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.

Stroebe, M. & Schut, H. (1999). The dual process model of coping with bereavement: Rationale and description. Death Studies, 23(3), 197-224.

PSYCHOLOGIST’S NOTES

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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:

These exercises do not replace therapy. If you are in distress or having suicidal thoughts: 112 (European Union), 3114 (France) or the emergency number of the country where you live.

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