________________________________

Your Name: ___________________________________________________________________
Date: ____________ Significant Event: ____________________________________________
Contact - Phone:_____ - _______ Email:__________________________________________

Your Name: ___________________________________________________________________
Date: ____________ Significant Event: ____________________________________________
Contact - Phone:_____ - _______ Email:__________________________________________

Your Name: ___________________________________________________________________
Date: ____________ Significant Event: ____________________________________________
Contact - Phone:_____ - _______ Email:__________________________________________

Your Name: ___________________________________________________________________
Date: ____________ Significant Event: ____________________________________________
Contact - Phone:_____ - _______ Email:__________________________________________

Your Name: ___________________________________________________________________
Date: ____________ Significant Event: ____________________________________________
Contact - Phone:_____ - _______ Email:__________________________________________

Your Name: ___________________________________________________________________
Date: ____________ Significant Event: ____________________________________________
Contact - Phone:_____ - _______ Email:__________________________________________

WEEK ONE – Homework Assignment

Your first homework assignment is to read Chapters 1, 2, & 3 of the Handbook. We know that grieving people often have difficulty concentrating. So, let’s break the assignment down to manageable chunks. Chapter 1 is 10 pages long. Chapter 2 is 12 pages. Chapter 3 is 16 pages. It is not essential that you read them all in one sitting. It might be helpful to set aside some quiet or private time for this reading. It might also be a good idea to have some tissues handy.

Part One: After you’ve read the chapters one time, we want you to go back and re-read them. This time, we want you to pay particular attention to the section that addresses the alleged stages of grief on pages 11-15. You probably have heard about the stages, and you may or may not agree with our position. Please make notes about your observations and possible differences between what you believe and what John and Russell have written about stages.

NOTES/COMMENT ABOUT STAGES: [pages 11-15]

_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________

See page two of this homework →
Part Two: When you re-read the chapters, we want you to prepare a list of beliefs that you have used in an attempt to deal with the painful and conflicting feelings caused by loss. On page 35, you will see the list of six myths John and Russell learned about dealing with loss. Write down the ones from that list that you may have been using, and then add any other beliefs you’ve been using to try to deal with the painful and conflicting feelings caused by loss.

MYTHS/BELIEFS ABOUT GRIEF: [pages 23-35]

_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________

Remember to take your assignment seriously. Your recovery will be the direct result of your participation. Do not shortchange yourself.
WEEK TWO – Homework Assignment

Read Chapters 4, 5, & 6. The last part of Chapter 6 - pages 66, 67, & 68 - and all of Chapter 7 are for people who are not in this program. You may read those sections for general knowledge or you can skip them. Re-read Chapters 4, 5, & 6 and underline the passages that affect you.

There are three distinct areas for you to focus on:

- First, is the list of comments on page 44. After reading the list, write down some of the intellectual comments that you heard at the time of your loss. Try to remember how you felt about those comments when they were said.
- Second, is the section entitled “WE WANT THE APPROVAL OF OTHERS,” which begins on page 54. List some of your own approval seeking reactions to what was happening around you, and how that may have led you to “Academy Award Recovery” behaviors.
- And third, pay particular attention to the section entitled: Who is responsible?, from pages 62 to 66. Although loss may be 99% responsible for how you feel, you must be willing to take 1% responsibility for your reaction to loss. It is essential that you begin to understand the idea of taking responsibility for your reaction to your losses, because it is the only thing you can actually work on.

Notes on intellectual comments that did not help you:
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

Notes on Approval:
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

See page two of this homework →
Remember to take your homework assignment seriously. As we move forward, you will need to set aside enough time for the reading and written assignments. Try not to leave it until the last minute and cause yourself to rush. Your recovery will be the direct result of your participation. Do not shortchange yourself.
WEEK THREE – Homework Assignment

So far, you’ve read Chapters 1-6 in the Handbook. You can skip Chapter 7, as it is not needed for this group. Read Chapter 8. Then re-read it and underline the passages that affect you. It’s a very important chapter about Short-Term Energy Relieving Behaviors [STERBs], and will be the focus of your small groups next week.

Your Homework Assignment is contained in these two paragraphs from page 82 of The Grief Recovery Handbook:

After reading the chapter again, try to identify at least two examples of short-term relief you have used to displace your feelings. This is not as easy as it appears. It could be your first chance to demonstrate your commitment to total honesty.

Here is the list of short-term energy-relieving behaviors from earlier in the chapter. Use it as a guideline to help determine whether you have been relying on short-term relief.

- Food
- Alcohol/Drugs
- Anger
- Exercise
- Fantasy (movies, TV, books)
- Isolation
- Sex
- Shopping (humorously called Retail Therapy)
- Workaholism

Write down any of the short-term energy relievers from the list in which you have participated. Then add any others you realized you may have used, or are still using. It is actually very common in our society to have been socialized with the idea that we should cover up emotional pain rather than confront it directly. STERBs are a perfect example of an indirect—and sometimes damaging—way of avoiding our real feelings.

Sometimes the behaviors or activities we use as STERBs are things we wouldn’t want to tell others. As you prepare your list, keep in mind that you will be sharing it with your small group next week. We will re-commit to Absolute Confidentiality, but you will need to determine what you are willing to share.

Remember to take your homework assignment seriously. This week you will have to be willing to look honestly at yourself as we begin to move from discovery to recovery. Try not to leave it until the last minute and cause yourself to rush. Your recovery will be the direct result of your participation. Do not shortchange yourself.

See page two of this homework
WEEK FOUR – Homework Assignment

Part One:

- Begin your homework by reading Chapter 9. Pay particular attention to the fact that death is not the only kind of loss. Divorce, Moving, Financial Problems and Loss of Trust events are just a few examples of the many different loss events that may have occurred during our lives.

- After you’ve read and re-read Chapter 9, set aside about an hour in which to complete your Loss History Graph. It’s a good idea to work in a private place. It may or may not be emotional for you, so have tissues handy just in case. Don’t get pre-occupied if you think you’re not doing it right. We’ll be able to edit and correct it during the next session.

- In class the leader helped you get started, so your graph already has a beginning and end date; your dawn of conscious memory date; and the year and a description of your most painful loss.

NOTE: All grief is experienced at 100%. There are no half grievers and we do not compare grief. However, for the purposes of this exercise, you’ll attach relative degrees of intensity to your losses. Let the length of your lines indicate the intensity that you remember feeling when the loss occurred. (See pages 87 & 92 for examples, and page 100 for a detailed explanation.)

Obviously, this is the most personal and possibly the most emotional homework assignment so far. Because of that, it has the potential to be a little scary. As we’ve pointed out a few times in the opening weeks, it’s not uncommon for people to have some apprehensions or fears when they go to do something they’ve never done before.

If you have any fears, please allow yourself those feelings, but please take the action of doing the homework anyway.

See page two of this homework ➔
WEEK FOUR – Homework Assignment

Part Two:

After you’ve completed your Loss History Graph, you will review your notes to see if you can discover some additional ways in which you may have been affected by those losses. You’ll be looking at four categories: Misinformation, STERBs, Accidents, & Illnesses.

See if you can find any examples of **Misinformation** you learned as the result of your losses. Things like “Don’t Feel Bad,” or “Be Strong,” etc. Write them under Misinformation.

**Example from Russell’s story:** “I was 15 when my grandmother died, and my little brother was five. I was told that I had to be strong for my brother. In effect, I was taught that my feelings didn’t count. Years later, it seemed logical for me to be strong for my Dad when his father, my grandfather, died.”

Go back over your Loss History Graph again and see if you discover any **Short-Term Energy Relieving Behaviors (STERBs)** that you may have participated in following losses. We did look at STERBs in an earlier assignment. Now you may discover some you had forgotten, or observe an increase following each loss. Write them under STERB.

**Example from Russell’s story:** “Although I rarely drink alcohol, I discovered that after my second divorce, I was having one or two cocktails every night for a couple of months following the separation.”

Next, look back over your Loss History Graph and think about if you may have been involved in any automobile **Accidents** shortly after losses occurred. Also, see if you remember incidents like bumping into things and hurting yourself. This category shows how loss causes us to lose concentration and focus. Write them under Accidents.

Finally, go back over your Loss History Graph and see if you had any major **Illnesses** in the weeks and months following losses. It’s common for the body to display a reaction to grief. If you discover any, write them under Illnesses.

**Misinformation:**

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
See page four of this homework →
STERBs:

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Accidents:

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Illnesses:

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Remember to take your assignments seriously. Your recovery will be the direct result of your participation. Do not shortchange yourself.
WEEK FIVE – Homework Assignment:

Read Chapters 10 & 11. Chapter 10 explains more about getting complete with your relationships. Chapter 11 introduces the Relationship Graph.

Read John’s and Russell’s examples carefully. This will help you understand how to do your own graph.

The instructions begin at the bottom of page 129 and conclude on page 133.

Events or experiences within a relationship may be both positive and negative. NOTE: Entries on John’s relationship with his brother in 1967, and Russell’s relationship with his former wife in 1976. Those events are both above and below the line.

Make sure to have at least two events above the line and two below the line. This will prevent enshrinement or bedevilment. (Review page 132 for more information on Enshrinement and Bedevilment.)

As you review the relationship, you may remember events that you had already discussed or feel you’d completed when the person was still alive, or while you were still married. Put them on your graph anyway because they are part of your whole relationship and may help you discover other events to put on your graph. If there were a whole series of similar events, positive or negative, you don’t have to list them all. Two or three examples are enough. The real objective here is accuracy. If you have any questions, stay and ask me after class.

Remember to take your assignments seriously. Your recovery will be the direct result of your participation. Do not shortchange yourself.

See page two of this homework ➔
Relationship Graph

Name __________________________ Date __________________________

Apologies

Forgives

Significant Emotional Statements
WEEK SIX – Homework Assignment

Part One: Read the first part of Chapter 12 from page 136 through page 143. Because of the important content of those pages we strongly suggest that you re-read them.

