

Grief & Loss

Myths About Grief

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PURPOSE OF GROUP: to explore myths about grief

MATERIALS NEEDED: pens/pencils for each group member
paper; have enough for each group member
print p. 4-5 of this guide; cut out each slip

1.

-Facilitator can open group with an **icebreaker**.

*Give group members pens/pencils and piece of paper. Ask them to write down a nickname they had at one point in their life. Then, fold the paper and put it into a bowl (or onto a chair)

*One-by-one, group members will take one of the papers, read the nickname, and guess who it belongs to

*Group members can call each other by their nickname for the rest of group!

-Facilitator can now introduce today's topic, **myths about grief & loss**.

-There are many misconceptions surrounding grief because it's a topic that is seldom discussed

-Unfortunately, these misconceptions can have a harmful impact on someone who is grieving the loss of a loved one

-Therefore, it's important to understand your grief & the changes you will go through during the grieving process

-The most important thing for people to realize is that **there is no right or wrong way to grieve**

a. You can feel what you feel and think what you think!

2. Group members will now participate in an activity in which they will explore myths about grief.

*Take the slips of paper you cut out (from p. 4-5 of this guide). Give one slip to each group member

*One-by-one, group members will read the myth/misconception on their slip, and group members will discuss it & give their thoughts

-To ensure group members engage with each other and don't rely on the facilitator to keep discussion going, you can sit in the back of the room & observe the group for this part of the activity

2a. After the activity, you can return to the group and ask the following questions:

-Which myth/misconception bothered you the most?

-Which myth/misconception surprised you the most?

-Were there any myths/misconceptions that you believed were true before today or at one point in your life?

-Do you know of any other myths/misconceptions that we did not discuss today?

3.

-Facilitator can conclude group by going back to some of the myths/misconceptions discussed earlier and expanding on them:

-Myth: It's important to "stay strong"

a. You don't need to "stay strong" for your family, for your kids, or if you're a male who thinks he needs to be the "strong" one

b. It's okay to feel sad & scared... it's okay to cry! **It's important to release your pain and the intense emotions you experience.** If you don't, you're interfering with the healing process, and those powerful emotions will stay inside of you

*You can ask group members, "How do you feel when people tell you to 'stay strong'?"

-Myth: Grief lasts a few months to a year

a. It's different for everyone! There is no timeline... grief may last a long or short time, it may come & go in waves...

-Myth: If you don't cry after the death of a loved one, it means you don't really care

a. We show our grief in different ways. Not everyone cries!

b. Also, people who are in shock or in denial may not show sadness because they

are still processing the loss

-Myth: When you're grieving, you want to be left alone. You don't want your friends or family members to talk about the loss

- a. Many people find comfort in talking to others about their loss
- b. They also like that they can express how they're feeling (as opposed to hiding their pain and pretending that everything is okay)
- c. Having **a strong support system is a big part of healing!**

*You can ask group members, "Who is part of your support system?"

-Myth: When you grieve, you only grieve for the person you lost

- a. Losing a loved one is a "primary" loss. But you also experience "secondary" losses

-Examples: loss of companionship, loss of the future you once imagined, loss of family structure (i.e. a child who loses a parent no longer has two parents in the home), etc.

-Facilitator can also end by noting any interesting observations you made throughout the discussion/activity from earlier

Myths/Misconceptions

The pain will go away if you ignore it

It's important to "stay strong"

When you're grieving, you can't laugh or be happy

Grief lasts a few months to a year

Women grieve more than men

The goal of grief is to "get over" the death

Once you heal from your loss, you will never feel the pain again

Grief & crying are signs of weakness

It's okay to grieve when you're alone, but you should hide it when you're around others

You can't be angry at the person you lost

You need to keep busy when you're grieving

You grieve less when the person you lost was elderly and lived a long life

It's easier to deal with an anticipated death than a sudden, unexpected death

Eventually, you should stop talking about the person you lost. You should get rid of their belongings and take down photos of them that you have displayed because it just makes you sad

If you don't cry after the death of a loved one, it means you don't really care

When you're grieving, you want to be left alone. You don't want your friends or family members to talk about the loss

When you start to move on with your life, it means you're forgetting about the person you lost

When you grieve, you only grieve for the person you lost