

**EXPRESSIONS OF GRIEF:  
AN ARTS-BASED GROUP PROGRAM FOR TEENS**

**KATHLEEN MICHELLE FRASER**

Bachelor of Arts with Distinction (Psychology), University of Alberta, 1993

Bachelor of Laws, University of Alberta, 1996

A Project  
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies  
of the University of Lethbridge  
in Partial Fulfilment of the  
Requirements for the Degree

**MASTER OF COUNSELLING**

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION  
LETHBRIDGE, ALBERTA**

May 2010

## Dedication

This project is dedicated to my mother, Margaret Pauline Fraser (1942–1999).

## Abstract

This applied project canvasses both academic literature and clinical application of an expressive-arts based group program intervention for bereaved adolescents. The project includes a literature review that outlines the clinical needs of bereaved adolescents and integrates those needs with the characteristics of expressive-arts group interventions. Research methodology and group manual design procedures are addressed. Planning considerations for group facilitators are highlighted. Personal reflections, a literature review synthesis, and a discussion of the clinical and research implications of this project are also included. In the Appendix, the writer has provided a facilitator group program manual for counsellors who would like to implement this group program intervention.

## Acknowledgements

First, I would like to acknowledge the mentorship, wisdom, guidance, and patience of my project supervisor, Dr. Corinne Borbridge. Your counselling skills have forever influenced how I work with clients and colleagues. In addition, your academic and life advice have been so valuable to me throughout the course of my graduate program. Thank you for sharing your time and expertise with me, and thank you for helping me realize how much I already know.

I would like to acknowledge the influence of Dr. Blythe Shepard who readily agreed to assist as the second committee reader for this project. Dr. Shepard's health psychology course inspired me to pursue my counselling interest of working with clients in the areas of loss and grief. It is also important to me to acknowledge the expertise and dedication of Dr. Dawn McBride, who passionately taught me what I needed to know about group process, designing group programs, and being an effective group facilitator.

The counsellors and staff at Hospice Calgary have contributed immensely to this project by providing me with high-quality practicum and employment opportunities to counsel bereaved adolescents and their families. I wish to specifically acknowledge the collegial support, leadership, and wisdom I received from Marnie Bolin and Shannon Laycraft during my practicum group-facilitation experience and the mentorship, encouragement, and clinical supervision that I received from my practicum supervisor, Colleen Clark. I also want to thank Jill Gerke for her instrumental role in initially connecting me with the amazing staff and programs at Hospice Calgary.

There are many others who have contributed to my success as a graduate student. I offer gratitude to Heather, Jillian, Tracey, Jana-Lynn, Michelle, Karin, Marian, Andrea,

and Melanie: my CAAP colleagues who have joined me in various points along this path—this arduous task of obtaining Masters’ degrees. Thanks for peer-editing, listening, commiserating, and supporting me through this degree. I also want to acknowledge my father, John, and step-mother, Heather, and my close friends, Cara, Carey, Samantha, and Cynthia. All of my family and friends unfailingly believed that I could do this project and this graduate degree and they have supported me in whatever ways I needed. Finally, I want to acknowledge the editing support of Shanaya Nelson, who provided efficient and professional expertise in the formatting and editing of this project.

Last, but certainly not least, without the strong support of my family, studying for a Master’s degree would not have been possible. I owe endless gratitude to my husband, Stacey, who for the past four years has done more than his share of household and parenting duties, almost always without complaint. I also thank my children Julia and Benjamin, for tolerating my countless absences during weekend activities and bedtime routines and for consistently reminding me about what is most important in my life. All three of you have given me invaluable emotional support during this long journey. I love you very much!

## Table of Contents

Dedication .....	iii
Abstract .....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vii
List of Tables .....	xii
Chapter One: Introduction .....	1
Project Purpose .....	2
Project Rationale.....	3
Project Format.....	5
Conclusion .....	6
Chapter Two: Theoretical Foundations .....	7
The Experience of Grief .....	7
Defining Key Concepts.....	7
Uncomplicated Grief Characteristics.....	9
The Cultural Context of Bereavement Experiences .....	11
Application to Group Program .....	12
The Nature of Adolescent Grief.....	13
Fleming and Adolph's Developmental Model.....	13
Adolescent Bereavement Narrative Themes.....	15
Summary .....	16
Bereavement Coping Processes .....	16
Worden's Tasks of Mourning .....	17

Accepting the reality of the loss .....	18
Processing the pain of grief.....	18
Adjusting to a world without the deceased.....	19
Finding an enduring connection and embarking on a new life .....	19
Dual Process Model of Bereavement.....	20
Meaning Reconstruction in Bereavement.....	21
Range of Responses to Loss Model.....	23
Summary.....	25
Application to Group Program .....	26
Rationale for Group Counselling with Bereaved Adolescents .....	28
Overcoming Isolation .....	31
Learning Grief-Related Information .....	32
Expressing Emotion.....	32
Integrating Meaning of Loss into Worldview.....	33
Summary .....	35
Using Expressive Arts Activities in Adolescent Grief Groups.....	37
The Therapeutic Benefits of Expressive-Arts Activities .....	38
Enhances self-expression.....	38
Requires active participation .....	39
Stimulates clients' imagination .....	39
Integrates mind-body connections.....	39
Activates emotional intelligence .....	40
Connecting Bereaved Adolescents' Needs with Expressive-Arts Benefits.....	41

Group Program Application.....	43
Conclusion .....	44
Chapter Three: Method.....	45
Research Methodology .....	45
Designing the Group Program .....	47
Stages of Group Development.....	48
Pre-Group Preparation .....	52
Opening and Closing Sessions.....	52
Balancing Content and Process.....	53
Program Evaluation .....	54
Session evaluation .....	54
Outcome evaluation.....	55
Program evaluation.....	55
Conclusion .....	56
Chapter Four: Planning Considerations .....	57
Session Objectives and Evaluation Methods .....	57
Group Membership and Screening .....	61
Group Membership Criteria.....	62
Screening Assessment Procedures.....	63
The intake interview .....	63
Standardized assessment measure .....	65
Contraindications for Group Membership .....	67