As you read that chapter, you will be formally introduced to the Recovery Components and will read in some detail about all three, but especially about Forgiveness.

Then, with your Relationship Graph in front of you, you are going to convert the events on your relationship graph into Recovery Components. Remember the components are Apologies, Forgiveness [or Acknowledgements of painful events], and Significant Emotional Statements. Here is a reprint from the book, pages 142-143:

Now take out your Relationship Graph. Go through it one event at a time and assign a recovery category to each event. Generally, above-the-line events will be either apologies or significant emotional statements. Below-the-line events will be either forgiveness or significant emotional statements. Some events will require two categories, especially negative events. For example, “Dad, thank you for taking me to my ball game” (Significant Emotional Statement). But, “I need to forgive you for telling me that I was the worst player there” (Forgiveness).

Many events on your graph will have a corresponding entry in at least one recovery category. Don’t be overly concerned if you repeat communications that you think you may have already said to someone. Don’t worry if there’s more than one event with the same recovery communication. Later you will have an opportunity to refine everything you have done in this exercise. Don’t edit. Just get it all down on paper.

It’s sometimes confusing to figure out exactly which recovery category or component each event fits into. Some things can go one of two ways. For example: “Dad, I really appreciated all the time you spent playing baseball with me.” That would be a Significant Emotional Statement. Or, “Dad, I remember how often you played ball with me. I’m sorry I never told you how much it meant to me.” That would be an apology. And, you could actually blend the two categories, by saying, “I really appreciated the time you spent playing ball with me, and I’m sorry I never took the time to tell you.”

On the other hand, it could be a negative Significant Emotional Statement and a Forgiveness: “Dad, it upsets me that you never could find the time to play with me, and I forgive you for that.”

You may have more entries in one category than the others. That’s fine. Pay attention to the length of your lists. If they start becoming very long, you may be repeating the same thing in different ways. You will have an opportunity to condense it in the next homework assignment. You may or may not have an emotional response while doing this assignment. Either way is ok, as long as you tell the truth. Remember to take your assignments seriously. Your recovery will be the direct result of your participation. Do not shortchange yourself.

Week Seven – Homework Assignment

Part One: Completion Letter
Allow at least an hour. Have some tissues handy. Re-read the beginning of Chapter 12 all the way through page 160. The most effective way to write your letter is to have your Relationship Graph and your lists of Apologies, Forgives, and Significant Emotional Statements in front of you. Look over the graph and the lists and then write your letter. Your graph and lists may contain many repetitions. It is not necessary to repeat the same recovery communications over and over. Use this letter to consolidate them into the most concise expression possible. Your letter should be primarily focused on the recovery categories, Apologies, Forgiveness, and Significant Emotional Statements.

There’s no limit on how much you can write, but the emotional intensity is often lost in volume. This is your opportunity to say the most important unsaid things. Generally, two or three standard pages are sufficient. It’s okay to write a little more or a little less. If you write more than five pages, you probably need to see if you are repeating the same things.

Writing the letter may or may not be an emotional experience for you. Do not be concerned if it is not emotional. Here’s a helpful format for your letter:

Dear Dad (use the name or title that best represents how you remember the person),

I have been reviewing our relationship, and I have discovered some things that I want to tell you.

Dad, I apologize for....
Dad, I apologize for....
Dad, I apologize for....
(You will probably list more than three incomplete communications in this section. It is helpful to keep them grouped by category.)

Dad, I forgive (acknowledge) you for....
Dad, I forgive (acknowledge) you for....
Dad, I forgive (acknowledge) you for....
(You will probably list more than three incomplete communications in this section. It is helpful to keep them grouped by category.)

Dad, I want you to know.... (Significant emotional statement)
Dad, I want you to know.... (Significant emotional statement)
Dad, I want you to know.... (Significant emotional statement)
(You will probably list more than three incomplete communications in this section. It is helpful to keep them grouped by category.)

See page two of this homework →
WEEK SEVEN – Homework Assignment

Important Notes:

- Any negative Significant Emotional Statement must be accompanied by a forgiveness or you will keep the pain. i.e., “Dad, I hated that you always compared me to my older brother and said I was never was good as he was. I forgive you so I can be free.”

- It’s never okay to say “You did the best you could with what you had to work with.” That comment negates all the hard work you’ve done in the forgiveness category. If you have compassion for the person you’re writing the letter to, and a desire to say so, a more appropriate statement is, “Dad, I have compassion for you and the things that happened to you in your life.” This communication should go very near the end of the letter.

Closing Your Letter
The Grief Recovery Method is about completion. In order to complete what you have discovered, you must end your letter effectively.

When you speak to a friend on the phone, you conclude the conversation with the word good-bye to signal the end of the conversation. We conclude our completion letter with good-bye to signal the end of this communication.

For the vast majority of grieving people, the most effective and accurate closing is simply: “I love you, I miss you. Good-bye Dad.”

However, many of you may have difficulty with “I love you” and “I miss you.” If those statements are not truthful for you, do not say them. An effective alternate is: “I have to go now, and I have to let go of the pain. Good-bye Dad.”

You can create other closing statements based on your unique relationship. What should remain constant are the very last words, “Good-bye Dad.” Failure to say them can often negate all the good work you’ve done. It is the good-bye that completes the communication. Do not substitute other words. Not saying good-bye leaves the communication open and runs the risk of leaving you incomplete.

Part Two: Read Chapters 13-15 in the Handbook. We will discuss them next week.
Dear ________________________,

I have been reviewing our relationship, and I have discovered some things that I want to tell you.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

See page four of this homework →
I love you. I miss you. Good-bye___________________________________________________.
or
I have to go now and I have to let go of the pain. Good-bye______________________________.
or
Your unique closing, plus… Good-bye________________________________________________.
Page deliberately blank.

Insert section divider here.
The Grief Recovery Method®

8-Week Group Program

by

The Grief Recovery Institute®

Format, Weeks 1-8
WEEK ONE:
Welcome to the first meeting of The Grief Recovery Method® Group Program. This program is conducted in association with The Grief Recovery Institute®. We’ll be using The Grief Recovery Handbook - 20th Anniversary Expanded Edition - as our text. For the first two meetings we’ll read the following passage adapted from the opening page of The Handbook:

If you are participating in this program, there is a high probability that your heart is broken.

It may have been caused by a death, either recent or long ago.

It may have been caused by a divorce or the breakup of a romantic relationship.

It may have been caused by any of the more than forty other losses that a person can encounter during a lifetime.

It could be caused by an awareness that your life is not as happy or fulfilling as you want it to be.

Regardless of the cause of your broken heart, you know how you feel, and it probably isn’t good.

We are not going to tell you how you feel. You already know. And, we will not tell you, “We know how you feel,” because we don’t. Neither does anyone else. At best, we remember how we felt when our losses occurred.

Whether grief is caused by a death or another loss, incomplete relationships can have a lifelong negative impact on your capacity for happiness. Recovery from loss is achieved by a series of small and correct choices made by the griever. It is my job, along with The Grief Recovery Handbook, to explain those action choices to you, and guide you in taking them.

If the resources available to you have not helped with your grief, it’s not because of what’s wrong with you. It’s because of a lack of correct information. If you’re attending this program it’s because of what’s right with you, not what’s wrong.

PURPOSE: The goal of The Grief Recovery Method® is to help you complete your relationship to the pain, isolation, and loneliness caused by significant emotional loss. While death and divorce may seem to be the most obvious losses, our groups are not limited to those losses. There are more than 40 life events that can produce feelings of grief.

GUIDELINES: We have a few guidelines to preserve our group’s safety and harmony. It is essential that there be no judgment or evaluation of each other. We should be careful not to
compare our pain and losses with each other’s. All relationships are unique, therefore each person’s grief is unique. It’s also important to know that grievers are not broken, therefore they don’t need to be fixed. They don’t need to be analyzed, criticized, or judged. They need to be listened to with dignity and respect.

**HOMEWORK DIRECTIONS:** The key to your success in this program hinges on your willingness to apply yourself to the weekly homework assignments designed to help you move beyond loss. Homework is based on *The Grief Recovery Handbook*, so everyone should have a copy. We can guide you in the actions of The Grief Recovery Method®, but we can’t do them for you. Your participation is the key to your recovery.

**LEADER’S NOTE:** Have copies of *The Grief Recovery Handbook - 20th Anniversary Expanded Edition* available to sell or give out to the participants. You can purchase books at the Specialist discount rate through your CGRS Login Area at [www.griefrecoverymethod.com](http://www.griefrecoverymethod.com).

**COMMITMENTS:** Each week we will be making three commitments to each other.

- **Total Honesty** - You can only achieve emotional completion by telling the truth. For the first few weeks we’ll tell you that there may be details of your life that you’re unwilling to say to others. That’s okay. Just tell the emotional truth about the event or experience. If you have difficulty with a safe way to say something, please ask me.

- **Absolute Confidentiality** - Anything of a personal nature that you hear in this program must be kept confidential. The safety of this program and the safety of your recovery, depend upon adherence to the principle of confidentiality. In keeping with this principle, please turn off electronic devices now; and please, no photos of other participants.

- **Uniqueness and Individuality** - Every relationship is unique. No one else’s opinion about our relationships to the people who have affected our lives is solicited or helpful. Please allow your fellow group members the respect and dignity to share their thoughts and feelings without analysis, criticism, or judgment.

Please raise your hand if you’re willing to honor these commitments. Please look around and notice that we’re all making these commitments to each other.

**LEADER’S NOTE:** Go over any details about the location, parking, meeting times, restrooms, breaks, snacks, attendance, etc. that need to be explained. If you may need to skip a week for a holiday, this is the time to discuss it. Also, if there is a need to create a “taxi” service for some of your participants, do so now. Also, if you plan to use the Special Days Calendar, now is the time to introduce it. Please make sure that the group members know that by signing up for it, they are agreeing to receive phone calls from volunteers in the group.

