WORKSHEET 141 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

My back and forth

Between moments for the loss and moments for life

AIM

Observe the balance between loss-oriented moments and restoration-oriented moments (dual process model), and rebalance if one of the two takes up all the space.

WHO IT IS FOR

Anyone who is grieving, especially those who avoid everything that recalls the loss or, on the contrary, allow themselves no break from their grief.

DURATION

5 min each evening for a week

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Introduce the dual process: oscillating between loss and restoration is healthy, including taking breaks from grief.
2. Each evening, the person notes one loss-oriented moment and one restoration-oriented moment.
3. At the end of the week, look at the balance, without looking for an “ideal” proportion.
4. If one side is missing, choose together a small step to give it room.

POINTS TO WATCH

> The balance varies from person to person, with the time elapsed and across cultures. Grief is not an illness: these worksheets offer support and must not push the person to “move on”. Watch for signs of prolonged grief (at least 6 to 12 months of intense, pervasive yearning with impairment) and for suicide risk, especially the wish to be reunited with the person.

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WORKSHEET 141 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

My back and forth

Grief is often a back and forth: moments for thinking about the person and feeling their absence, and moments for dealing with life, breathing, doing something else. Both are useful. Being distracted isn't forgetting.

1. Each evening, note a moment when you thought about the person or felt their absence.
2. Also note a moment turned towards life: a task, an outing, a rest, a laugh.
3. At the end of the week, look at the balance.
4. If one side is missing, choose a small step to give it room.

Day	A moment for the loss	A moment for life

The side I am missing a little right now, and a small step:

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WORKSHEET 142 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

What I feel in my grief

Every emotion has its place

AIM

Normalise the range of emotions in grief (yearning, sadness, anger, guilt, relief, fear, moments of joy), identify their intensity and what helps to get through them.

WHO IT IS FOR

People surprised or worried by their reactions ("I should be sadder", "I'm ashamed to feel relief").

DURATION

15 min

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Remind them that grief has no compulsory order or form; yearning is often the most present feeling.
2. The person ticks the emotions they feel and their intensity.
3. For each one, they note what triggers it and what helps.
4. Identify an emotion that is hard to say or experienced as "forbidden" and talk about it.

POINTS TO WATCH

> Grief is not an illness: these worksheets offer support and must not push the person to "move on". Watch for signs of prolonged grief (at least 6 to 12 months of intense, pervasive yearning with impairment) and for suicide risk, especially the wish to be reunited with the person.

REFERENCES

Maciejewski, P. K., Zhang, B., Block, S. D. & Prigerson, H. G. (2007). An empirical examination of the stage theory of grief. JAMA, 297(7), 716-723.

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WORKSHEET 142 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

What I feel in my grief

Grief isn't only sadness. You can feel longing, anger, guilt, fear, relief after a long illness, and even moments of joy. All these emotions are normal and can exist at the same time.

1. Read each emotion in the table and rate its intensity from 0 to 10.
2. Write what triggers it these days.
3. Write what helps you when it appears.
4. Circle an emotion you find hard to say out loud.

Emotion	Intensity (0-10)	What triggers it	What helps me

The emotion I find hard to say, and whom I could talk to about it:

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WORKSHEET 143 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

The bond that continues

What I keep of the person, and how I honour them

AIM

Explore “continuing bonds” with the person who died (memories, legacy, values passed on, rituals) and direct them towards forms that support present life.

WHO IT IS FOR

Grieving people who are afraid of “forgetting”, or whose bond with the person stops them living in the present.

DURATION

20 min

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Explain that keeping a bond with the person is common and often helps (Klass et al.).
2. The person notes what they received from the one who died: memories, qualities, values, habits.
3. They choose ways of honouring that bond in their current life.
4. Explore whether the bond helps them live or holds them outside the present.

POINTS TO WATCH

> Continuing bonds are more difficult when the person can’t make sense of the loss (Neimeyer et al., 2006): pay attention if the bond comes with intense distress. Grief is not an illness: these worksheets offer support and must not push the person to “move on”. Watch for signs of prolonged grief (at least 6 to 12 months of intense, pervasive yearning with impairment) and for suicide risk, especially the wish to be reunited with the person.

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WORKSHEET 143 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

The bond that continues

Death ends a life, not necessarily a relationship. Many people keep a bond with the person they have lost: an object, a habit, a phrase they used to say, a value they passed on. That bond can become a source of strength.