Group Structure and Organization .....	68
Expectations for group members.....	68
Member drop-out policy.....	68
Facilitators .....	69
File notes .....	70
Group characteristics .....	70
Learning diversity.....	71
Location .....	71
Multicultural competency.....	72
Facilitator debriefing .....	72
Group Marketing Plan .....	73
Ethical Implications .....	75
Informed Consent .....	75
Confidentiality .....	76
Facilitator Qualifications .....	76
Dual Relationships.....	77
Group Techniques.....	77
Conclusion .....	78
Chapter Five: Synthesis .....	80
Personal Rationale .....	80
Literature Review Synthesis .....	82
Project Application .....	85
Project Strengths .....	85

Project Limitations.....	87
Future Research Initiatives .....	90
Conclusion .....	93
References.....	94
Appendix: Expressions of Grief: An Arts-Based Group Program for Teens .....	103

## List of Tables

### Table

1. Connections between Client Need, Group Program Goals, and Bereavement-Coping Models .....	26
2. Connections between Client Needs, Group Program Goals, and Therapeutic Group Factors .....	35
3. Connections between Client Needs, Group Program Goals, and Expressive-Arts Benefits .....	41
4. Connection between Group Development Stage, Goals of the Group Stage, and Session Plan Activities.....	49
5. Group Program Goals, Session Objectives, and Evaluation Methods.....	58

## Chapter One: Introduction

It is almost trite to say that almost all human beings will grieve the loss of loved ones at some point in their lives (Currier, Holland, & Neimeyer, 2007). However, despite its universality, in Western industrialized cultures death is often seen as mysterious, private, and requiring medical expertise (McCarthy, 2007). Although some people believe that youth are protected from direct experiences of death (McCarthy, 2006), research has shown that bereavement is a common experience for adolescents. As many as 90% of high school students have personal experience grieving the death of someone they cared about (Stewart & Sharp, 2007). McCarthy (2007) stated that the vast majority of young people experience the death of a significant person in their lives before the age of 18.

Adolescents, defined as youth between 10 and 22 years (Balk & Corr, 2001), are caught between two distinct developmental phases with opposite roles and perspectives related to death: the innocence and dependence of childhood and the maturity and responsibility of adulthood (McCarthy, 2007; Noppe & Noppe, 1997). McCarthy (2006) discussed common themes inherent in the concepts of adolescence and bereavement: transition and disruption. Both adolescence and bereavement are stages characterized by intense change and tumultuous emotions. As such, grieving adolescents face situations that have been described as double jeopardy (McCarthy, 2006).

Although research has shown that some bereaved persons cope resiliently (Gillies & Neimeyer, 2006), the stress of death and bereavement is substantial for many. Bereavement presents risk factors that can negatively impact physical and mental health (Stroebe, Hansson, Stroebe, & Schut, 2001). As noted by Stroebe et al., bereaved

individuals have higher rates of depression, anxiety, somatic complaints, and infections. Individuals who are grieving also consult doctors and are hospitalized more frequently, use medication more often, and have a higher risk of mortality (Stroebe et al., 2001).

Bereaved adolescents face similar risk factors to adults. However, they also experience unique bereavement-related complications, which can have enduring health ramifications (Balk & Corr, 2001). These complications include threats to identity formation, ambivalence with relationships, implications for cognitive development, and increased risk for psychopathology (McCarthy, 2007). Given these significant health-related concerns, preventative psychological care is a critical aspect of adolescent bereavement (McCarthy, 2007). This preventative care may include the promotion and facilitation of adaptive coping after loss and the identification of risk factors connected to less adaptive bereavement-coping strategies. Bereavement group interventions are an ideal way to offer such preventative care. The group structure is conducive to meeting specific needs of grieving adolescents including (a) overcoming isolation, (b) providing grief-related information, (c) containing and expressing emotions, and (d) integrating the meaning of their losses into their worldviews (Tedeschi, 1996).

In this chapter, I outline the purpose of this applied project. I also review the rationale for creating an expressive-arts-based group program for bereaved adolescents. Finally, I provide readers with an overview of the project's format.

#### *Project Purpose*

Several research questions comprise the foundation of this project. These questions include:

1. What is the impact of bereavement on adolescents?

2. Are group programs an effective way to address the concerns of bereaved teenagers?
3. How could the inclusion of expressive art activities increase the effectiveness of these group interventions?

In this project, I critically explore theory that discusses the impact of bereavement on adolescents and synthesize the needs of grieving adolescents. I outline literature that describes how individuals cope with bereavement. I also canvass literature that discusses the effectiveness of adolescent grief-group interventions and provide theoretical support for incorporating expressive-arts-based therapeutic activities into adolescent bereavement groups. Finally, in this project, I created a nine-session expressive-arts focused group program manual, which is intended to be implemented with a group of grieving adolescents to promote their adaptive coping to bereavement.

#### *Project Rationale*

Orloff, Armstrong, and Remke (2009) noted that much of what is known about adolescent bereavement support groups comes from anecdotal sources including descriptions in agency publications, conversations between care providers, and comments from group participants. There has been minimal research that empirically explored the therapeutic efficacy of these bereavement support groups (Orloff et al., 2009). In addition, Kosminsky and Lewin (2009) wrote that the “focus on research-based practice or research-informed practice is relatively new in the field of bereavement counselling, and certainly, among clinicians, research is still only a small part of what informs their practice” (p. 328). This absence of empirical work has resulted in a lack of best practices resources for professionals to reference when designing and implementing programs for

bereaved adolescents (Orloff et al., 2009). Kosminsky and Lewin proposed, “Much of what clinicians bring to their work with bereaved adolescents is based on experience, instincts, and common sense” (p. 328). However, several writers have described key principles of the adolescent bereavement experience (Fleming & Adolph, 1986; Orloff et al., 2009; Sharpe, McCarthy, & Jessop, 2006), and from those principles, the needs of grieving adolescents can be identified. Within this project, I offer a synthesis of these key principles, translating adolescent bereavement needs into foundational goals for this group program.