**WHAT IS GRIEF?** Two of the definitions we use are from *The Grief Recovery Handbook:*
• *Grief is the normal and natural reaction to loss.*
• *Grief is the conflicting feelings caused by the end of or change in a familiar pattern of behavior.*

A problem for many people is that even though grief is the normal and natural reaction to loss, the vast majority of what we learn in our society about dealing with loss is not normal, not natural, and not helpful. Here are two statements that reflect what some of you may be feeling:

• For those of you who have been devastated by the death of someone you loved, your grief may be: “The feeling of reaching out for someone who’s *always* been there for you, only to discover when you need them one more time, they are no longer here.”
• For those of you who have been impacted by the death of someone who *should* have been a loving person to you, but wasn’t, your grief may be “The feeling of reaching out for someone who was *never* there for you only to discover that when you need them one more time, they are still not there.” [This also applies to divorce or other estrangements.]

**WHAT IS UNRESOLVED GRIEF?** Unresolved grief is almost always about things we wish we’d said or done differently, better, or more. For example, “I wish I’d told Dad I loved him before it was too late.” Or, “I wish I’d visited grandma before she died so I could tell her what she meant to me.” This program will show you how to discover and communicate those unsaid things, so that they no longer limit you or affect your capacity for happiness.

Unresolved grief is also about the unrealized hopes, dreams, and expectations we had for the relationship. Even in the best of relationships, we are often left with plans that never got to happen. In negative relationships, the death or divorce robs us of the possibility of repair thereby preventing the relationship from becoming positive.

Finally, unresolved grief is about undelivered communications of an emotional nature. It is the goal of this program to help you discover and complete what was left emotionally incomplete for you by a death, a divorce, or any other loss. The expression of those communications is often accompanied by tears, but not always. All that we ever ask is that you be honest.

**WHAT IS COMPLETENESS?** Completeness is the result of having delivered those emotional communications that either we never made, or we felt were never heard, or that need to be said again, with someone hearing us say them. It gives us the ability to say goodbye to any pain, which may be limiting us from fond memories, and say goodbye to any unmet hopes, dreams, and expectations about the future.

**INTRODUCTIONS:** Now we’re going to take a few minutes to get to know each other. I will go first and tell you two of the losses that have affected my life. Then, we’ll go around the room
and you will each introduce yourself by giving your first name and one or two of the losses you’ve experienced, including the one that prompted you to attend this group.

This gives us a chance to say out loud, in safety, the loss we’ve been preoccupied with, and lets us know that we’re not alone. Over the next several weeks, you might uncover other incomplete relationships that have been affecting your lives. There’s a possibility that you might choose to work on a loss other than the one that brought you here. If that happens, please let that be okay with you.

If anyone is feeling a sense of apprehension about talking in front of a group of strangers, understand that’s normal. Please don’t let it stop you from participating.

**LEADER’S NOTE:** Begin this session by sharing two of the losses that brought you to The Grief Recovery Institute®. Talk a little about the positive impact The Grief Recovery Method® had in helping you complete what was unfinished for you in those relationships. This doesn’t mean an in-depth, emotional display, just that you’ve had losses, and you’ve experienced recovery.

My name is Leader______ and two of the losses I experienced are:________________.

Now that I’ve gone first, we’ll go around the room and each of you will have a chance to say your name and tell us a little about the loss that brought you here, and at least one other loss.

Before we get started, let me tell you that as this program unfolds, you’ll each have a chance to look at and talk about the losses that have affected your life in greater depth. But for tonight, I just want you to talk briefly about your presenting loss and one other loss. As each of you talks, the others will listen, and may laugh or cry as appropriate, but they will not talk or make comments of any kind. This will create safety for each of you to be as honest as possible.

**LEADER’S NOTE:** While listening to each griever, remember to utilize The Grief Recovery Method® paraphrasing skills, using feeling words to establish emotional focus and shift them from head to heart. Avoid using diagnostic language. When needed, reframe their experiences as grief or loss. Remember, when relevant, to mention the intangibles such as loss of safety, loss of trust, and loss of control of their body.

After the last person has introduced themself - Thank you all for participating. And thank you all for listening to each other and creating the safety for each person to tell the truth. Grieving people don’t lack courage or willingness, but they sometimes lack proper information and a safe environment in which to discover and take the actions of recovery. Together we will continue to create safety and acquire the tools and actions that lead to completion. Thank you!

**HOMEWORK REMINDER:** In our opening tonight, we said that “recovery from loss is achieved by a series of small and correct choices made by the griever.” Each of you has already
made excellent choices by showing up and participating tonight. Please make sure that you make the next indicated choice by doing your homework.

Hand out and explain WEEK ONE - Homework Assignment

WEEK ONE - Homework Assignment
Your first homework assignment is to read Chapters 1, 2, & 3 of the Handbook. We know that grieving people often have difficulty concentrating. So, let’s break the assignment down to manageable chunks. Chapter 1 is 10 pages long. Chapter 2 is 12 pages. Chapter 3 is 16 pages. It is not essential that you read them all in one sitting. It might be helpful to set aside some quiet or private time for this reading. It might also be a good idea to have some tissues handy.

Part One: After you’ve read the chapters one time, we want you to go back and re-read them. This time, we want you to pay particular attention to the section that addresses the alleged stages of grief on pages 11-15. You probably have heard about the stages, and you may or may not agree with our position. Please make notes about your observations and possible differences between what you believe and what John and Russell have written about stages.

Part Two: Also, when you re-read the chapters, we want you to prepare a list of beliefs that you have used in an attempt to deal with the painful and conflicting feelings caused by loss. On page 35, you will see the list of six myths John and Russell learned about dealing with loss. Write down the ones from that list that you may have been using, and then add any other beliefs you’ve been using to try to deal with the painful and conflicting feelings caused by loss.

Remember to take your assignment seriously. Your recovery will be the direct result of your participation. Do not shortchange yourself.

LEADER’S NOTE: This first week’s meeting may not have taken up all of the planned two hours, since there were no small breakout groups. End the group early and tell them that the next weeks will usually use up all the allotted time.

As we get ready to conclude tonight’s meeting, some of you may feel a little skeptical or apprehensive as you think about and start to take actions you’ve never done before. That’s perfectly normal and healthy. The key is to allow yourself those feelings but take the new actions anyway. Keep in mind, that if you don’t do something new and different, nothing can change.

GROUP HUG: Form large circle. Leader makes closing comments.
**WEEK TWO:**
Welcome to the second meeting of The Grief Recovery Method® Group Program. This program is conducted in association with The Grief Recovery Institute®. We’ll be using *The Grief Recovery Handbook - 20th Anniversary Expanded Edition* as our text. Again tonight, we’ll read the following passage adapted from the opening page of The Handbook:

> If you are participating in this program, there is a high probability that your heart is broken.

> It may have been caused by a death, either recent or long ago.

> It may have been caused by a divorce or the breakup of a romantic relationship.

> It may have been caused by any of the more than forty other losses that a person can encounter during a lifetime.

> It could be caused by an awareness that your life is not as happy or fulfilling as you want it to be.

> Regardless of the cause of your broken heart, you know how you feel, and it probably isn’t good.

> We are not going to tell you how you feel. You already know. And, we will not tell you, “We know how you feel,” because we don’t. Neither does anyone else. At best, we remember how we felt when our losses occurred.

Whether grief is caused by a death or another loss, incomplete relationships can have a lifelong negative impact on your capacity for happiness. *Recovery from loss is achieved by a series of small and correct choices made by the griever.* It is my job, along with *The Grief Recovery Handbook*, to explain those action choices to you, and guide you in taking them.

If the resources available to you have not helped with your grief, it’s not because of what’s wrong with you. It’s because of a lack of correct information. If you’re attending this program it’s because of what’s right with you, not what’s wrong.

**LEADER’S NOTE:** If there are any newcomers tonight, after the Commitments you will re-introduce yourself with two of your losses. Have the other group members do the same, and then help the newcomers introduce themselves and their presenting loss and one other loss.

**PURPOSE:** The goal of The Grief Recovery Method® is to help you complete your relationship to the pain, isolation, and loneliness caused by significant emotional loss. While death and
divorce may seem to be the most obvious losses, our groups are not limited to those losses. There are more than 40 life events that can produce feelings of grief.

GUIDELINES: We have a few guidelines to preserve our group’s safety and harmony. It is essential that there be no judgment or evaluation of each other. We should be careful not to compare our pain and losses with each other’s. All relationships are unique therefore each person’s grief is unique. It’s also important to know that griever are not broken therefore they don’t need to be fixed. They don’t need to be analyzed, criticized, or judged. They need to be listened to with dignity and respect.

HOMEWORK DIRECTIONS: The key to your success in this program hinges on your willingness to apply yourself to the weekly homework assignments, which are designed to help you move beyond loss. Homework is based on The Grief Recovery Handbook, so everyone should have a copy. I can guide you in the actions of The Grief Recovery Method®, but I can’t do them for you. Your participation is the key to your recovery.

COMMITMENTS: Each week we will be making three commitments to each other.

- Total Honesty - You can only achieve emotional completion by telling the truth. There may be details of your life that you’re unwilling to say to others. That’s okay. Just tell the emotional truth about the event or experience. If you have difficulty with a safe way to say something, please ask me.

- Absolute Confidentiality - Anything of a personal nature that you hear in this program must be kept confidential. The safety of this program and the safety of your recovery, depend upon adherence to the principle of confidentiality. In keeping with this principle, please turn off electronic devices now; and please, no photos of other participants.

- Uniqueness and Individuality - Every relationship is unique. No one else’s opinion about our relationships to the people who have affected our lives is solicited or helpful. Please allow your fellow group members the respect and dignity to share their thoughts and feelings without analysis, criticism, or judgment.

