

# TEAM-CBT for Grief

## Going Beyond Empathy

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## Continuing Bonds vs Stages of Grief

- Stages: Grieving people go through stages that ends in acceptance or a new life.
- Continuing Bonds: When a loved one dies, you go through a process of adjustment and redefine your relationship with that person
- Your bond with them continues and endures.
- A relationship never ends – grief is not something that you go *'through'* to 'let go' or 'move on from' your loved one. Instead, grieving is the process that helps you to form a different relationship with them.

Klass, D., Nickman, L.N., Silverman, P.R. (1996). *Continuing Bonds: New Understandings of Grief (Death Education, Aging and Health Care)*. New York: Routledge.

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## Empathy

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- Empathy using the 5 secrets of effective communication
  - Necessary
  - Sometimes sufficient
- Create space for them to share about their loved one
- There aren't a lot of spaces for sharing our grief



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## Empathy

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Targeted grief inquiries:

- What do you miss about your \_\_\_\_? (Refer to them however the client refers to them)
- What was your relationship like?
- What do you remember about them?
- What is a special memory you have with this person?
- What do you love about this person?



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## Empathy

Targeted grief inquiries cont'd:

- How did you find out that they died?
- How did you react to this person's death?
- Did you get to say goodbye to your loved one?
- What are some words you would have liked to express before they died?
- How does their death affect you today?
- What items or events remind you of your loved one?



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## Empathy

### Analogy for feeling empathy

There's often an emptiness after we lose our loved ones. It's a bizarre experience for someone to be physically present one moment and then no longer in physical existence ever again.

Losing a loved one you've been really close to is like losing a limb: Nothing can replace it. It's gone forever. You learn to adapt and adjust, to move forward with life without it, but you never think your life is better without that limb.

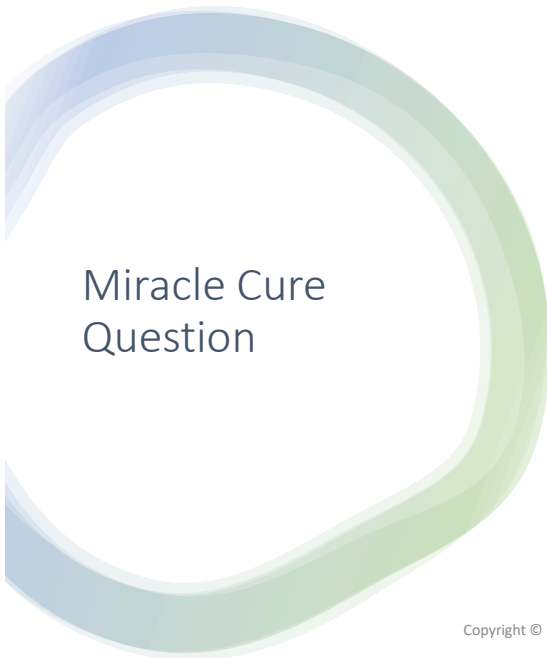
There's constant reminders that having that limb would be a much more ideal existence.



"You've shared with me about how you feel stuck in your grief and can't move on. I have some tools that can help you work on this grief while still honoring your loved one and the loss. Would you be interested in doing this grief work? Or sometimes we just need space to talk about the loss, and that may be all that we need. Which would you prefer?"

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"If you get what you're looking for from our work together around your grief, how would your grief be different? What would change about how you're dealing with losing your \_\_\_\_\_?"

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## Specificity

- "Can you tell me a moment in time when you found yourself struggling with the grief? Where you're feeling stuck or that it's too excessive?"
- Grief is a complex ball of emotions
- The Daily Mood Log can be used as an empathy tool that allows them to unpack their grief

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## Specificity Cont'd

- Identify negative thoughts driving these feelings
- E.g., Guilt – I should have done more, I should have spent more time with them, I should have seen the signs, I shouldn't be feeling happy.

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## Magic Button

"If you could push a button and all of these painful feelings around your grief would disappear, and instead you'd feel more at peace with the loss, would you want to push that button?"

- It's not uncommon to hear people say "no" to this question when dealing with grief
- Often the grief is not the problem, it's not having space to express the emotions from the grief that creates the stuckness/sense that the grief is too excessive.

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## Positive Reframing

- During times of grief, we may want to push that button to get rid of the painful feelings. One healthy way to address these feelings is to allow them to be there, see why they make sense, what they do for you, and even the values you hold about love and relationships.
- Pushing the button to get rid of our emotions is like trying to push the beach ball into the water. The harder we push down, the greater the force up. Instead, when we allow the feelings to be there, it's like floating with the ball, riding the waves, and even seeing its value.
- "Grief, I've learned, is really just love. It's all the love you want to give, but cannot. All that unspent love gathers up in the corners of your eyes, the lump in your throat, and in that hollow part of your chest. Grief is just love with no place to go."