Stokes, Reid, and Cook (2009) noted, “Many adolescents find it difficult to express their feelings verbally; therefore, it is important for professionals to offer them alternative ways to explore their memories and emotions following a bereavement” (p. 193). As such, a number of expressive-arts-based techniques have been used with success in adolescent group bereavement programs. Journalling and creative writing strategies have often been used to (a) express emotions, (b) resolve issues with the deceased, (c) maintain a connection with the deceased, (d) communicate with other members of the youth’s support network, and (e) document learning and growth from the bereavement experience (Tedeschi, 1996). Other artistic means of expression that have been utilized in bereavement groups include collages, poems, stories, songs, and murals, as these activities “encourage expression of emotion and telling of stories about the deceased, the adolescent’s relationship with the deceased, and the death” (Tedeschi, 1996, p. 301).

This project directly addresses a community need for counsellors who work with bereaved adolescents by providing a theoretically-supported group program manual that

will contribute to the dearth of available best-practices resources (Orloff et al., 2009). Incorporating an expressive-arts focus in this group program will offer counsellors alternative intervention ideas that go beyond talk therapy. Utilizing these expressive-arts activities as an integral focus within adolescent bereavement groups will assist adolescents with their grief-related emotional processing (Malchiodi, 2005), as well as promote increased members' sharing of their emotional experiences with other teens. Finally, this project will promote heightened focus on members' immediate discussions of their creative experiences. These facilitated discussions will result in a more process-focused group program, distinguishing it from the predominantly psychoeducational and peer-support functions that are historically characteristic of adolescent bereavement groups (Orloff et al., 2009).

#### *Project Format*

This project is organized into the following chapter format. In chapter 2, I outline the theoretical foundations for this project and review literature related to three themes: (a) models that describe adolescent grief experiences and bereavement-coping processes, (b) the benefits of using group interventions with bereaved adolescents, and (c) the rationale for using expressive-arts activities within an adolescent bereavement group. Chapter 3 contains a description of my research methods, along with a review of the process that I used to create the group program manual. In chapter 4, I review foundational considerations for the *Expressions of Grief* group program (found in the Appendix), including group member objectives and evaluative methods, group membership criteria and screening protocol, group structure and organizational details, a program marketing plan, and ethical considerations. Chapter 5 provides readers with a

project synthesis, including reflections about the personal meaning of this project, application of the literature review, project strengths and limitations, and ideas for future research initiatives. Finally, the Appendix to this project contains the *Expressions of Grief* group program manual, including session plans, facilitator notes, participant worksheets, evaluation tools, and additional resources.

### *Conclusion*

Bereavement is an experience common to many adolescents. These grieving adolescents are often concurrently experiencing developmental changes, which in turn impact their grief experiences (McCarthy, 2006). There are bereavement risk factors unique to adolescents (McCarthy, 2007) and, therefore, there is a community need for interventions designed to provide preventative bereavement support for teenagers (McCarthy, 2007). In this chapter I described the purpose and rationale for this applied project. I also reviewed the format of the project. In the next chapter I provide the theoretical foundations for the *Expressions of Grief* group program.

## Chapter Two: Theoretical Foundations

Researchers have outlined numerous paradigms that can assist counsellors in their understanding of the nature and diversity of bereavement responses, as well as the processes involved in adaptive coping to loss (Machin, 2009). In this chapter, I begin with a synthesis of the literature that describes the experience of grief. Two models that offer explanations about the unique qualities of adolescent grief will be explored. Then, several bereavement-coping theories will be presented. Next, I outline literature that discusses the therapeutic benefits of using group interventions with bereaved adolescents and highlight how the needs of grieving teenagers can be ideally met by group programs. In the final section of this chapter, I discuss literature that addresses the benefits of expressive-arts activities and how those benefits connect to the needs of bereaved adolescents.

### *The Experience of Grief*

In this section, I outline literature related to the grief experience. First, I define some key concepts. Then, I delineate the characteristics of uncomplicated grief. The importance of understanding the cultural context of bereavement is also discussed.

#### *Defining Key Concepts*

It is important to define several key concepts that will be used throughout this literature review. *Bereavement* is “the objective situation of having lost someone significant through death” (Stroebe, Hansson, Schut, & Stroebe, 2008, p. 4). Corr, Nabe, and Corr (2009) highlighted three essential elements of bereavement: (a) a relationship or attachment with someone who is valued, (b) the loss of that relationship, and (c) an individual who is deprived of this valued relationship due to the loss. *Grief* is

conceptualized as “the response or reaction to loss” (McCarthy, 2006, p. 32), often seen as a “primarily emotional (affective) reaction to the loss of a loved one through death” (Stroebe et al., 2008, p. 5). However, grief involves more than affect reactions, and may also include physical sensations, thoughts, behaviours, social difficulties and searches for spiritual meaning (Corr et al., 2009). *Mourning* describes the interpersonal aspects of grief, including “the social expressions or acts expressive of grief that are shaped by the (often religious) beliefs and practices of a given society or cultural group” (Stroebe et al., 2008, p. 5). *Bereavement coping* describes those “processes, strategies, or styles of managing (reducing, mastering, tolerating) the situation in which bereavement places the individual” (Stroebe et al., 2001, p. 9). *Expressive arts activities* often include “the use of art, music, dance/movement, drama, poetry/creative writing, play and sandtray” (Malchiodi, 2005, p. 2).

Underlying most contemporary grief and bereavement research is the concept of *attachment*. Worden (2009) wrote,

Bowlby’s attachment theory provides a way for us to conceptualize the tendency in human beings to create strong affectional bonds with others and a way to understand the strong emotional reaction that occurs when those bonds are threatened or broken. (p. 13)

The presumption is that it is normal for humans to form attachments with significant others and, thus, normal for individuals to experience intense reactions when these important attachment figures are no longer available (Corr et al., 2009). As such, clinicians and researchers seem to agree that it is often inappropriate to pathologize bereavement-related thoughts, feelings, and behaviours.