Please raise your hand if you’re willing to honor these commitments. Please look around and notice that we’re all making these commitments to each other.

LEADER’S NOTE: If there are any newcomers, now is the time to reintroduce yourself and the other group members. This should be done quickly, in less detail than the first week, just enough to create safety. Help the newcomers introduce themselves and state their presenting loss and one other loss.

Tonight I’m going to repeat the definitions of grief, grief recovery, and completeness that I read last week. We really want you to get the message and we also want the newcomers to hear them.
WHAT IS GRIEF? Two of the definitions we use are from *The Grief Recovery Handbook*:
- Grief is the normal and natural reaction to loss.
- Grief is the conflicting feelings caused by the end of or change in a familiar pattern of behavior.

A problem for many people is that even though grief is the normal and natural reaction to loss, the vast majority of what we learn in our society about dealing with loss is not normal, not natural, and not helpful. Here are two statements that reflect what some of you may be feeling:

- For those of you who have been devastated by the death of someone you loved, your grief may be: “The feeling of reaching out for someone who’s *always* been there for you, only to discover when you need them one more time, they are no longer here.”
- For those of you who have been impacted by the death of someone who *should* have been a loving person to you, but wasn’t, your grief may be “The feeling of reaching out for someone who was *never* there for you only to discover that when you need them one more time, they are still not there.” [This also applies to divorce or other estrangements.]

WHAT IS UNRESOLVED GRIEF? Unresolved grief is almost always about things we wish we’d said or done differently, better, or more. For example, “I wish I’d told Dad I loved him before it was too late.” Or, “I wish I’d visited grandma before she died so I could tell her what she meant to me.” This program will show you how to discover and communicate those unsaid things, so that they no longer limit you or affect your capacity for happiness.

Unresolved grief is also about the unrealized hopes, dreams, and expectations we had for the relationship. Even in the best of relationships, we are often left with plans that never got to happen. In negative relationships, the death or divorce robs us of the possibility of repair thereby preventing the relationship from becoming positive.

Finally, unresolved grief is about undelivered communications of an emotional nature. It is the goal of this program to help you discover and complete what was left emotionally incomplete for you by a death, a divorce, or any other loss. The expression of those communications is often accompanied by tears, but not always. All that we ever ask is that you be honest.

WHAT IS COMPLETENESS? Completeness is the result of having delivered those emotional communications that either we never made, or we felt were never heard, or that need to be said again, with someone hearing us say them. It gives us the ability to say goodbye to any pain, which may be limiting us from fond memories, and say goodbye to any unmet hopes, dreams, and expectations about the future.

LARGE GROUP: As we move forward tonight, I want to tell you that we often use the image of trying to paint a room using a hammer, a saw, and a screwdriver to demonstrate the parallel
idea that many of the tools we were given to deal with grief are the wrong tools. In order to move from grief to recovery it’s important to look at the tool kits we have and to replace the tools that don’t work with ones that do.

Did you each read the first three chapters and write down the things that affected you? Good, thanks. Here are a couple of questions which will remind you of what you read, and which you will talk about when we break into small groups in a few minutes:

- Were any of you affected by what the authors had to say about the alleged Stages of Grief on pages 11-15 in the Handbook?
- Were any of you surprised to learn that the six myths John and Russell talk about are not good or helpful tools? Were any of you relieved to learn that you haven’t been the only one using incorrect tools to deal with your grief? To remind you, the myths in the Handbook are:
  - Don’t Feel Bad
  - Replace the Loss
  - Grieve Alone
  - Just Takes Time
  - Be Strong for Others
  - Keep Busy

Did anything jump out at you, anything you hadn’t thought of before? Did any of you realize that you may have developed some of your own myths that have kept you stuck in grief?

SMALL GROUPS: We are now going to break into small groups. We have some special guidelines for the small groups in addition to our overall guidelines and commitments. The small groups are not exactly “discussion” groups. Instead, each of you will get a chance to talk about tonight’s homework topics while your partner[s] listen. You will extend the same courtesy to each other. Please listen to your partners with dignity and respect. You may laugh or cry as your partner[s] talks, but please refrain from comment, analysis, criticism, judgment, or advice. Since we typically talk back and forth, I realize that your impulses to help or comment may get the better of you, so I will circulate among the groups to help keep you on track.

LEADER’S NOTE: Break your group into small groups of three, with possibly one or two groups of two, depending on the total number of people. If you only have four people, make two groups of two. If you have seven people, you’ll need to make one group of three and two groups of two.

Each group may determine if they want to take a quick break now or later. While groups are working, you should roam. It’s acceptable for you to sit in with the groups, but tell them that you might do that. Spread the groups around the room so they’ll be able focus on their own group members. Don’t put people into separate rooms where you can’t monitor them.
Your small group topics are from your reading of the first three chapters and the notes you made.

**Part 1 – The Myth of the Stages of Grief:** Each of you can take a few minutes to talk about your reaction to reading about the alleged stages of grief, and the fact that The Grief Recovery Institute doesn’t believe they exist, and that they limit griever's in their normal and natural reaction to loss. You are not obliged to agree, but talk about your reaction to what you read, and tell the others in your group what you wrote about the stages. If you have no opinion or point of view, that’s okay.

**Part 2 - The Six Myths, and other Correct and Incorrect Information:** Each of you can take a few minutes to talk about the Six Myths of grief as presented in the Handbook, and the other correct and incorrect information that you’ve used to deal with loss. As we’ve said, this is not a discussion, nor an opportunity to correct someone else’s ideas. It’s just a safe place to say some of the things you’ve been taught about dealing with loss.

Newcomers, and anyone who didn’t read and do the Homework from Chapters 1, 2, and 3, will just listen tonight. You will have a chance to talk next week after you’ve read the chapters.

**8:45 RECONVENE IN LARGE GROUP**

In spite of the efforts of The Grief Recovery Institute, and others, grief and grief recovery still tend to be off-limits topics of conversation. I hope you’ve benefitted from this opportunity to talk openly about some of the myths and beliefs you’ve used to deal with grief.

- How many of you feel relieved to finally be able to talk about this subject?
- How many of you felt a little scared or exposed talking about your beliefs?

Thank you for telling the truth. Please notice that we honor each other’s feelings, without judgment as to right or wrong, good or bad.

**Hand out and explain WEEK TWO - Homework Assignment**

**WEEK TWO - Homework Assignment**

Read Chapters 4, 5, & 6. The last part of Chapter 6 - pages 66, 67, & 68 - and all of Chapter 7 are for people who are not in this program. You may read those sections for general knowledge or you can skip them. Re-read Chapters 4, 5, & 6 and underline the passages that affect you.

**There are three distinct areas for you to focus on:**

- First, is the list of comments on page 44. After reading the list, write down some of the intellectual comments that you heard at the time of your loss. Try to remember how you felt about those comments when they were said.
- Second, is the section entitled “WE WANT THE APPROVAL OF OTHERS,” which begins on page 54. List some of your own approval seeking reactions to what was
happening around you, and how that may have led you to “Academy Award Recovery” behaviors.

- And third, pay particular attention to the section entitled: *Who is responsible?*, from pages 62 to 66. Although loss may be 99% responsible for how you feel, you must be willing to take 1% responsibility for your reaction to loss. It is essential that you begin to understand the idea of taking responsibility for your reaction to your losses, because it is the only thing you can actually work on.

Remember to take your homework assignment seriously. As we move forward, you will need to set aside enough time for the reading and written assignments. Try not to leave it until the last minute and cause yourself to rush. Your recovery will be the direct result of your participation. Do not shortchange yourself.

**GROUP HUG:** Form large circle. Leader makes closing comments.
WEEK THREE:
Welcome to the third meeting of The Grief Recovery Method® Group Program. This program is conducted in association with The Grief Recovery Institute®. Tonight is the last night for newcomers. From this point forward we will be a permanent group.

COMMITMENTS: Each week we will be making three commitments to each other.

- **Total Honesty** - You can only achieve emotional completion by telling the truth. There may be details of your life that you’re unwilling to say to others. That’s okay. Just tell the emotional truth about the event or experience. If you have difficulty with a safe way to say something, please ask me.

- **Absolute Confidentiality** - Anything of a personal nature that you hear in this program must be kept confidential. The safety of this program and the safety of your recovery, depend upon adherence to the principle of confidentiality. In keeping with this principle, please turn off electronic devices now; and please, no photos of other participants.

- **Uniqueness and Individuality** - Every relationship is unique. No one else’s opinion about our relationships to the people who have affected our lives is solicited or helpful. Please allow your fellow group members the respect and dignity to share their thoughts and feelings without analysis, criticism, or judgment.

Please raise your hand if you’re willing to honor these commitments. Please look around and notice that we’re all making these commitments to each other.

LEADER’S NOTE: If there are any newcomers, now is the time to reintroduce yourself and the other group members. This should be done quickly, in less detail than the first week, just enough to create safety. Help the newcomers introduce themselves and state their presenting loss and one other loss.

LARGE GROUP: Did each of you read Chapters 4, 5, & 6 and write down the things that affected you regarding Intellectual Comments, Approval, and Who is Responsible for my feelings? Good, thanks.

Can anyone give us an example of one of the “intellectual” comments you heard after a loss that didn’t help you? Thanks.

Now, is anybody willing to tell us of any discovery or awareness you might have had about “approval seeking behaviors” you may have used after losses to show others you were smart, strong, or mature? Thanks.

And does anyone want to tell an example of things you may have learned or observed growing up that made it difficult for you to take responsibility for your reactions to grief or loss events? Thanks.
LEADER’S NOTE: If there were no problems with last week’s small groups, and attendance is the same, have them break into the same groups. If there are any issues about the group make-up, deal with them now.

