

A TEACHING GUIDE

LEARNING TO LIVE THROUGH LOSS:

GRIEF AND THE MOURNING PROCESS

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- learn about the physical, emotional and social aspects of grief.
- learn the 3 phase process of mourning.
- identify causes of complicated grief and share ways to care for someone in mourning.

Notes:

Order your materials as you plan

From your county Extension office order enough copies of *Learning to Live Through Loss: Grief and the Mourning Process*, L8842, visual masters for posters or overhead transparencies and copies of the evaluation form. Your agent will explain the evaluation form to you. At the same time request copies of *Friends InDeed: A Course in Helping*, MF-806 and the accompanying Crisis Card.

Consider this, before you begin

As you prepare to teach this lesson remember that the emotional issues surrounding a discussion on grief and mourning are as important as the facts you present; both for you and group participants.

Also, be aware of your own readiness to talk about grief and mourning. If you have known the pain of grief and been through the process of mourning your experiences can help you lead a sensitive and compassionate discussion. Be aware that preparing and presenting this lesson will rekindle those memories. If your mourning is still in process you may choose not to present this material. Either way, be good to yourself.

Consider the experiences of your participants. Someone in your group may be mourning the death of a loved one, others may find that this discussion triggers memories of their own losses.

The Extension publication *Friends InDeed: A Course in Helping* is a valuable resource to review as you prepare to present this lesson. The lesson for Week Four, titled Warm Listening will show you how to listen and respond to members of your group.

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS

Notes:

On page 3 are activities you may want to use to introduce or summarize this lesson.

You may choose to follow this outline as you teach this lesson.

Part 1

- a. What is grief, what is mourning? (*visual 2*)
- b. Grief
 - Importance of grief (*visual 3*)
 - Physical, emotional and social aspects of grief (*visual 4*)
 - Other grief reactions
- c. Mourning (*visual 5*)
 - The impact of experience, coping skills, life stresses, spiritual beliefs, and circle of support on mourning
 - Disbelief, shock and numbness as protection (*visual 6*)
 - Anticipated vs. sudden death
 - The importance of travel to the funeral
 - Reaction to the death
 - The value of ritualized grief and mourning
 - The needs of mourners after the funeral is over
 - Adapting to the death
 - Adaptation is not a matter of time or anniversaries
 - Grief spasms
- d. Circumstances of the death (*visual 7*)
 - Sudden death
 - Traumatic, violent, disfiguring death
 - Death of a child
- e. Summary
 - Grief is the pain, mourning is the process (*visual 2*)

Depending on the time available, you may either continue with a discussion on helping and complicated grief and mourning or use the following outline at a later time.

Part 2

- a. How can I help? (*visual 8*)
 - Review phases of mourning (denial, reaction and adaptation)
 - Briefly discuss helpful and hurtful responses to grief experienced by participants
- b. Caring during disbelief, shock and numbness
- c. Caring during reaction
- d. Caring during adaptation
- e. Discuss the value of concrete help, and the value of silence
- f. Conclude with “Remember that...” from page 6 of the publication (*visual 9*)

Allow time for discussion and sharing. Following the lesson, take time to visit with participants who seemed especially involved in the discussion.

WRAPPING UP

Notes:

Ask participants to complete the program evaluation which you will return to your county Extension agent. Plan time for informal discussions after the lesson is concluded. This may be a good time for refreshments. If participants want more information refer them to the books listed at the end of this teaching guide. Refer anyone who seems particularly upset to their spiritual leader, family physician or community mental health center.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES TO USE WITH LESSON

You may find these activities helpful to introduce or summarize the lesson.

Activity 1

Read one or more of these sayings to the group and ask for discussion. As an introduction, discuss how the verse deals with grief and mourning. As a summary, discuss how the verse relates to what has been learned. Be prepared to begin the discussion yourself.

*Had we never loved sae kindly,
Had we never loved sae blindly,
Never met—or never parted—
We had ne'er been broken hearted.*

Robert Burns

*Do not appease your fellow in his hour of anger
Do not comfort him while the dead is still laid out before him;
Do not question him in his hour of misfortune.*

Rabbi Simson Ben Ehazer

*Home they brought her warrior dead.
She not swooned nor uttered cry;
All her maidens watching said,
She must weep or she will die.*

Tennyson, The Princess

*No matter what may fill the gap, ev'n if it be filled completely,
it nonetheless remains something else.*

Sigmund Freud

Activity 2 (for use with Part 2)

Ask group participants to think about their own experiences with grief and mourning. Ask them to think about helpful and hurtful things that were said. Write each of the following statements on a card, mix them up and ask the group if the statement is helpful or hurtful? Discuss differences of opinion.

Helpful Statements

“How can I be of help?”

“Tell me how you are feeling.”

“It must be hard to accept.”

“That must be very painful.”

"It's O.K. to be angry with God."

Notes:

"I'm sorry."

"I wish I could take the pain away."

Hurtful Statements

"It's God's will."

"I know how you feel."

"Time heals all things."

"She/he led a full life."

"You will marry again."

"You can have other children."

"Your child is in heaven now."

RESOURCES:

Buscaglia, Leo. *The Fall of Freddie the Leaf: A Story of Life for All Ages*. Thorofare, NJ: Charles B. Slack/Book Division, 1982.

Kushner, Harold. *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. New York, NY: Avon Books, 1981.

Loewensohn, Ruth Jean. *Survival Handbook for Widows (and for relatives and friends who want to understand)*. Glenview, IL: AARP, Scott, Foresman and Co, 1984.

Rando, Therese A. *Grieving: How to Go on Living When Someone You Love Dies*. Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1984.

Sanders, Catherine, M. *Grief and the Mourning After*. New York, NY: Wiley Interscience, 1989.

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