However, these same researchers and clinicians often conceptualize grief reactions as uncomplicated or complicated (Corr et al, 2009; Stroebe et al., 2008; Worden, 2009). *Uncomplicated grief* refers to the “normal process of grieving for the loss of an important relationship” (Cohen, Mannarino, & Deblinger, 2006, p. 16). Worden (2009) noted that normal grief “encompasses a broad range of feelings and behaviors that are common after a loss” (p. 17). *Complicated grief*, also called *traumatic grief* or *complicated mourning*, typically refers to enduring grief reactions with extreme levels of distress symptoms and impaired functioning (Cohen et al., 2006). Worden outlined four types of complicated grief reactions, including (a) *chronic*, which is prolonged in duration without any improvement in daily functioning; (b) *delayed*, where individuals suppress their grief at the time of the loss and experience subsequent reemergence of their grief in response to another triggering event; (c) *exaggerated*, which involves an intensified grief reaction that is experienced by the bereaved person as excessive and disabling; and (d) *masked*, where individuals experience symptoms and behaviours that cause them difficulty, but they do not recognize these symptoms as being related to their loss. The target population for the *Expressions of Grief* group program (found in the Appendix) is adolescents experiencing uncomplicated grief. However, counsellors need to understand when clients’ grief reactions may be identified as complicated, as those individuals will likely require qualitatively different therapeutic care (Cohen et al., 2006).

#### *Uncomplicated Grief Characteristics*

Given that grief is a normal reaction to death, uncomplicated grief should not be regarded as pathological (Stroebe et al., 2001). Corr et al. (2009) referenced the healthy nature of uncomplicated grief:

Grief is neither a disorder nor a healing process; it is a sign of health itself, a whole and natural gesture of love. Nor must we see grief as a step toward something better. No matter how much it hurts—and it may be the greatest pain in life—grief can be an end in itself, a pure expression of love. (p. 216)

Despite this view, most bereavement researchers conceptualize grief using a symptom-based or medical model and by articulating the physical and mental health consequences of bereavement (Stroebe et al., 2001). Uncomplicated grief reactions are multidimensional. The signs or manifestations of grief can include: (a) *affective* reactions, such as sadness, loneliness, helplessness, anxiety, guilt, anger, shock, numbness, and relief; (b) *behavioural* reactions, including crying, agitation, and social withdrawal; (c) *cognitive* manifestations, such as rumination, confusion, preoccupation, hallucinations, lowered self-esteem, thoughts of hopelessness, and memory problems; and (d) *physiological* symptoms, including loss of appetite, sleep disturbances, low energy levels, physical sensations of tightness and breathlessness, and susceptibility to illness (Stroebe et al., 2001; see also Gillies & Neimeyer, 2006; Worden, 2009). Currier, Neimeyer, and Berman (2008) noted, “The majority of bereaved people tend to experience strong emotions, a sense of cognitive disequilibrium, and impaired role functioning for at least a short period” (p. 648). It is important for counsellors to be aware of the diversity within individual experiences of uncomplicated grief so as to avoid prematurely assessing pathology in grieving people. As well, awareness of this diversity helps counsellors normalize the experiences of bereaved people, particularly if a client is facing his or her first significant loss (Worden, 2009). Clients may not experience death, loss, and grief on frequent occasions, so when they do, their reactions may feel foreign

and even abnormal. Counsellors can assist with reassurances that “reacting and responding to loss is a healthful process, not a morbid one” (Corr et al., 2009, p. 217).

### *The Cultural Context of Bereavement Experiences*

Cultural assumptions also impact individuals’ bereavement experiences. Wortman and Silver (2001) noted common grief assumptions imposed by the dominant North American culture including: (a) individuals will react to loss with intense distress and without positive emotions, (b) failure to experience distress is indicative of a problem, (c) successful coping requires confronting and working through one’s feelings, (d) continued attachment to the deceased is seen as pathological, and (e) healthy mourning is time-limited. These assumptions influence how family, friends, and health professionals treat bereaved persons. Wortman and Silver cited research that challenged the accuracy of many of these assumptions. For example, research has shown that continued attachment to the deceased is not necessarily indicative of maladaptive coping (Klass, Silverman, & Nickman, 1996).

Rosenblatt (2001) conducted research that highlighted cultural commonalities by revealing that deaths were difficult for most people in every studied culture. These difficulties were expressed through “tears, anger, personal disorganization, lamentation, depressed affect, or difficulty engaging in some or all of what before the death would be normal activities” (Rosenblatt, 2001, p. 288). Rosenblatt also noted the wide variations among cultures in “how and how much people typically grieve” (p. 289). In reconciling these cultural differences with the universality of the grief experience, Rosenblatt outlined key areas of distinction including: (a) cultural differences in what is understood to have been lost with a death; (b) the construction of the relationship of survivors with

the person who has died; and (c) “how grief is shaped, the meaning of the shaping, and the consequences of resisting the shaping processes” (p. 291). Similarly, Neimeyer (2001) highlighted the increasing emphasis on cultural practices for accommodating losses and reduced emphasis on theories that explore universal processes of grief. In stressing the importance of cultural context in understanding experiences of grief, Rosenblatt advised,

The quest for grief universals and universal processes is predicated on an essentialist reality. That reality helps us to learn more about human grieving, but it also guarantees that we miss a lot. To learn what we may be missing, it would be very useful to understand grieving from the perspectives of many different languages and cultures, to understand things in people’s own terms. (p. 298)

#### *Application to Group Program*

This literature supports the foundational premise of the *Expressions of Grief* group program: Grief is an “individualized phenomenon, unique in many ways to each particular loss and griever” (Corr et al., 2009, p. 217). The diversity inherent in individuals’ grief highlights the importance of facilitating this group program with flexibility and client-focus. Using the group session plans as a guide, facilitators need to also look for ways to learn about the prominent needs of each adolescent participant. This group program will be most effective if facilitators are prepared to facilitate the proposed session plans while still allowing opportunities for group members to explore ways that will make the group experience meaningful for them. The overall goal of the *Expressions of Grief* program is to create a climate where participants feel free to grieve their unique

losses in their unique ways while simultaneously drawing on the healing power of the group's common loss experience.

### *The Nature of Adolescent Grief*

In this section, I review two models relevant to understanding the unique qualities inherent in the experience of adolescent grief, including Fleming and Adolph's (1986) developmental model and McCarthy's (2006) qualitative work with narrative themes. Practitioners can reference these models to increase their understanding of distinct challenges that may be faced by bereaved adolescents while remaining cognizant that these individuals' grief presentations differ in unique ways and depend on a multitude of intra- and interpersonal factors (Servaty-Seib, 2004).