SMALL GROUP: Tonight’s small group session is focused on your reading and the notes you made on Chapters 4, 5, & 6, specifically on three topic areas: Unhelpful Intellectual Comments, Approval Seeking, and Responsibility For Your Feelings. However, you are free to talk about other aspects of the reading, as in Academy Award Recovery, and especially the use of the phrase “I’m fine” when it wasn’t always true for you.

Anyone who didn’t read and do the Homework from Chapters 4, 5, & 6, will just listen tonight. You will have a chance to talk next week after you’ve read those chapters.

Reminder: We have some special guidelines for the small groups in addition to our overall guidelines and commitments. The small groups are not “discussion” groups. Instead, each of you will get a chance to talk about tonight’s homework topics while your partner[s] listen. You will extend the same courtesy to each other. Please listen to your partners with dignity and respect. You may laugh or cry as your partner[s] talks, but please refrain from comment, analysis, criticism, judgment, or advice. Since we typically talk back and forth, I realize that your impulses to help or comment may get the better of you, so I will circulate among the groups to help keep you on track.

8:45 RECONVENE IN LARGE GROUP

LEADER’S NOTE: Debrief Small Group interaction. Make sure there are no problems or pre-occupations. If anyone needs special attention, ask them to stay after class.

Hand out and explain WEEK THREE - Homework Assignment

So far, you’ve read Chapters 1-6 in the Handbook. You can skip Chapter 7, as it is not needed for this group. Read Chapter 8. Then re-read it and underline the passages that affect you. It’s a very important chapter about Short-Term Energy Relieving Behaviors [STERBs], and will be the focus of your small groups next week.

Your Homework Assignment is contained in these two paragraphs from page 82 of The Grief Recovery Handbook:

After reading the chapter again, try to identify at least two examples of short-term relief you have used to displace your feelings. This is not as easy as it appears. It could be your first chance to demonstrate your commitment to total honesty.
Here is the list of short-term energy-relieving behaviors from earlier in the chapter. Use it as a guideline to help determine whether you have been relying on short-term relief:

- Food
- Alcohol/Drugs
- Anger
- Exercise
- Fantasy (movies, TV, books)
- Isolation
- Sex
- Shopping (humorously called Retail Therapy)
- Workaholism

Using the homework sheet I’ve given you, write down any of the short-term energy relievers from our list in which you have participated. Then add any others you realize you may have used, or are still using. It is actually very common in our society to have been socialized with the idea that we should cover up emotional pain rather than confront it directly. STERBs are a perfect example of an indirect—and sometimes damaging—way of avoiding our real feelings.

Sometimes the behaviors or activities we use as STERBs are things we wouldn’t want to tell others. As you prepare your list, keep in mind that you will be sharing it with your group members next week. We will re-commit to Absolutely Confidentially, but you will need to determine what you are willing to share.

Remember to take your homework assignment seriously. This week you will have to be willing to look honestly at yourself as we begin to move from discovery to recovery. Try not to leave it until the last minute and cause yourself to rush. Your recovery will be the direct result of your participation. Do not shortchange yourself.

Before we have our group hug, I want to give you an alert. Next week, after our small groups, I am going to demonstrate the next major exercise and help you get started with it. There’s a possibility that we’ll run past 9:00. Please allow some extra time so you can stay if needed.

**GROUP HUG:** Form large circle. Leader makes closing comments.
WEEK FOUR:
Welcome to the fourth meeting of The Grief Recovery Method® Group Program. This program is conducted in association with The Grief Recovery Institute®. We are now a permanent group and we have a lot to do tonight, so let’s get going with our three commitments to each other.

- **Total Honesty** - You can only achieve emotional completion by telling the truth.
- **Absolute Confidentiality** - Anything of a personal nature that you hear in this program must be kept confidential. The safety of this program and the safety of your recovery, depend upon adherence to the principle of confidentiality. In keeping with this principle, please turn off electronic devices now; and please, no photos of other participants.
- **Uniqueness and Individuality** - Every relationship is unique. No one else’s opinion about our relationships to the people who have affected our lives is solicited or helpful. Please allow your fellow group members the respect and dignity to share their thoughts and feelings without analysis, criticism, or judgment.

*Please raise your hand if you’re willing to honor these commitments. Please look around and notice that we’re all making these commitments to each other.*

LARGE GROUP: Even before we start tonight I want to let you know that we will be reconvening in the large group at 8:15 instead of 8:45. I will be demonstrating my Loss History Graph and helping you get started with your Loss History Graph. Since that needs some extra time, we might go past 9:00 tonight.

Before we break into our small groups, let’s talk a little bit about Chapter 8—the Short-Term Energy Relieving Behaviors.

How many of you discovered you had a long list of “Short-Term Energy Relieving Behaviors?” Let’s name a few: Food, Alcohol, etc. + + +. Thank you.

Did any of you discover that you didn’t have any STERBs that you could correlate to losses in your life, or things you may have seen family or friends do? Thank you.

Were any of you surprised or embarrassed at some of the STERBs you’ve been using? Thank you

SMALL GROUP: Short Term Energy Relieving Behaviors - STERBs

As we get ready to break into our small groups, I want to remind you to be as honest as possible, but please, don’t say anything that you feel would embarrass you. Short-term energy relieving behaviors [STERBs] can be a fun category. However, it can also be painful and awkward. Be especially careful not to judge, criticize, or evaluate yourself or anyone in your group. Be
mindful of your commitment to absolute confidentiality. Maintaining truth and safety is essential to recovery.

**REMINDERS:**
- Sit an appropriate distance from your partner[s]
- Each have your own tissues handy
- Don’t touch the talking partner, as touch stops feelings
- You may laugh or cry but don’t talk when you are a listening partner
- Be a heart with ears

Read your list of “Short-Term Energy Relieving Behaviors.” Talk a little bit about how the behaviors may have created an illusion that you were dealing with your feelings. As you read your list of STERBs, it’s important to remember why we participate in them. It is not because we are defective—it’s either because we were taught to do so, usually by observing others. One of the purposes of this exercise is to help you become more aware of things that you may have been doing unconsciously, or without realizing why. The possibility of changing some of the habits that hurt you lies in becoming aware that they exist.

**8:15 RECONVENE IN LARGE GROUP**

Thank you for talking about your STERBs and giving each other dignity and respect by listening with your hearts. I’m about to demonstrate my Loss History Graph. Please honor the same listening guidelines. As I tell my graph, you may laugh or cry, but don’t talk. And be a heart with ears.

**LEADER’S NOTE:** Tell your LHG in about 20 minutes, using a slightly shortened version of your actual graph. They will be able to reference John’s and Russell’s in addition to your examples. When you finish, ask someone for a hug to demonstrate what they will do next week.

As I promised, I’m going to help you each get started with your beginning and end dates, your Dawn Of Conscious Memory, and one of the losses that has affected you the most. With that head-start, you’ll be able to fill in the rest of the graph as homework.

Let’s get started, using the Loss History Graph line on your homework sheet:

1. Put the year of your birth at the left end of the line.
2. Now put today’s date—just the year—at right end of line.
3. Next, you’re going to put the year of your “dawn of conscious memory” event at the beginning of the graph line [Leader – explain Dawn of Conscious Memory.]
4. Think about the event you perceive to be your most painful loss and the year in which it happened. Approximate where that year would fall on your line and enter it there. If you have any questions about which loss to put down first, please ask me. But there may be two [or more] losses that feel equal in intensity to you. It’s okay to put both down.
When you get home and get ready to do the graph, you will go back and fill in the other loss events you remember. Are there any questions?

**LEADER’S NOTE: Review the Week Four Loss History Graph homework instructions.**

**WEEK FOUR – Homework Assignment**

**Part One:**

- Begin your homework by reading Chapter 9. Pay particular attention to the fact that death is not the only kind of loss. Divorce, Moving, Financial Problems and Loss of Trust events are just a few examples of the many different loss events that may have occurred during our lives.

- After you’ve read and re-read Chapter 9, set aside about an hour in which to complete your Loss History Graph. It’s a good idea to work in a private place. It may or may not be emotional for you, so have tissues handy just in case. Don’t get pre-occupied if you think you’re not doing it right. We’ll be able to edit and correct it during the next session.

- In class the leader helped you get started, so your graph already has a beginning and end date; your dawn of conscious memory date; and the year and a description of your most painful loss.

**NOTE:** All grief is experienced at 100%. There are no half griever and we do not compare grief. However, for the purposes of this exercise, you’ll attach relative degrees of intensity to your losses. Let the length of your lines indicate the intensity that you remember feeling when the loss occurred. (See pages 87 & 92 for examples, and page 100 for a detailed explanation.)

As will be obvious, this is the most personal and possibly the most emotional homework assignment so far. Because of that, it has the potential for being a little scary. As we’ve pointed out a few times in the opening weeks, it’s not uncommon for people to have some apprehensions or fears when they go to do something they’ve never done before.

If you have any fears, please allow yourself those feelings, but please take the action of doing the homework anyway.

**Part Two:**

After you’ve completed your Loss History Graph, you will review your notes to see if you can discover some additional ways in which you may have been affected by those losses. You’ll be looking in four categories. Misinformation, STERBs, Accidents, & Illnesses.
See if you can find any examples of **Misinformation** you learned as the result of your losses. Things like “Don’t Feel Bad,” or “Be Strong,” etc. Write them under Misinformation.

**Example from Russell’s story:** “I was 15 when my grandmother died, and my little brother was five. I was told that I had to **be strong** for my brother. In effect, I was taught that my feelings didn’t count. Years later, it seemed logical for me to **be strong** for my Dad when his father, my grandfather, died.”

Go back over your Loss History Graph again and see if you discover any **Short-Term Energy Relieving Behaviors (STERBs)** that you may have participated in following losses. We did look at STERBs in an earlier assignment. Now you may discover some you had forgotten, or observe an increase following each loss. Write them under STERB.

**Example from Russell’s story:** “Although I rarely drink alcohol, I discovered that after my second divorce, I was having one or two cocktails every night for a couple of months following the separation.”

