PURPOSE OF GROUP: to explore grief & loss

MATERIALS NEEDED: markers/colored pencils (writing utensils for group members)
big sheet of paper

1.
- Facilitator opens group by introducing topic, grief & loss. This is a difficult topic to explore, but we will do so today to better understand how loss affects us.

- Death has a “ripple” effect. The death of a person is a “primary” loss in our life, but there are secondary losses that occur as a result.

- Examples of secondary losses include:
  - Loss of family structure
    a. For example, a child who loses a parent no longer has two parents in the home
    b. Someone who loses a spouse no longer has another adult in the household & may have to take on additional responsibilities
  - Loss of companionship or loss of marriage
  - Loss of lifestyle
    a. For example, a mother volunteers at her child’s school, goes to her soccer games & dance recitals every weekend, hangs out with other moms, etc. A parent’s lifestyle (and social circle) changes if their child dies
    b. Someone who loses a spouse must adjust to being single again
  - Loss of financial security
  - Loss of identity
- Loss of health
  a. Depression, anxiety, sleep problems, eating problems, etc.
- Loss of the future you once imagined
- Loss of purpose
- Loss of joy, hope, love, etc.

- As a result of these secondary losses, people who are grieving often feel as though they have lost *everything* dear to them.

2. 
- The group members will participate in an *activity* that will allow them to *explore the ripple effects of loss*, and it will also *normalize their reactions* to the losses they’ve experienced.
  * Before they begin the activity, ask each group member to think of a person they have lost
  * One-by-one, allow each group member to share who that person is & how long ago they lost him/her

- For the activity, have group members sit at a table. Cover the table with a large sheet of paper.
  * In the middle of the paper, draw a circle & ask each group member to write the name of the person they’ve lost
  * Around the circle, instruct the group members to *write the ways in which the loss has had a ripple effect on them* (i.e. write the secondary losses they’ve experienced)
  * After the group members are done writing, have each group member *identify & discuss some of the ripple effects (on the paper) that they can relate to*

2a. After the activity, you can ask the group members the following questions:
  - Which secondary loss hit you the hardest?
  - Which secondary loss was the most unexpected (i.e. not prepared for, surprised by)?
  - Which group member could you relate to the most during the activity?

3. 
- Facilitator can conclude group by talking about *the healing process*. When we are mourning a
“primary” loss, we are mourning for another (our loved one). However, when we are mourning a “secondary” loss, we are mourning for ourselves. But that’s okay! That’s not selfish. It’s necessary.

- Each loss you experience (as a result of the “primary” loss) must be acknowledged & mourned

- You must learn to adjust to a new life, a new reality, a new environment, etc.
  - For example, someone who loses a spouse must adjust to added responsibility
  *You can ask group members, “What new life did you have to adjust to?” and “What was the scariest thing about this new life?”

- One of the best ways to cope with everything is to take care of yourself.
  - Ask for help, confide in family & friends, join a bereavement group, etc.

- If there is time, you can end group by having each group member complete the following sentences:
  - Grief has taught me...
  - I know I’m going to be okay because...