1. Think about what the person gave you: memories, qualities, values, small habits.
2. Write them in the table.
3. For each one, choose a way of keeping it alive today.
4. Ask yourself what they would say to you about your life now.

What I received from them	A related memory	How I keep it alive today

What I think they would tell me today:

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WORKSHEET 144 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

The letter I couldn’t give

Telling the person what was left unsaid

AIM

Offer a space to express to the person who died what could not be said (gratitude, regret, anger, forgiveness, goodbye), in the form of an unsent letter.

WHO IT IS FOR

Sudden death, impossible goodbyes (pandemic, distance, living abroad), unfinished or conflictual relationships.

DURATION

20-30 min, in one or several sittings

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Suggest writing directly to the person, addressing them as “you”.
2. The themes are free: what was loved, what is regretted, what hurt, what you would like them to know.
3. The person chooses what to do with the letter: keep it, read it at the grave or aloud, burn it, share it.
4. Go back over what they felt in session.

POINTS TO WATCH

Writing can rekindle strong emotion: suggest doing it at a time when the person won’t be alone afterwards, or in session. If the relationship was abusive, the letter can also express anger, with no obligation to forgive. Grief is not an illness: these worksheets offer support and must not push the person to “move on”. Watch for signs of prolonged grief (at least 6 to 12 months of intense, pervasive yearning with impairment) and for suicide risk, especially the wish to be reunited with the person.

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WORKSHEET 144 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

The letter I couldn’t give

Sometimes we couldn’t say goodbye, thank you, sorry, or what we had inside. Writing a letter to the person, even if they will never read it, can help you set down what was left unsaid.

1. Write directly to the person, as “you”.
2. Tell them what you loved, what you regret, what hurt you, what you would like them to know.
3. Take your time: you can write it in several sittings.
4. Choose what to do with the letter: keep it, read it, leave it somewhere, burn it.

What I want to tell you	What I feel as I write it

What I chose to do with my letter, and how it felt:

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WORKSHEET 145 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

The difficult dates

Preparing for anniversaries, holidays and firsts

AIM

Anticipate the moments of risk (anniversary of the death, birthdays, holidays, first times without the person) and prepare a flexible plan: what to expect, with whom, what ritual, what way out.

WHO IT IS FOR

First year of grief, approaching holidays, people surprised by “setbacks” on certain dates.

DURATION

20 min

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Normalise anniversary reactions, which can happen even years later.
2. List the sensitive dates and situations in the coming months.
3. For each one, prepare: with whom, a possible ritual, what could help, a way out.
4. Remind them that the anticipation is often harder than the day itself.

POINTS TO WATCH

> Grief is not an illness: these worksheets offer support and must not push the person to “move on”. Watch for signs of prolonged grief (at least 6 to 12 months of intense, pervasive yearning with impairment) and for suicide risk, especially the wish to be reunited with the person.

REFERENCES

Worden, J. W. (2018). Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner (5th ed.). Springer.

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WORKSHEET 145 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

The difficult dates

Some dates rekindle the pain: the anniversary of the death, their birthday, holidays, the first start of the school year or the first holiday without the person. That is normal, even years later. Preparing for them a little helps you get through them.

1. Note the dates or situations that may be difficult.
2. For each one, choose whom you want to be with (or whether you prefer to be alone).
3. Choose, if you like, a small ritual: a candle, a meal, a visit, some music.
4. Plan a way out in case it gets too hard in the moment.

The date or situation	With whom	A ritual, if I want one	My way out

What I want to tell my loved ones about those days:

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WORKSHEET 146 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

What has changed in my daily life

The tasks and roles to reinvent

AIM

Work on the “restoration” side of grief: identify the tasks and roles the person who died used to have, what needs to be learnt, delegated or given up, and the help available.

WHO IT IS FOR

Widowhood, loss of a parent or partner who handled a large part of daily life (paperwork, money, cooking, children, the car…).

DURATION

20 min

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Remind them that adjusting to a world without the person is a task of grief in itself (Worden).
2. The person lists what the one who died used to do, specifically.
3. For each task: learn it, delegate it, simplify it or drop it.
4. Identify who can help and where to start.

POINTS TO WATCH

> Relearning tasks can rekindle longing (“that was their role”): this is to be expected and should be acknowledged. Avoid pushing for big decisions (selling, moving house) too soon. Grief is not an illness: these worksheets offer support and must not push the person to “move on”. Watch for signs of prolonged grief (at least 6 to 12 months of intense, pervasive yearning with impairment) and for suicide risk, especially the wish to be reunited with the person.