Next, look back over your Loss History Graph and think about if you may have been involved in any automobile **Accidents** shortly after losses occurred. Also, see if you remember incidents like bumping into things and hurting yourself. This category shows how loss causes us to lose concentration and focus. Write them under Accidents.

Finally, go back over your Loss History Graph and see if you had any major **Illnesses** in the weeks and months following losses. It’s common for the body to display a reaction to grief. If you discover any, write them under Illnesses.

Remember to take your assignments seriously. Your recovery will be the direct result of your participation. Do not shortchange yourself.

Before we have our group hug, I want to give you an alert. Next week, after our small groups, I am going to demonstrate the next major exercise, and help you get started with it. There’s a possibility that we’ll run past 9:00. Please allow some extra time so you can stay if needed.

**GROUP HUG:** Form large circle. Leader makes closing comments.
WEEK FIVE:
Welcome to the fifth meeting of The Grief Recovery Method® Group Program. This program is conducted in association with The Grief Recovery Institute®. We have a lot to do tonight, so let’s get going with our three commitments to each other.

- **Total Honesty** - You can only achieve emotional completion by telling the truth.
- **Absolute Confidentiality** - Anything of a personal nature that you hear in this program must be kept confidential. The safety of this program and the safety of your recovery, depend upon adherence to the principle of confidentiality. In keeping with this principle, please turn off electronic devices now; and please, no photos of other participants.
- **Uniqueness and Individuality** - Every relationship is unique. No one else’s opinion about our relationships to the people who have affected our lives is solicited or helpful. Please allow your fellow group members the respect and dignity to share their thoughts and feelings without analysis, criticism, or judgment.

Please raise your hand if you’re willing to honor these commitments. Please look around and notice that we’re all making these commitments to each other.

LARGE GROUP: Tonight as we start, I want to let you know that we will be reconvening in the large group at about 8:30 instead of 8:45. I will be demonstrating my Relationship Graph and that needs some extra time. I’ll also be helping you get started with yours. Reminder: We might need to go past 9:00 tonight.

Let’s quickly review your homework, the Loss History Graph, and the four related areas: Misinformation, STERBs, Accidents, and Illnesses.

This can be a tough assignment:
- Did anyone have trouble with it?
- Did it bring up painful memories?
- Was anybody unclear or unsure of whether something was a loss event?
- Did any of you discover any interesting connections between your losses and the four categories? Any examples?

It’s normal to experience conflicting emotions while doing this exercise. Whether or not it was difficult or emotional, give yourself a large pat on the back for doing your homework.

SMALL GROUPS: Now, let’s break into your small groups, and remembering all the guidelines for listening partners, give each person your ears and heart so they can tell their Loss History Graph and the accompanying categories.

For the groups of three, please sit so that the person talking can face both of you without a lot of head-swiveling. If you haven’t done so yet, please determine whether each of you is safe with
hugs following your talking. If anyone doesn’t want one, please say so in advance. Remember, no touching while someone is talking even if they’re crying. Touch tends to stop feelings. When you are the listening partner[s], please don’t have paper or pencil in your hands or lap. Give the talker your full, undivided attention. Again, you may laugh or cry but do not talk.

Each of you please take up to 20 minutes to tell your Loss History Graph and what you’ve written in the four categories. It’s okay to go a little bit over. I will check with each group to see how the timing is going. I may sit in for a while with each group.

When the first person has read his/her Graph, offer a hug. After the hug, that person sits down and takes a minute to tell what they’d written in the four categories: Misinformation, STERBs, Accidents, and Illness. That should happen quickly since you already talked about Misinformation and STERBs in some detail in earlier weeks. Then move onto the next person.

If your small group finishes before the others, please sit quietly as chit-chat can disturb the other groups. Or, step outside the room to talk. Please try not to discuss what you just did as it tends to get analytical.

We will reconvene about 8:30 when all groups are done.

**LEADER’S NOTE:** While the groups are working, you must stay in the room and monitor to make sure guidelines are being followed. If necessary step in and get them on track. Also, during that time, get your materials ready for the demonstration of your Relationship Graph and have the homework sheets ready to hand out.

**8:30 RECONVENE IN LARGE GROUP**

**Quickly debrief LHG experience.**

Was it emotional for any of you to tell your graph? Some yes, some no… Thank you.

Was it awkward for any of you as the listener to not be allowed to interrupt or ask questions? Yes, we know it can difficult but we know that questions and comments have a point of view and can alter the speaker’s truth. Thanks for honoring that guideline.

Was it awkward for any of you as the talker that no one was interrupting or making comment? Yes, that can be difficult the first time as we’re so used to people saying things when we talk.

If anyone has any issues beyond those things, please see me after the class.

Now I’m going to demonstrate how to create a Relationship Graph using something of mine. As always, you may laugh or cry as I talk, but please do not talk. Be a heart with ears.
LEADER’S NOTE: Demonstrate your Relationship Graph example, which should be relatively short since they will be reading John’s and Russell’s as part of their homework. Try to do this in about 20 minutes. Remind them to listen only. They can laugh or cry while you talk and to be a heart with ears.

Hand out homework assignment pages. Explain how to create the graph, starting either at DOCM if graphing a parent, or in the year they met someone other than a parent. Talk about having at least two above the line or positive events, and at least two below the line or negative events – to avoid creating a saint or a devil. The explanations about creating the graph can be relatively short since they will be reading the whole chapter and John’s and Russell’s examples and instructions.

Next, help them choose which relationship to work on. If any of them are unsure or have questions about who to work on, have them stay after class, and/or ask them to read Chapter 14 [More on Choices – Which Loss to Work on First], pages 169-173 over the next few days. After they’ve read that, have them call you so you can help them choose, now that they will have more information about making the choice.

WEEK FIVE – Homework Assignment:

Read Chapters 10 & 11. Chapter 10 explains more about getting complete with your relationships. Chapter 11 introduces the Relationship Graph.

Read John’s and Russell’s examples carefully. This will help you understand how to do your own graph.

The instructions begin at the bottom of page 129 and conclude on page 133.

Events or experiences within a relationship may be both positive and negative. NOTE: Entries on John’s relationship with his brother in 1967, and Russell’s relationship with his former wife in 1976. Those events are both above and below the line.

Make sure to have at least two events above the line and two below the line. This will prevent enshrinement or bedevilment. (Review page 132 for more information on Enshrinement and Bedevilment.)

As you review the relationship, you may remember events that you had already discussed or feel you’d completed when the person was still alive, or while you were still married. Put them on your graph anyway because they are part of your whole relationship and may help you discover other events to put on your graph. If there were a whole series of similar events, positive or negative, you don’t have to list them all. Two or three examples are enough. The real objective here is accuracy. If you have any questions, stay and ask me after class.
Remember to take your assignments seriously. Your recovery will be the direct result of your participation. Do not shortchange yourself.

**GROUP HUG:** Form large circle. Leader makes closing comments.
WEEK SIX:
Welcome to the sixth meeting of The Grief Recovery Method® Group Program. This program is conducted in association with The Grief Recovery Institute®. We have a lot to do tonight, so let’s get going with our three commitments to each other.

- **Total Honesty** - You can only achieve emotional completion by telling the truth.
- **Absolute Confidentiality** - Anything of a personal nature that you hear in this program must be kept confidential. The safety of this program and the safety of your recovery, depend upon adherence to the principle of confidentiality. In keeping with this principle, please turn off electronic devices now; and please, no photos of other participants.
- **Uniqueness and Individuality** - Every relationship is unique. No one else’s opinion about our relationships to the people who have affected our lives is solicited or helpful. Please allow your fellow group members the respect and dignity to share their thoughts and feelings without analysis, criticism, or judgment.

*Please raise your hand if you’re willing to honor these commitments. Please look around and notice that we’re all making these commitments to each other.*

LARGE GROUP: Tonight as we start, I want to let you know that we will again be reconvening in the large group at about 8:30. I will be demonstrating how to convert the elements on your Relationship Graph into the three main completion categories. I’ll also be helping you get started with your completion components. Reminder: We might need to go past 9:00 tonight.

Let’s quickly review your homework, the Relationship Graph. Like the Loss History Graph, it can also be a tough assignment:
- Did anyone have trouble with it?
- Did it bring up painful memories?
- Was anybody unclear or unsure of whether something belonged on the graph? [If so, have them see you before they go into their small group.]

It’s normal to experience conflicting emotions while doing this exercise. Whether or not it was difficult or emotional, give yourself a large pat on the back for doing your homework.

SMALL GROUPS: Now, let’s break into your small groups, and remember all the guidelines for listening partners. Give each person your ears and heart so they can relate their Relationship Graph. I will sit in on the groups, but if you have any questions, please come get me.

8:30 RECONVENE IN LARGE GROUP

Debrief Relationship Graph experience:
Was it emotional for any of you to tell your graph? Some yes, some no… Thank you.

Again, was it awkward for any of you as the listener to not be allowed to interrupt or ask questions? Thanks for honoring that guideline.

And, was it awkward for any of you as the talker that no one was interrupting or making comment?

Now I’m going to show you how to convert your Relationship Graph into the three Recovery Components – Apologies, Forgiveness, and Significant Emotional Statements. We haven’t really discussed them yet, but you were introduced to them in Chapter 11. On pages 125-129, Russell used them to explain the communications he had to make based on his Relationship Graph with his ex-wife.

LEADER’S NOTE: Demonstrate the conversion of several elements on your Relationship Graph example to Recovery Components. Make sure to show that at least one of your examples falls both above and below the line, as in Russell’s example in the upcoming homework: “Dad, thank you for taking me to my ball game” (Significant Emotional Statement). But, “I need to forgive you for telling me that I was the worst player there” (Forgiveness).

For each event on the Relationship Graph there should be at least one corresponding entry in one of the three Recovery Components: Apologies, Forgiveness, and Significant Emotional Statements. Some may have two as in the example above.