#### *Fleming and Adolph's Developmental Model*

The work of Fleming and Adolph (1986) is widely regarded "as providing the most relevant theoretical framework for understanding bereavement and adolescence" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 44; see also Balk, 2007). Fleming and Adolph's model proposed connections between three adolescent developmental phases and issues faced by bereaved youth and thereby identified critical bereavement tasks and conflicts that present at each maturational stage (Balk, 1996). Based on this model, Balk and Corr (2001) summarized five core issues that grieving adolescents must learn to manage, including: "(a) trusting in the predictability of events, (b) gaining a sense of mastery and control, (c) forging relationships marked by belonging, (d) believing the world is fair and just, and (e) developing a confident self-image" (p. 201). How bereaved adolescents affectively, behaviourally, and cognitively cope with these issues will vary depending on their current maturational status, and these youth may reexperience their grief in new ways as they

advance through each phase of adolescent development (Balk, 1996). In this vein, it is also important to note that most teenagers will continue to grieve adolescent losses beyond adolescence. Corr et al. (2009) noted the periodic reemergence of grief as individuals reach new developmental milestones throughout the courses of their lives.

Some researchers have examined adolescent bereavement within the context of Fleming and Adolph's developmental model (Balk & Corr, 2001; Christ, 2000; Noppe & Noppe, 1997). Fleming and Balmer (1996) found that younger adolescents internalized their anxiety resulting in physical symptoms while older adolescents experienced greater distress due to their increased conscious awareness of the impact of their losses. Christ (2000) found that early adolescents avoided public emotional expression and were more intensely involved with school, friends, and activities. In contrast, middle adolescents experienced severe negative affect that often interfered with their participation in school and activities (Christ, 2000).

Noppe and Noppe (1997) found that the three developmental phases of adolescence corresponded to different meanings about death. Early adolescents, aged 11–14, were theorized as being preoccupied with separating from their parents (Corr et al., 2009). Research findings showed that these youth conceptualized the meaning of death as a separation from loved ones (Noppe & Noppe, 1997). In cases involving the loss of a significant person, these teenagers often express intense feelings of abandonment and threats to their feelings of safety (Corr et al., 2009). Middle adolescents, who are 14–17 years of age, typically present with developmental concerns about personal mastery, independence, and control (Corr et al., 2009). These developmental issues corresponded to middle adolescents' meanings of death, with these teenagers expressing significant

worries about personal mortality and uncertainty about life after death (Noppe & Noppe, 1997). When middle adolescents experience the death of a significant loved one, they often report losing their feelings of immortality (Corr et al., 2009). Those participants in later adolescence, aged 17–21 years, typically experience developmental concerns about intimacy and commitment (Corr et al., 2009). In relation to the meaning of death, these older teenagers most often expressed strong concerns about leaving a legacy and more certain beliefs about an afterlife (Noppe & Noppe, 1997). As well, after a significant loss, older adolescents may experience difficulties in obtaining and maintaining future intimate connections with others (Corr et al., 2009). Understanding the needs of bereaved adolescents at different developmental stages may assist counsellors in devising client-focused bereavement intervention strategies. The importance of this literature to clinical practice will be discussed further in chapter 5.

#### *Adolescent Bereavement Narrative Themes*

Sharpe et al. (2006) summarized extensive qualitative research that analyzed narratives from bereaved adolescent participants. Common themes found within the experiences of these bereaved youth included: (a) *a search for meaning*, including a desire to make sense of the death event and to incorporate that experience into their assumptive world; (b) *overwhelming feelings*, including making sense of and managing these feelings as well as finding safe avenues and venues to express feelings and have them acknowledged; (c) *impact on social relationships*, including common feelings of isolation and loneliness and selective losses of previously-supportive relationships; (d) *impact of social context*, as a guide on how to experience, understand, and manage bereavement; (e) *risk and vulnerability*, as present in the lives of bereaved youth,

particularly those who were grieving the loss of a parent; (f) *reoccurrence*, referring to the likelihood that grief could re-emerge during significant points in later life; (g) *lack of formal intervention opportunities*; and (h) *lack of power*, including exclusion from decision-making and denial of access to key information (Sharpe et al., 2006; see also McCarthy, 2007). Although the narratives of these research participants were unique and diverse, these themes highlight some convergent experiences in the lives of bereaved adolescents (Sharpe et al., 2006).

### *Summary*

In this portion of the literature review, I highlighted needs often present in grieving teenagers. An examination of these needs provides direction to counsellors who offer bereavement support to adolescents. The *Expressions of Grief* group program has been designed for adolescents aged 15–18 years old. Based on information gleaned from the above review, I have selected five needs of grieving adolescents to be addressed in this group program. These needs include: (a) emotional expression and regulation, (b) finding and incorporating new meanings into their evolving identities, (c) identifying and enhancing supportive relationships, (d) identifying and developing bereavement coping strategies, and (e) enhancing feelings of empowerment to regain some sense of security and control. How I incorporate these needs into the *Expressions of Grief* group program's goals is addressed further below in the Application to Group Program section of this chapter.

### *Bereavement Coping Processes*

In this section, I review several bereavement-coping models that describe how individuals may experience and adapt to the challenges presented by death-related loss.

These models highlight commonalities in bereavement coping processes and thus, they offer counsellors paradigms to increase their understanding about how to help their bereaved clients. However, it is also critical to remember that individuals cope with grief in unique ways. Worden (2009) noted, “Each person’s grief is like *all* other people’s grief; each person’s grief is like *some* other person’s grief; and each person’s grief is like *no* other person’s grief” (p. 8). In the next section, I summarize the following models: Worden’s (2009) tasks of mourning, Stroebe and Schut’s (2001) dual process model of bereavement, Gillies and Neimeyer’s (2006) meaning reconstruction model, and Machin’s (2009) range of responses to loss.

#### *Worden’s Tasks of Mourning*

Worden’s (2009) model was originally developed as a result of the Child Bereavement Study, a research project undertaken by Worden, Silverman, and Nickman at Harvard University (Worden, 1996). Through analysis of 125 interviews and standardized assessments of non-clinical minors, aged 6 to 17 years, Worden (1996) identified four tasks of mourning that individuals, including children and adolescents, encounter during their processes of adaptation to bereavement. Worden (2009) recently amended the original task descriptors to incorporate recent empirical work. The current descriptors of the four tasks of mourning are: (a) accepting the reality of the loss, (b) processing the pain of grief, (c) adjusting to a world without the deceased, and (d) finding an enduring connection with the deceased in the midst of embarking on a new life. Worden (2009) noted that children and adolescents will undertake these tasks in unique ways and their mourning processes are influenced by their current developmental issues. Worden (2009) also stated that these tasks can be revisited and worked through on

multiple occasions and that different tasks could be addressed at the same time. Worden's (2009) four tasks of mourning are described in greater detail below.

