



COPING WITH GRIEF AND LOSS

Workbook

This workbook includes tools for exploring your experience with grief and loss.

Scroll down to see the following resources, which can help you understand how we are impacted by grief, how to name the emotions we are feeling, how to calm ourselves when feeling overwhelmed by those emotions, and how to support our well-being during any stage of the grief cycle and beyond:

1. What is Grief
2. The Stages of Grief
3. The Grief Cycle
4. Grounding Exercise
5. Feelings Wheel
6. Relaxation Techniques
7. Self-Care Plan

WHAT IS GRIEF?

Grief is the experience of coping with loss and can be a result of any change in our daily lives.

Physical symptoms may include:

- Fatigue.
- Headaches.
- Nausea.
- Restlessness.
- Upset stomach.
- Heart palpitations.
- Weak muscles or joint pain.
- Tightness in your chest or throat.
- Having reduced or increased appetite.
- Trouble sleeping (insomnia) or sleeping too much.

Behavioral changes may include:

- Confusion.
- Trouble thinking or making decisions.
- Feeling as if you've lost a sense of hope or direction.
- Difficulty focusing on anything other than your loss.
- Difficulty remembering or keeping track of your responsibilities.

The Stages of Grief

The Kübler-Ross model of grief (the five stages of grief) describes five primary responses to loss. These stages are denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Someone who is grieving may go through these stages in any order, and they may return to previous stages.

Denial: "This can't be happening."

Individuals may refuse to accept the fact that a loss has occurred. They may minimize or outright deny the situation. It is suggested that loved ones and professionals be forward and honest about losses to not prolong the denial stage.

Anger: "Why is this happening to me?"

When an individual realizes that a loss has occurred, they may become angry at themselves or others. They may argue that the situation is unfair and try to place blame.

Bargaining: "I will do anything to change this."

In bargaining, the individual may try to change or delay their loss. For example, they may try to convince a partner to return after a breakup, or search for unlikely cures in the case of a terminal illness.

Depression: "What's the point of going on after this loss?"

At the stage of depression the individual has come to recognize that a loss has occurred or will occur. The individual may isolate themselves and spend time crying and grieving. Depression is a precursor to acceptance because the individual has come to recognize their loss.

Acceptance: "It's going to be okay."

Finally, the individual will come to accept their loss. They understand the situation logically, and they have come to terms emotionally with the situation.

THE GRIEF CYCLE

Use this worksheet to think about your own stages of grief. Have you had any of these thoughts? Use the spaces below each thought to write down any examples from your own experience.

Denial: “This can’t be happening.”

Anger: “Why is this happening to me?”

Bargaining: “I will do anything to change this.”

Depression: “What is the point of going on after loss?”

Acceptance: “I know what happened. I can’t change it. Now, I need to cope.”

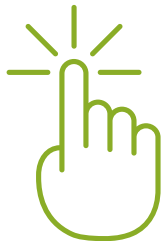
Developed by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, worksheet adapted from therapistaid.com

GROUNDING EXERCISE

When experiencing grief, our emotions can feel overwhelming at times. During those moments, grounding techniques can help us to calm our mind and our body. Here is one helpful practice.



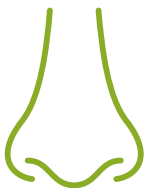
Name 5 things you can see.



Name 4 things you can feel.



Name 3 things you can hear.



Name 2 things you can smell.