Hand out homework assignment pages. Read it out loud and make sure everyone is clear about the assignment. If anyone needs additional help, have them stay after class.

WEEK SIX – Homework Assignment

Part One: Read the first part of Chapter 12 from page 136 through page 143. Because of the important content of those pages we strongly suggest that you re-read.

As you read that chapter, you will be formally introduced to the Recovery Components and will read in some detail about all three, but especially about Forgiveness.

Then, with your Relationship Graph in front of you, you are going to convert the events on your relationship graph into Recovery Components. Remember the components are Apologies, Forgiveness [or Acknowledgements of painful events], and Significant Emotional Statements. Here is a reprint from the book, pages 142-143:

Now take out your Relationship Graph. Go through it one event at a time and assign a recovery category to each event. Generally, above-the-line events will be either apologies
or significant emotional statements. Below-the-line events will be either forgiveness or
significant emotional statements. Some events will require two categories, especially
negative events. For example, “Dad, thank you for taking me to my ball game”
(Significant Emotional Statement). But, “I need to forgive you for telling me that I was
the worst player there” (Forgiveness).
 Many events on your graph will have a corresponding entry in at least one recovery
category. Don’t be overly concerned if you repeat communications that you think you
may have already said to someone. Don’t worry if there’s more than one event with the
same recovery communication. Later you will have an opportunity to refine everything
you have done in this exercise. Don’t edit. Just get it all down on paper.

It’s sometimes confusing to figure out exactly which recovery category or component each event
fits into. Some things can go one of two ways. For example: “Dad, I really appreciated all the
time you spent playing baseball with me.” That would be a Significant Emotional Statement. Or,
“Dad, I remember how often you played ball with me. I’m sorry I never told you how much it
meant to me.” That would be an apology. And, you could actually blend the two categories, by
saying, “I really appreciated the time you spent playing ball with me, and I’m sorry I never took
the time to tell you.”

On the other hand, it could be a negative Significant Emotional Statement and a Forgiveness:
“Dad, it upsets me that you never could find the time to play with me, and I forgive you for that.”

You may have more entries in one category than the others. That’s fine. Pay attention to the
length of your lists. If they start becoming very long, you may be repeating the same thing in
different ways. You will have an opportunity to condense it in the next homework assignment.
You may or may not have an emotional response while doing this assignment. Either way is ok,
as long as you tell the truth.

Remember to take your assignments seriously. Your recovery will be the direct result of your
participation. Do not shortchange yourself.

**GROUP HUG:** Form large circle. Leader makes closing comments.
WEEK SEVEN:
Welcome to the seventh meeting of The Grief Recovery Method® Group Program. This program is conducted in association with The Grief Recovery Institute®. We have a lot to do tonight, so let’s get going with our three commitments to each other.

- **Total Honesty** - You can only achieve emotional completion by telling the truth.
- **Absolute Confidentiality** - Anything of a personal nature that you hear in this program must be kept confidential. The safety of this program and the safety of your recovery, depend upon adherence to the principle of confidentiality. In keeping with this principle, please turn off electronic devices now; and please, no photos of other participants.
- **Uniqueness and Individuality** - Every relationship is unique. No one else’s opinion about our relationships to the people who have affected our lives is solicited or helpful. Please allow your fellow group members the respect and dignity to share their thoughts and feelings without analysis, criticism, or judgment.

*Please raise your hand if you’re willing to honor these commitments. Please look around and notice that we’re all making these commitments to each other.*

LARGE GROUP: Tonight as we start, I want to let you know that we will again be reconvening in the large group at about 8:30. I will be demonstrating how to convert everything you’ve done so far into completion. I’ll also be helping you get started with your completion components. Reminder: We might need to go past 9:00 tonight.

SMALL GROUP: As you break into your small groups, one more reminder that you may laugh or cry but not talk when your partner[s] are relating their lists of Recovery Components. It’s essential that each of you be able to read your lists without interruption, criticism, analysis, or judgment. Please use that image of a heart with ears to help establish the trust and safety for each other. If your small group finishes before the others, sit quietly or go out of this room.

SHARING THE RECOVERY COMPONENTS: In your small groups tonight, you will each tell your lists of Apologies, Forgives, and Significant Emotional Statements. This is one of the major actions of this program. You may feel fear or hesitation as we move toward completion of what was incomplete in your relationship with the person you’re working on. It’s okay to have that feeling, but take the action of this exercise anyway.

When you are a listening partner:
- Sit a reasonable distance away. Avoid being in your partner’s face.
- You may laugh or cry, but don’t talk! Have your own tissues handy.
- Do not touch your partner. Touch usually stops feelings.
- Do your best to stay in the moment and listen. Your job is to be a heart with ears.
When you are the talking partner:

- Have your own tissues handy.
- Start with the apologies category: “I need to apologize to my father for the times I took money out of his pocket,” Or, “I owe my mother an apology for lying to her about staying out late.” In this exercise, we are only acknowledging the need to make these recovery communications.
- Do the same for the forgiveness category: “I need to forgive my dad,” and so on. Do the same for significant emotional statements: “I need to tell Dad how much…” and so on with the significant emotional statements category.
- When you finish telling your lists, ask your partner[s] for a hug.

This exercise may or may not be emotional for you. Either way is correct as long as you are honest. Do not judge yourself or others.

8:30 RECONVENE IN LARGE GROUP - Debrief list reading.

Was it emotional for any of you as you read your lists?
Which elements seemed to affect you the most?

Was there more emotion for any of you in saying the list out loud than there was in writing it out at home? Thank you.

Any problems or preoccupations?
[If so, either handle them or ask them to see you after class.]

Now we are now ready to set up the final action to complete all the work you’ve been doing.

LEADER’S NOTE: Pass out WEEK SEVEN - Homework Assignment -writing the Completion Letter

This week’s homework assignment is to write your Grief Recovery Method Completion Letter®.

Having spent the last few weeks looking in detail at the relationship you’ve been working on, it is now time to put all that you’ve done into a document that communicates everything that represents what has been incomplete for you until now.

Although the content of what you write will obviously not be seen by a person who has died, it also must never be shown or read to the living person to whom it is addressed. Since any Completion includes “forgiveness,” and since forgiveness essentially attacks the other person,
you cannot achieve completion when you attack someone. Please re-read the second paragraph on page 140 of The Handbook, which explains why forgiveness must be indirect.

The Completion Letter is designed to help you say “good-bye” to anything that has been incomplete or unfinished for you until now, and to say goodbye to any pain you associate with the relationship you’ve been working on. You will say good-bye to all unfinished emotional business, and to the physical relationship that has ended because of death, or changed because of divorce or other estrangements. The instructions on the bottom of page 145 through the middle of page 146 explain what you are saying goodbye to in more detail.

If your relationship graph is on a living person, it’s possible that many of the hopes, dreams, and expectations that you had associated with the relationship were never fulfilled. This will be your opportunity to say good-bye to those unmet hopes, dreams, and expectations.

Before you start your Letter, re-read the beginning of Chapter 12 and finish reading the rest of the chapter. Pay particular attention to pages 145 through 151. Use the directions beginning on page 145 to write your “completion letter.” Use John’s and Russell’s examples to guide you. Their letters are shortened from the originals. Your letters do not need to be as short, but must be in the recovery categories to be effective.

You are now ready to write your Grief Recovery Method Completion Letter®. The letter will help you with all of the undelivered emotional communications that have kept you incomplete, and made it difficult for you to say “Good-bye.” Writing it is an essential element of your recovery.

**WEEK SEVEN – Homework Assignment**

**Part One: Completion Letter**

Allow at least an hour. Have some tissues handy. **Re-read the beginning of Chapter 12 all the way through page 160.** The most effective way to write your letter is to have your Relationship Graph and your lists of Apologies, Forgives, and Significant Emotional Statements in front of you. Look over the graph and the lists and then write your letter. Your graph and lists may contain many repetitions. It is not necessary to repeat the same recovery communications over and over. Use this letter to consolidate them into the most concise expression possible. Your letter should be primarily focused on the recovery categories, Apologies, Forgiveness, and Significant Emotional Statements.

There’s no limit on how much you can write, but the emotional intensity is often lost in volume. This is your opportunity to say the most important unsaid things. Generally, two or three standard pages are sufficient. It’s okay to write a little more or a little less. If you write more than five pages, you probably need to see if you are repeating the same things.
Writing the letter may or may not be an emotional experience for you. Do not be concerned if it is not emotional. Here’s a helpful format for your letter:

Dear Dad (use the name or title that best represents how you remember the person),

I have been reviewing our relationship, and I have discovered some things that I want to tell you.

Dad, I apologize for....
Dad, I apologize for....
Dad, I apologize for....

(You will probably list more than three incomplete communications in this section. It is helpful to keep them grouped by category.)

Dad, I forgive (acknowledge) you for....
Dad, I forgive (acknowledge) you for....
Dad, I forgive (acknowledge) you for....

(You will probably list more than three incomplete communications in this section. It is helpful to keep them grouped by category.)

Dad, I want you to know.... (Significant emotional statement)
Dad, I want you to know.... (Significant emotional statement)
Dad, I want you to know.... (Significant emotional statement)

(You will probably list more than three incomplete communications in this section. It is helpful to keep them grouped by category.)

Important Notes:

- Any negative Significant Emotional Statement must be accompanied by a forgiveness or you will keep the pain. i.e., “Dad, I hated that you always compared me to my older brother and said I was never as good as he was. I forgive you so I can be free.”

- It’s never okay to say “You did the best you could with what you had to work with.” That comment negates all the hard work you’ve done in the forgiveness category. If you have compassion for the person you’re writing the letter to, and a desire to say so, a more appropriate statement is, “Dad, I have compassion for you and the things that happened to you in your life.” This communication should go very near the end of the letter.