*Accepting the reality of the loss.* Worden (2009) stated, "The first task of grieving is to come full face with the reality that the person is dead, that the person is gone and will not return" (p. 39). Individuals challenged by this task may use strategies that involve negating the "facts of the loss, the meaning of the loss, or the irreversibility of the loss" (Worden, 2009, p. 40). A bereaved person who rejects the meaning of his or her loss may assert that the loss was not significant or engage in behaviours such as removing all reminders of the deceased from his or her environment. Choosing not to accept the irreversibility of the loss often occurs in the context of religion spiritualism (Worden, 2009), whereby bereaved people may sustain a hope that they will soon be reunited with the deceased. Accepting the reality of the loss includes both an intellectual and an emotional acceptance, with the latter often being more difficult. Worden noted that "the bereaved person may be intellectually aware of the finality of the loss long before the emotions allow full acceptance of the information as true" (p. 42).

*Processing the pain of grief.* Worden (2009) noted that after the loss of significant loved ones, people experience physical, emotional, and behavioural pain. Worden stated, "Not everyone experiences the same intensity of pain or feels it in the same way, but it is nearly impossible to lose someone to whom you have been deeply attached without experiencing some level of pain" (p. 44). "Productive mourning acknowledges that the pain encountered during bereavement is essential and appropriate" (Corr et al., 2009, p. 226). Others' reactions to bereaved persons can impede this processing task, particularly when those individuals are uncomfortable with grief-related emotions.

Grieving individuals who do not engage in this mourning task often “cut off their feelings and deny the pain that is present” (Worden, 2009, p. 44). Worden asserted that bereaved people who do not engage in processing their grief-related pain would carry these painful feelings with them throughout their lives.

*Adjusting to a world without the deceased.* Worden (2009) described three areas of required adjustment after the death of a loved one including: (a) *external* adjustments to how one functions in the world; (b) *internal* adjustments to how one experiences his or her sense of self; and (c) *spiritual* adjustments to one’s beliefs, values, and assumptions about the world. External adjustments are required to fill roles that were previously assumed by the deceased (Worden, 2009). Internal adjustments occur as significant losses require bereaved people to reconsider their self-definition, self-esteem, and sense of self-efficacy, ultimately asking, “Who am I now” (Worden, 2009, p. 48)? Grieving people also make spiritual adjustments as the death of significant loved ones often present challenges to three assumptions: the world is a benevolent place, the world makes sense, and the bereaved person is worthy (Worden, 2009). Bereaved individuals who do not engage in these adjustments will often struggle to develop loss-coping skills and typically experience decreased senses of self-efficacy and self-esteem (Worden, 2009).

*Finding an enduring connection and embarking on a new life.* Worden (2009) recently reworded this fourth task to emphasize research that highlights the importance for some bereaved persons to maintain continued bonds with the deceased. In this task, a bereaved person can “find a place for the deceased in a way that will not preclude him or her from going on with life” (p. 50). Successful completion of this task includes restructuring the relationship with the deceased person while remaining open to new

attachments and relationships (Corr et al., 2009) Worden noted that this mourning task is often the most difficult for bereaved persons to complete.

In the original study, Worden (1996) found that most children and teenagers adaptively cope with their tasks of mourning, although 33% “were found to be at some degree of risk for high levels of emotional and behavioural problems” (p. 16). As a tool for bereavement coping assessment, Worden (2009) emphasized the importance of understanding the *mediators of mourning*, variables that influence individuals’ mourning reactions and their capabilities to engage in mourning tasks. These mediators include: (a) the type of relationship with the deceased; (b) the nature of the bereaved person’s attachment to the deceased; (c) how the deceased died; (d) the bereaved person’s history of previous losses and grief experiences; (e) the mourner’s personality variables, including age, developmental stage, gender, coping style, attachment style, cognitive style, ego strength, and beliefs and values; (e) social variables, including the mourner’s satisfaction with his or her support systems; and (f) concurrent stressors (Worden, 2009; see also Corr et al., 2009).

#### *Dual Process Model of Bereavement*

Stroebe and Schut (2001) proposed the dual process model (DPM) of coping with bereavement. In proposing the DPM, Stroebe and Schut integrated applicable and influential components of other coping models with the goal of providing a comprehensive answer to this question: What is adaptive coping to bereavement? The foundational premise of the DPM is that death losses involve multiple and diverse stressors and that adaptive bereavement coping is directed toward two sets of coping processes (Servaty-Seib, 2004).

The first category of coping processes is *loss orientation*, referring to “the bereaved person’s concentration on and processing of some aspect of the loss experience” (Stroebe & Schut, 2001, p. 395). Loss-oriented coping includes activities that deal with the loss of the deceased including “crying, missing, yearning, remembering” (Gillies & Neimeyer, 2006, p. 36). Other loss-oriented coping activities could include “appraisal of the meaning of the loss, and relocation of the deceased in a world without the deceased’s presence” (Worden, 2009, p. 53). The second category of coping processes is *restoration orientation*, which focuses on “secondary stressors that are also consequences of bereavement” (Stroebe & Schut, 2001, p. 395). Restoration-oriented coping refers to “activities by which one begins to build a new life and identity” (Gillies & Neimeyer, 2006, p. 36). Worden identified new skill mastery and identity change as restoration-oriented coping activities. The DPM proposes a dynamic process with adaptively coping grieving individuals oscillating between loss and restoration orientations. Within each orientation, the grieving individual also fluctuates between confrontation and avoidance activities. Neimeyer (2001) highlighted a major strength of the DPM as,

Its capacity to integrate much of the leading edge research on the way in which bereaved people cope with their new status by oscillating between preoccupation with the grief itself and re-engagement in a world forever transformed by their loss. (p. 6)