REFERENCES

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WORKSHEET 146 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

What has changed in my daily life

When someone goes, what they used to do also disappears: the paperwork, the cooking, the phone calls, the shared decisions. Adjusting to this new daily life is part of grief. You don't have to do everything alone, or all at once.

1. Note what the person used to do, specifically.
2. For each thing, choose: I learn it, I hand it to someone, I simplify it or I drop it.
3. Write who could help you.
4. Choose where to start, and when.

What they used to do	I learn it, hand it over, simplify it or drop it	Who can help me	When

What I am proud to have learnt or done since then:

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WORKSHEET 147 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

Guilt and the “if only”s

Looking at my self-reproaches more fairly

AIM

Examine guilt in grief (“if only…”) by distinguishing what the person knew and could do at the time from what they know today (hindsight bias), and make room for regret without self-condemnation.

WHO IT IS FOR

Persistent guilt after a death (an undetected illness, an argument, being absent at the time of death, a loved one’s suicide).

DURATION

30 min, ideally in session

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Welcome the guilt: it is common in grief and often linked to love and a sense of responsibility.
2. For each self-reproach, explore what the person knew, could do and wanted at the time, and the other causes.
3. Distinguish guilt (I acted wrongly) from regret (I wish it had been different).
4. Look for a way to make amends or to honour, if something remains to be done.

POINTS TO WATCH

> Intense guilt is a risk factor for complicated grief (Li et al., 2014). After a suicide it is very common: work on it in session, paying particular attention to suicide risk. Grief is not an illness: these worksheets offer support and must not push the person to “move on”. Watch for signs of prolonged grief (at least 6 to 12 months of intense, pervasive yearning with impairment) and for suicide risk, especially the wish to be reunited with the person.

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WORKSHEET 147 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

Guilt and the “if only”s

Best done with your psychologist

After a loss, many people blame themselves: “if only I had noticed”, “I wasn’t there”, “our last conversation was an argument”. With what you know today, everything seems obvious. But back then you didn’t know everything you know now.

1. Write down a self-reproach.
2. Write what you really knew at that moment, and what you could do.
3. Write the other causes or people that played a part.
4. Write what you would say to a friend who blamed themselves in that way.

My self-reproach	What I knew and could do then	The other causes	What I would say to a friend

What is regret (and not guilt), and what I can do with it:

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WORKSHEET 148 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

What I have been avoiding since the loss

Gradually going back to places, objects and activities

AIM

Identify the avoidance that keeps grief stuck (anxious avoidance of reminders of the loss, depressive avoidance of activities) and build a gradual return, at one's own pace.

WHO IT IS FOR

Grief that doesn't ease, people who avoid the bedroom, the photos, the cemetery, certain places or activities, or who have withdrawn from life.

DURATION

20-30 min in session, then in small steps

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Explain the two forms of avoidance described by Boelen: avoiding reminders of the loss and no longer doing what gave meaning.
2. The person lists what they avoid and rates the difficulty from 0 to 10.
3. Order them from easiest to hardest and choose a feasible first step.
4. Plan the step, with company if needed, and go back over what happened.

POINTS TO WATCH

Don't force: the pace belongs to the person, and some avoidance is a legitimate choice (not keeping certain objects). Therapies for prolonged grief include this work in a structured way (Shear, 2015). Grief is not an illness: these worksheets offer support and must not push the person to "move on". Watch for signs of prolonged grief (at least 6 to 12 months of intense, pervasive yearning with impairment) and for suicide risk, especially the wish to be reunited with the person.

REFERENCES

Boelen, P. A., van den Hout, M. A. & van den Bout, J. (2006). A cognitive-behavioral conceptualization of complicated grief. Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice, 13(2), 109-128.

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WORKSHEET 148 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

What I have been avoiding since the loss

Best done with your psychologist

After a loss, we sometimes avoid what hurts too much: a place, the photos, the bedroom, some music, seeing certain people. We may also stop doing what we used to enjoy. In the moment it protects. But if it lasts, it can keep grief stuck. You can go back, step by step.

1. Note what you have been avoiding since the loss: places, objects, activities, people.
2. Rate the difficulty of each one, from 0 to 10.
3. Choose an easy first step (3 or 4 out of 10).
4. Decide when you will take it, and with whom if you would like company.

What I avoid	Difficulty (0-10)	A small step	When, with whom

What I felt after my first step:

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