Closing Your Letter
The Grief Recovery Method is about completion. In order to complete what you have discovered, you must end your letter effectively.
When you speak to a friend on the phone, you conclude the conversation with the word good-bye to signal the end of the conversation. We conclude our completion letter with good-bye to signal the end of this communication.

For the vast majority of grieving people, the most effective and accurate closing is simply: “I love you, I miss you. Good-bye Dad.”

However, many of you may have difficulty with “I love you” and “I miss you.” If those statements are not truthful for you, do not say them. An effective alternate is: “I have to go now, and I have to let go of the pain. Good-bye Dad.”

You can create other closing statements based on your unique relationship. What should remain constant are the very last words, “Good-bye Dad.” Failure to say them can often negate all the good work you’ve done. It is the good-bye that completes the communication. Do not substitute other words. Not saying good-bye leaves the communication open and runs the risk of leaving you incomplete.

**Part Two:** Read Chapters 13-15 in the Handbook. We will discuss them next week.

Remember to take this last assignment seriously. Your recovery will be the direct result of your participation. Do not shortchange yourself.

**GROUP HUG:** Form large circle. Leader makes closing comments.
WEEK EIGHT:
Welcome to the eighth and final meeting of The Grief Recovery Method® Group Program. This program is conducted in association with The Grief Recovery Institute®. We have a lot to do, so let’s get going with our three commitments to each other.

- **Total Honesty** - You can only achieve emotional completion by telling the truth.
- **Absolute Confidentiality** - Anything of a personal nature that you hear in this program must be kept confidential. The safety of this program and the safety of your recovery, depend upon adherence to the principle of confidentiality. In keeping with this principle, please turn off electronic devices now; and please, no photos of other participants.
- **Uniqueness and Individuality** - Every relationship is unique. No one else’s opinion about our relationships to the people who have affected our lives is solicited or helpful. Please allow your fellow group members the respect and dignity to share their thoughts and feelings without analysis, criticism, or judgment.

Please raise your hand if you’re willing to honor these commitments. Please look around and notice that we’re all making these commitments to each other.

LARGE GROUP: Did everyone write their Completion Letter? Good, thanks. If anyone didn’t, come see me when we break into small groups and I’ll help you.

LEADER’S NOTE: You then need to arrange for them to get it written soon, but not tonight, and then meet with you or one or more of their partners sometime in the next week to get it read.

One more question: did you each conclude your letter with “Good-bye Dad,” or “Goodbye Mary,” —whomever it was addressed to? If not, please add that now. Thank you.

Over the past few weeks we’ve mentioned that the closer you get to completion, the more scared you might get of the actions we ask you to take. So one more time, if you have some fear, that’s okay, just take the action of reading your letter anyway.

One of the reasons for any fear you might have may be that if you say “good-bye” you will lose the images, memories, and mental pictures of the person you’ve written to—especially if they are no longer alive. That is not possible! You cannot forget someone who was an important and significant person in your life. You cannot lose them! The objective is to complete and say good-bye to everything that is incomplete until now, so you can restart based on your current feelings, not limited by any pain or unfinished business associated with the past. But that does not mean that you will want or need to spend time with someone you don’t like.

In a few moments, we’ll get into our small groups. But first, since this last action is so important, I’m going to go over the reading and listening instructions.
LEADER’S NOTE: Read instructions and field any questions that arise.

Instructions for the Listeners:

1. Your first instruction is to adopt the image of a heart with ears. It is your job to listen and listen only. You may laugh or cry if appropriate, but you must not talk at all. Nothing about what you do can imply judgment, criticism, or analysis.

2. Take a position at least a few feet away from the reader. We don’t want you in the reader’s face; it can be a little intimidating. Let your body be relaxed. You are a friend listening to an important communication.

3. During the letter reading, do not touch the reader at all. At this juncture, touch usually stops feelings. The reader will have his or her own tissues handy.

4. There is a very real possibility that you will be affected by listening to what your partner reads. Please let that be okay with you. However, you must keep in mind that this is not about you. So, to a limited degree, you need to control the intensity of your reaction. On the other hand, if tears well up in your eyes, please leave them there. If you wipe them away, you give the message that tears are bad.

5. Your presence is important to the reader. You must stay in the moment, even if your head and your heart want to pull you away. Listen with your heart on behalf of your partner.

6. As soon as the reader says good-bye immediately offer a hug. You will have a sense of how long the hug should last. Don’t rush it. The letter is the culmination of some courageous work.

7. Remember not to analyze, judge, or criticize. It is not necessarily a good idea to talk about the experience. Talking tends to lead to analysis, judgment, or intellectualizing.

Instructions for the Letter Reader

1. Have your own box of tissues handy. There is a probability that you will experience some emotions as you read your letter. Keep the tissues where you can get them. We don’t want your listeners handing them to you.

2. Before you start reading your letter, close your eyes. Although you have enlisted the help of one or more listeners, your objective is to read the letter to the person to whom it was written. Get a mental image of the person to whom the letter is addressed if you can.

3. Open your eyes. Start reading your letter. You may or may not have an emotional response to your reading. Either way is okay. If you choke up, try to talk while you cry. The emotions are
contained in the words you have written. Try to push the words up and out of your mouth. Do not swallow your words or your feelings.

4. When you get to the very end, before reading your good-bye sentence, close your eyes, get an image of the person again, and say your final words. This may be accompanied by tears. If so, make sure you get the words spoken, especially the good-bye.

5. Remember, you are saying good-bye to any pain and any unfinished emotional business attached to the relationship. You are not saying good-bye to fond memories or the hope of seeing someone in heaven or any other spiritual belief. You are saying good-bye to emotional incompleteness and to any pain, isolation, or confusion you may have felt. Say good-bye to the physical relationship that you had but that has now ended due to death, or has changed due to divorce or estrangement. Say good-bye and then let it be okay if you cry and let it all out. Also, let it be okay if you don’t cry. It’s essential that you say “good-bye” to accomplish a sense of completion.

6. As soon as you finish, ask your listeners for a hug. You might want and need the hug to be quite long. Don’t cut it short. You may find yourself sobbing for a while. Let that be okay with you. You probably have been holding on to the pain for a while. Don’t rush the feelings.

Any questions? Thank you.

As you get ready to get into your small groups, let me remind you that I will be here and available if any of you need help.

We will reconvene at 8:30, or a little bit after, to debrief this experience and talk about what you will need to do to sustain what you’ve learned here.

8:30 RECONVENE IN LARGE GROUP

Debrief Letter Reading Experience.

Thank you for reading your letters and listening to each other. I have a couple of questions for each of you.

Did you each get a sense that your partner or partners heard you? [If anyone says no, ask them to see you after the group.]

In reading your letter, did each of you get a sense that you communicated some things that are valuable for you? [If anyone says no, ask them to see you after the group.]

Last question: Is there anything important to you that you’re consciously aware of that you may have left out of your graph and your letter? If so, when you get home tonight, I want you to go to
pages 158, 159, & 160 of The Grief Recovery Handbook. Read the section that starts with WHAT ABOUT NEW DISCOVERIES? COLE’S WINDOW STORY. It explains that a PS letter is a short follow-up to add anything left out of your original Completion Letter. As always, it concludes with “good-bye.”

After reading those pages, you’ll be able to write a PS letter. This is something you’ll be able to do when you feel incomplete with a relationship on which you’ve already done a Graph and Completion Letter. If you write a PS letter, it’s not totally complete until you’ve read it out loud to someone you trust. It’s usually best to get together with one of your partners from this group as they will be safe for you to read to.

As we move toward our final group hug, I want to talk about the fact that as important as this program has been for you, it’s only a beginning. Most of you are already aware that you have other incomplete relationships on which to work. I suggest that you make a list of those people and get in touch with me to talk about the list and the order in which to work on them.

Now that you know what to do, and have moved through all the actions, it makes sense to go back and work on all the major relationships that have affected your life. One way to look at it is to answer this question. If you have seven thorns in your foot, how many would you pull out? We’re not saying that all your relationships are like thorns, but that all relationships, good, bad, or mixed, can always benefit from you taking correct actions to complete what’s unfinished for you.

Chapters 14 & 15: As part of last week’s homework, I asked you to read chapters 14 and 15 and said we’d discuss them this week. Now’s the time, if anyone has any questions or comments, fire away. _______________. If there’s anything we didn’t cover tonight, and there’s something from those chapters you want to talk about, give me a call.

I will be forming graduate or alumni groups for people who’ve been through one of my Grief Recovery Method groups, so you can work on other losses with partners and with my guidance. Those groups are only four weeks long. Make sure I have your contact information so I can let you know when the next of those groups will begin.

If any of you have been inspired by this program to want to help grieving people, please see me, so you can get in touch with The Grief Recovery Institute, and find out about their Grief Recovery Method® Certification Training Program. All of you can support friends, relatives and others by telling them about The Grief Recovery Handbook and about this Grief Recovery Method® Program.

Now it’s time to get complete with each other and this experience.

How many of you are feeling some excitement at going back into life armed with some better tools, skills, and ideas about dealing with life and loss?
And, how many of you might be feeling a little sense of sadness that our family group is about to end?

What one word most accurately defines this conflicting group of human emotions? GRIEF! We are having a grieving experience.

Remember, grief is the conflicting feelings caused by a change in or an end of a familiar pattern of behavior. We need to grieve and complete our relationship to this group. It would be absurd to leave here incomplete with each other. Even though there is a real probability that some or most or you will see each other again, you must be complete with THIS EXPERIENCE so that you can have the next one.

After we have our final group hug, make sure that you go to each individual in this group. Thank them if they have inspired you or given you courage. Thank them for listening to you. Please do NOT issue any forgives, as they are attacks and do not create completion. Remember to say “good-bye.”

[If appropriate, discuss group get together for barbeque or potluck.]

As for me, I want to thank you all for your participation, your trust, and for being part of this program. Thank you. I love you. Good-bye.

Final Group hug.