#### *Meaning Reconstruction in Bereavement*

Gillies and Neimeyer (2006) proposed the model of meaning reconstruction in bereavement (MRB). Gillies and Neimeyer described “bereavement as an active process of meaning reconstruction in the wake of loss” (p. 32). Bereaved individuals may utilize

three different meaning-reconstruction strategies, which include (a) making sense of the death, (b) finding benefit in the bereavement experience, and (c) undergoing a process of identity change (Gillies & Neimeyer, 2006). Sense making refers to a bereaved person's desire to find reasons for death. Individuals using this strategy may ask questions about the causation of death, the reasons for death, why they were chosen to lose and grieve, and what this death means to the life they thought they knew (Gillies & Neimeyer, 2006). Benefit finding, which may happen months or years after the loss, describes the desire to identify positive outcomes from the experience. Gillies and Neimeyer stated that finding benefit involves "building new meaning structures, incorporating—sometimes even founded on—the raw materials offered by the loss" (p. 37). Identity change refers to self-changes that occur during meaning reconstruction. This personal growth may involve (a) increased resilience, independence, and confidence; (b) new roles; (c) a greater awareness of vulnerability and the fragile nature of life; (d) changes in social relationships; and (e) an increased capacity for empathy and emotional closeness (Gillies & Neimeyer, 2006). In the MRB model, Gillies and Neimeyer hypothesized that bereaved people use these meaning-making processes when creating new post-loss meaning structures, thereby altering their worldview. Using this model, Gillies and Neimeyer asserted that adaptive coping to bereavement "frequently involves constructing a new reality, in which survivors' assumptive worlds and their views of themselves are forever changed" (p. 36). Machin (2009), describing the MRB model, stated "a revised identity comes gradually as latent resources and experiments with new roles and ways of being take shape" (p. 51).

### *Range of Responses to Loss Model*

Designed to bridge the gap between the universality proposed in many bereavement coping theories and the individuality of grief reactions in clinical practice, Machin (2009) devised the range of responses to loss model (RRLM). Using qualitative research interviews, Machin identified three broadly different reactions to bereavement. These grief reactions include: (a) *overwhelmed*, “where feelings of distress are the dominant response” (Relf, Machin, & Archer, 2008, p. 5); (b) *controlled*, “where maintaining emotional control, managing problems and dealing with the demands of everyday life is the dominant response” (Relf et al., 2008, p. 5); and (c) *resilient*, “where there is an ability to manage the emotional, social, and practical aspects of the situation with a sense of equilibrium” (Relf et al., 2008, p. 5) between the emotional and cognitive realms. Machin highlighted the congruency between the RRLM and the DPM, drawing connections between: (a) the overwhelmed response and loss orientation, (b) the controlled response and restoration orientation, and (c) the resilient response and the oscillation between loss and restoration dimensions.

Machin (2009) used the RRLM concepts to devise several self-assessment tools, designed to facilitate bereaved individuals’ descriptions of how they are experiencing different aspects of their grief. One of these tools, the Adult Attitude to Grief (AAG) scale, was originally used in two research studies to validate the RRLM categories of grief reactions (Machin, 2009). However, these studies also revealed “individual respondents could not be fitted unequivocally into a single category of loss response” (Machin, 2009, p. 79). Further, repeated use of the AAG scale showed individual changes in responses to loss over time, leading Machin to conclude that “the overwhelmed,

resilient, and controlled reactions function interactively, not as discrete grieving states” (p. 92).

Accordingly, Machin’s (2009) conceptualization of the RRLM evolved, with increased focus on the dynamic nature of grief reactions. Machin found that two core states were “at the heart of a grief reaction” (p. 93): (a) a focus on feelings such as sadness, anger, and guilt; and (b) a focus on action, such as doing, organizing, and caring. Machin defined *resilience* as “the ability to face the distress, tension, and uncertainties of loss with courage, resourcefulness and optimism, while recognizing those areas of life where control and active choice are still possible and appropriate” (p. 95). Machin highlighted the importance of social support to promote resilience. Conversely, *vulnerability* denotes an inability to “oscillate between the core grief dimensions” (Machin, 2009, p. 97). Machin proposed that an individual’s predisposition to resourcefulness and the nature of his or her loss were two factors that could increase the risk of vulnerability. In this way, Machin’s RRLM suggests a therapeutic goal for counsellors to “facilitate a move from the limitations of vulnerability to the possibilities of resilience” (p. 112).

Although originally designed as a research tool, the AAG scale has evolved into a useful tool for clinical practice. Machin (2009) noted that the AAG scale “is readily understood and interpreted by clients themselves, and is not a mysterious tool of assessment, understood only by the professional” (p. 86). Machin stated that the AAG would be beneficial for practitioners as a “structure for telling the story of grief, as a measure of change taking place in grief, and as an indicator for therapeutic focus” (p. 91). Machin also created a Young Person’s Grief Perspective Scale (YPGPS), a modification

of the AAG for use with children and adolescents. Machin noted that the YPGPS was utilized in a 2007 research study that assessed the efficacy of child bereavement counselling services. The YPGPS has been incorporated into the *Expressions of Grief* group program as a method for understanding members' grief experiences, and for measuring pre- and post-group changes in the participants' perceptions of their grief (Machin, 2009).

### *Summary*

Contemporary bereavement-related literature described numerous theories about how individuals cope with loss and grief. I chose to review both task and process models. The task model provides counsellors with increased awareness about normative challenges inherent in the experiences of many grieving individuals (Corr et al., 2009). The process-focused models encourage counsellors to conceptualize grief as dynamic, ongoing, and individualized (Corr et al., 2009). Counsellors can employ these process-based frameworks to explore each client's unique grief experience.

The models I chose to emphasize in this literature review align with my personal approach to counselling. In my clinical work, I avoid pathologizing clients' issues, preferring to view challenges to optimal psychological health as problems in living (van Deurzen, 2005). Challenges presented by grief are somewhat predictable in that they flow from death, a given of existence that all humans encounter (van Deurzen, 2005). Clients may adaptively cope with their grief because their life experiences have taught them strategies, and their support networks provide them with needed support. At other times, clients may experience increased challenges related to their grief. This may be because they are encountering new developmental stages that require additional learning and

growth or they may lack adequate resources or support to meet their bereavement needs.