— Jamie Anderson

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# Positive Reframing

I avoid using the word “positive” when doing positive reframing.

Clients may have heard dismissive messages like “it’s for the best” or are told to think of the positives when they are grieving, which has often felt invalidating of their pain and loss.

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## Magic Dial

How much of this feeling should we keep? Sometimes we may dial up, if this feeling hasn’t had space to be expressed.

Sometimes we need to dial up before the emotion can be dialed down. Let the emotions be present to ride the waves of grief.

The dial allows the emotions to be there, keeping the benefits and the level of intensity that makes sense.

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## Methods

- Double standard
- Grief method
- Ongoing rituals to honor the life and continued bond
  - Balloon release, lantern release
  - Creativity – poetry or art
  - Write out the gifts they've left you and how their life has impacted you and others
  - Write their life story
  - Make an ornament
  - Write a letter to them, write a response from them
  - Plant a tree, create a garden in their honor
  - Memory box with their favorite things, photos, etc.
  - Light a candle when you miss their warmth & presence
  - Annual ceremonies – bake a cake for them on birthday or cook a meal for them on the anniversary of their death
  - Let the tears flow when they need to, each teardrop honors the love and bond, and complexities of the relationship

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## Grief Method

- **Address process resistance:** “I have a tool for grief that can be really effective in helping people work through their grief. Many of my clients say they feel relief after it (dangle the carrot). It can also be really emotional (gentle ultimatum) and even painful at first. Would you like to hear about it to see if you want to give it a try?”
- **Set Up:** I’m going to have you imagine talking to your mom and share anything you’ve wanted to express, then I will become you and share those words back to you, and have you become your mom to respond to me, since you know best what she’d say and how she’d say it.
- Would you be open to trying it out and seeing where it goes?

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## Grief Method

- Have the client share anything they'd like to share with their deceased loved one:
  - "If your mom was here right now, what would you want to share with her? What would you want her to know if you could talk to her right now? It's helpful to speak it out loud as if you're talking to her."
- Take thorough notes of their exact wording.
- Prompt for more:
  - "Anything else you'd want her to know? About your son or your life? Anything you wanted to express but didn't have the chance to?"
- You can also give it to them for homework to write a letter as well.

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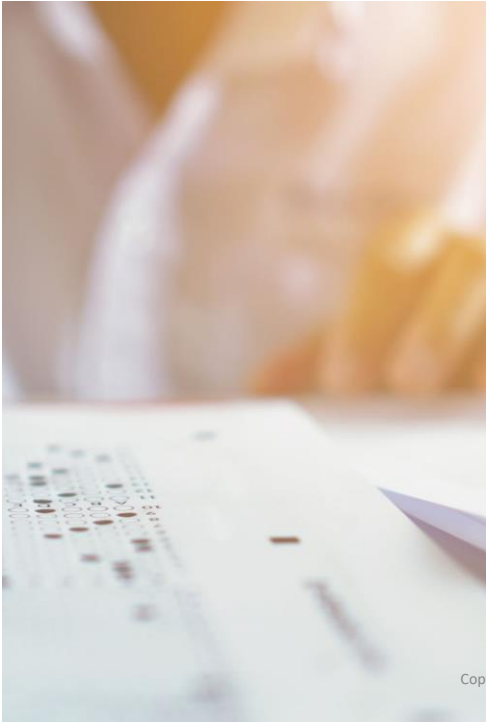
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## Grief Method Cont'd

- You take on the client's role and they become their deceased loved one.
  - "Now I will be you, sharing with you these words, and you become your mom responding to me. Do your best to take on her voice when responding to me and stay in the role until we're finished."
- Share their words from your notes verbatim and pause for a response.
- Share thoughts and feelings from the daily mood log "e.g. I've been feeling so guilty because I should have done more for you and taken you to the doctor sooner."
- Pause to make space for the tears.
- Wrap up with processing what this was like for them and if there are any takeaways.
- Re-rate thoughts and feelings on the DML

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## Feedback Form

- <https://forms.gle/FtMjQbtKqPnzezYf9>
- Certificate of completion will be sent after you submit the feedback form

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## Resources

### TEAM-CBT Online Course

- [courses.teamcbttraining.com/mood](https://courses.teamcbttraining.com/mood)
- Starts July 1<sup>st</sup>
- Cohort-based
- Drip-content – 6 modules in 8 weeks
- Learn tools to more effectively help clients work through anxiety, depression, and anger

### Next Webinar – Part 2 Demo

- Thursday, August 4<sup>th</sup>, 10:30-12:30

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