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that doesn't ease, people who avoid the bedroom, the photos, the cemetery, certain places or activities, or who have withdrawn from life.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

Shear, M. K. (2015). Complicated grief. New England Journal of Medicine, 372(2), 153-160.

PSYCHOLOGIST'S NOTES

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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:

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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