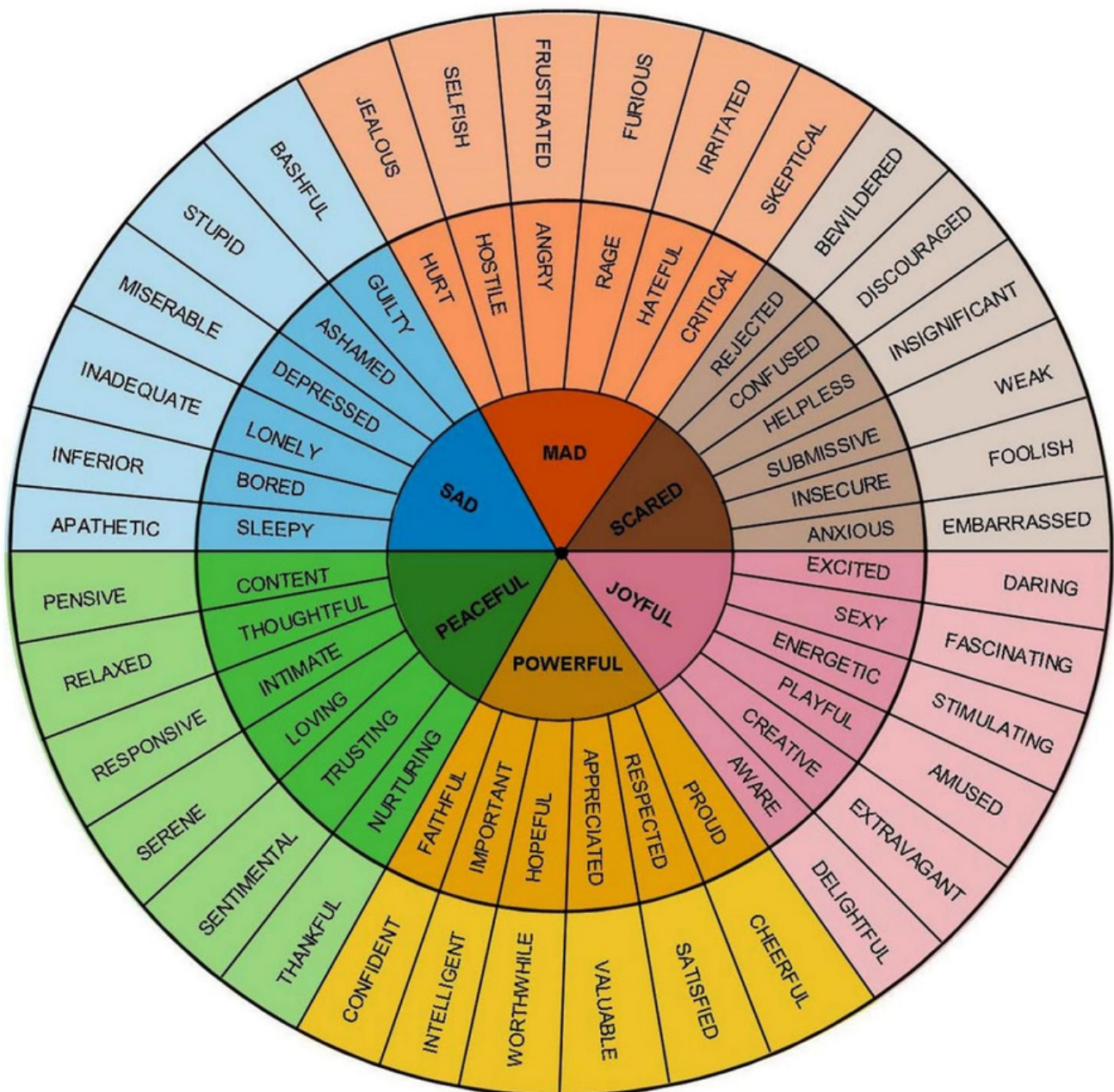


Name 1 thing you can taste.

FEELINGS WHEEL

A TOOL FOR UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONS

The Feelings Wheel can help people recognize and communicate what they are feeling. The inner circle is labeled with names of primary feelings (mad, sad, scared, joyful, powerful, and peaceful). The outer rings contain names of secondary feelings related to the primary ones. Use the Feelings Wheel to describe how you're feeling.



RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

Deep Belly Breathing (Diaphragmatic Breathing):

- Sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
- Place one hand on your chest and the other on your abdomen.
- Inhale deeply through your nose, expanding your diaphragm and feeling your abdomen rise.
- Exhale slowly and completely through your mouth, feeling your abdomen fall.
- Repeat for several breaths, focusing on the rhythmic rise and fall of your abdomen.

4-7-8 Breathing (Relaxing Breath):

- Sit or lie down comfortably.
- Inhale quietly through your nose for a count of four.
- Hold your breath for a count of seven.
- Exhale completely and audibly through your mouth for a count of eight.
- Repeat this cycle as many times as needed.

Box Breathing (Square Breathing):

- Inhale through your nose for a count of four.
- Hold your breath for a count of four.
- Exhale completely through your mouth for a count of four.
- Pause and hold your breath for a count of four before beginning the next cycle.
- Repeat the box breathing pattern for several rounds.

SELF-CARE

When experiencing grief, it is more important than ever to take good care of ourselves. This is also a time when it can be more difficult to do so. Using a plan like the one below can help keep us on track.

Area of self-care	Current practices	Practices to try
Physical <i>Eat regular and healthy meals, good sleep habits, regular exercise, medical check-ups.</i>		
Emotional <i>Engage in positive activities, acknowledge accomplishments, express emotions in a healthy way.</i>		
Spiritual <i>Read inspirational literature, self-reflection, spend time in nature, meditate, explore spiritual connections.</i>		
Professional <i>Pursue meaningful work, maintain work-life balance, positive relationships with co-workers, time management skills.</i>		
Social <i>Healthy relationships, make time for family/friends, spend time with partner/spouse, ask for support from family and friends.</i>		
Financial <i>Understand how finances impact your quality of life, create a budget or financial plan, pay off debt.</i>		
Psychological <i>Take time for yourself, disconnect from electronic devices, learn new skills, engage in psychotherapy, life coaching, or counseling support.</i>		