Understanding Grief

A gentle worksheet for naming grief, pacing the day, and honoring what matters without pressure.

Use this at your own pace. Skip, adapt, pause, or stop. You are allowed to choose what fits your body, culture, privacy, energy, safety, access needs, and real-life limits today.

This is a reflection tool, not a test. One honest sentence, one checked box, or one small next step can be enough.

A printable reflection and practice resource Created by Michelle D. Elder, MSW, LMHC. This worksheet is a free educational wellness resource from My Reflective Collective.

- Use what supports you. Skip, pause, adapt, or connect with a licensed therapist, healthcare provider, advocate, or trusted support if reflection brings something up.

Please read before using this resource

Grief, Loss & Continuing Bonds

This does not replace therapy This worksheet is a general educational and self-reflection resource. It is not individual therapy, group therapy, counseling, medical or psychiatric care, diagnosis, treatment, legal advice, or crisis intervention. It may be used alongside therapy or other qualified professional support when that is appropriate for you, but it does not replace those services.

- Use choice and care You may skip a question, adapt an activity, pause, or stop. Some topics or exercises may bring up discomfort, strong emotions, memories, dizziness, or physical sensations. Clinical or wellness terms are used only for general education and are not a personalized assessment or recommendation.

Seek appropriate support Consult an appropriately qualified professional about your individual mental health, physical health, medications, safety, legal matter, or treatment decisions. No outcome is promised, and information or external links may change.

Emergency and crisis needs text 988 for suicide or crisis support. Call 911 for an immediate emergency when that is safe and appropriate. Outside the United States, use local emergency or crisis resources.

Created by Michelle D. Elder with AI used as a collaborative drafting and organizing tool to support self-growth and reflection. AI-assisted material can contain errors or oversimplifications. This resource has educational intent and should not be treated as personalized professional judgment. reviewed for web immediate danger or medical emergency. Call or text 988 in the U.S. or Canada for suicide or mental health crisis support. Copyright Michelle publication: June 27, 2026.

Grief is a natural response to loss. It can affect emotions, thoughts, physical health, relationships, spiritual beliefs, and daily functioning.

There

is no "right" way to grieve and no timeline that everyone follows.

Grief may include:

l Sadness l Anger l Guilt l Relief l Confusion l Numbness l Loneliness l Anxiety l Difficulty concentrating l Changes in sleep or appetite l Fatigue l Feeling disconnected from others Many people move back and forth between different emotions rather than progressing through grief in a straight line.

Some

days may feel manageable while others feel overwhelming.

Important Reminders

l Your grief is unique to your relationship with the person who died. l There is no "correct" timeline for healing. l Missing someone does not mean you are moving backward. l Joy and grief can exist at the same time. l Healing does not mean forgetting. l Continuing bonds with a loved one are normal and healthy.

Reflection Questions

Consider journaling or discussing these questions:

About the Relationship l What did this person mean to me?

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_____ l What are some of my favorite memories with them? l What qualities of theirs do I carry with me? l What would I want future generations to know about them?

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About My Grief

l What emotion feels strongest today? l What am I struggling with the most right now? l What do I wish others understood about my grief? l What am I avoiding because it feels painful?

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About Healing

l What helps me feel connected to my loved one? l What support do I need right now? l What small act of self-care feels possible today? l How can I honor their memory in my daily life?

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_____ Healthy Ways to Process Grief

Emotional Expression

l Journal freely without censoring yourself. l Write letters to your loved one. l Create artwork or music. l Talk with trusted friends or family. l Attend a grief support group.

Physical Care

l Stay hydrated. l Eat regular meals when possible. l Get gentle movement such as walking. l Prioritize rest. l Practice breathing exercises or mindfulness.

Connection

l Share stories about your loved one. l Look through photos when it feels comforting. l Reach out when feeling isolated. l Accept help when offered.

Rituals for Healing and Remembrance

Memory Box

Place photographs, letters, keepsakes, and meaningful objects in a special box.

Letter Writing

- Write a letter sharing what you wish you could say today.

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Candle Ritual

Light a candle and spend a few moments remembering your loved one.

Memory Jar

- Write favorite memories on slips of paper and collect them in a jar to revisit later.

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Anniversary Ritual

Create a meaningful tradition on birthdays, anniversaries, or holidays.

Nature Ritual

Plant a tree, flowers, or a garden in their honor.

Acts of Service Volunteer or perform acts of kindness inspired by the values of your loved one.

Coping Skills for Difficult Moments

When grief feels overwhelming:

Grounding Exercise

Notice:

l 5 things you can see l 4 things you can touch l 3 things you can hear l 2 things you can smell l 1 thing you can taste

Self-Compassion Statement

Ask yourself:

l What would I say to a friend going through this? l Can I offer myself that same kindness?

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Permission Slip

Give yourself permission to:

l Cry l Rest l Laugh l Take breaks from grief l Ask for help l Say no to obligations

Signs You May Need Additional Support

- Consider seeking professional support if you are experiencing:

l Persistent hopelessness l Thoughts of harming yourself l Inability to complete daily responsibilities for an extended period l Significant substance use to cope l Severe isolation l Intense distress that feels unmanageable Mantras for Grief l "I can miss them and continue living." l "My love for them remains." l "I am allowed to grieve in my own way." l "Healing does not mean forgetting." l "I can take this one moment at a time." l "There is room for both sadness and joy." l "I carry their memory with me." l "My feelings are valid." l "I do not have to rush my healing." l "Love continues even after loss."

Quotes for Comfort "Grief is love with nowhere to go." "What we once enjoyed and deeply loved we can never lose, for all that we love deeply becomes a part of us." "The pain of grief is part of the price we pay for love." "Although we cannot see them, the impact of their life remains woven into ours." "Sometimes the smallest step forward is enough."

Closing Reflection

Take a moment to consider:

l What is one memory that makes me smile? l What is one thing my loved one taught me? l How can I honor their memory this week? l What support do I need moving forward?

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_____ Remember: Grief is not something to "get over." It is something people learn to carry while continuing to build a meaningful life.

The

goal is not to forget the person who died, but to find ways to stay connected to their memory while caring for yourself in the present. danger or medical emergency. Call or text 988 in the U.S. or Canada for suicide or mental health crisis support. Copyright Michelle D. Elder, MSW, LMHC. My Reflective Collective.

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They are not therapy, diagnosis, medical care, legal advice, crisis care, or individualized safety planning.

Pause or stop any activity that feels wrong, unsafe, inaccessible, or too much.

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Michelle D. Elder, MSW, LMHC | My Reflective Collective

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_____ Privacy and safer searching If someone may monitor your device, accounts, internet connection, location, downloads, or browser activity, consider using a safer device and a trusted network. Private browsing may reduce locally saved history but does not make activity invisible. Clearing history can also be noticed. A website Quick Exit button changes the page; it cannot erase browser, download, router, account, employer, school, carrier, or device records. Choose only steps that feel safer in your situation.

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