The bereavement coping models outlined in this section have highlighted the enduring and reoccurring processes of grief, the significance of meaning-making, and the importance of restoring equilibrium into bereaved people's lives (Corr et al., 2009). In selecting these models for review, my intention was to raise the reader's awareness about bereavement coping paradigms that assume non-pathological, individualized, and personal-growth-based perspectives.

#### *Application to Group Program*

After completing the above literature review, I created program goals for the *Expressions of Grief* group program. These goals incorporate theoretical concepts from the literature identifying the needs of bereaved adolescents. The program goals also integrate theory from the task and process bereavement coping models. The connections between bereaved teenagers' needs (identified in the Nature of Adolescent Grief section of this chapter), the *Expressions of Grief* group program goals, and the bereavement coping models are summarized in Table 1 below. These goals are also articulated in adolescent-friendly language in the *Expressions of Grief* group program manual (see the Appendix, Pre-Group session – Handout 3).

Table 1.

#### *Connections between Client Need, Group Program Goals, and Bereavement-Coping Models*

---

Client need	Group program goals	Relationship to bereavement coping models
Need to learn about	To access accurate	Processing pain of grief;

---

---

Client need	Group program goals	Relationship to bereavement coping models
death, bereavement, and grief.	information about death, bereavement, and grief	adjusting to a world without the deceased (Worden, 2009).
Need to learn how to adaptively cope with grief.	To learn how to adaptively cope to bereavement stressors	Restoration orientation (Stroebe & Schut, 2001)
Need to enhance feelings of empowerment, safety, and control.	(Stroebe & Schut, 2001).	Controlled reaction (Machin, 2009).
Need to express and regulate emotions.	To express and normalize emotions,	Accepting the reality of the loss; processing pain of grief (Worden, 2009).
Need to receive validation for emotional reactions.	thoughts, and behaviours related to death and loss experiences (Orloff et al., 2009).	Loss orientation (Stroebe & Schut, 2001). Overwhelmed reaction (Machin, 2009).
Need to engage in activities to memorialize death and relationship with deceased.	To facilitate an adaptive continued connection to the deceased (Klass et al., 1996; Kosminsky & Lewin, 2009).	Finding an enduring connection and embarking on a new life (Worden, 2009).
Need to identify and enhance other supportive relationships.	To form, identify, and maintain supportive relationships, within and	Oscillation between loss and restoration orientations (Stroebe & Schut, 2001). Goal is for a resilient

---

---

Client need	Group program goals	Relationship to bereavement coping models
	outside of the group (Worden, 2009; Yalom, 2005).	response (Machin, 2009).
Need to make sense of the loss.	To explore the impact of loss on meaning-making	Accepting the reality of the loss; adjusting to a world
Need to incorporate new meanings into personal identities.	and personal identity schemas (Gillies & Neimeyer, 2006;	without the deceased (Worden, 2009).
	Kosminsky & Lewin, 2009).	Oscillation between loss and restoration orientations (Stroebe & Schut, 2001)
		Meaning Reconstruction in Bereavement (Gillies & Neimeyer, 2006).
		Goal is for a resilient response (Machin, 2009).

---

*Rationale for Group Counselling with Bereaved Adolescents*

Machin (2009) wrote, “The challenge to adjust, cope, and find meaning in loss is the often lonely journey demanded of grieving individuals” (p. 52). Adolescents may approach the tasks inherent in coping with grief by seeking counselling support. Corr et al. (2009) adapted Worden’s (2009) tasks of mourning into counselling guidelines for those who support bereaved individuals. Corr et al.’s counsellor guidelines are targeted toward cognitive tasks, affective tasks, behavioural tasks, and valuational tasks.

Cognitive helping tasks address the bereaved person's need for information (Corr et al., 2009). Affective helping tasks are directed toward "acknowledging the expression and validating the appropriateness of the emotional reactions" (Corr et al., 2009, p. 265). Behavioural helping tasks include performing an external action to mark the death and engaging in commemorative activities to remember the life of the deceased (Corr et al., 2009). Valuational helping tasks include assisting individuals in meeting their need to make sense of their losses (Corr et al., 2009). Clinicians utilize a variety of bereavement intervention services that can incorporate these counselling guidelines. These services can be delivered in different formats including individual counselling, group counselling, family counselling, and school-based programs (Jessop & McCarthy, 2006).

A widely-used adolescent bereavement intervention is the counsellor-facilitated peer support group (Jessop & McCarthy, 2006). In this environment, youth are encouraged to share their bereavement experiences with other grieving peers. Groups are typically comprised of adolescents who have experienced loss due to the death of a significant support person. The group members are often chosen according to similarity in age and the program is typically delivered in a brief (i.e., 8–12 session), closed-group format. Commonly-cited purposes of these grief support groups include (a) providing opportunities for teens to assess how they are coping with their grief; (b) enabling adolescents to share similar experiences with other bereaved teens, thereby learning from and supporting each other; and (c) facilitating access to social support that these teens need to cope more adaptively with grief (Orloff et al., 2009).

Both clinicians and researchers have proposed psychoeducational peer-support groups as an appropriate intervention choice for bereaved adolescents as these programs

can be tailored to meet the developmental and counselling needs of these youth (Perschy, 2004; Stewart & Sharp, 2007; Worden, 2009). Peers play a critical role in the lives of most teenagers (Worden, 1996), influencing “the development of adolescent’s ideology, philosophy of life, or assumptive world” (Tedeschi, 1996, p. 295). As such, many teenagers prefer to seek out and utilize the support of other adolescents. Adolescent peer-support group utilize the therapeutic factor of *group cohesiveness*, an atmosphere that is described by Yalom (2005) in this way: “Members of a cohesive group feel warmth and comfort in the group and a sense of belongingness; they value the group and feel in turn that they are valued, accepted, and supported by other members” (p. 55). Further, peer support groups emphasize the process of *mutual aid*, whereby members can “support and assist one another with their personal goals” (Drumm, 2006, p. 21; see also Malekoff, 2004). Mutual aid provides critical support to grieving teens, particularly when their previously relied-upon support persons are often unavailable, unaware, or unable to respond with types of support that meet their bereavement needs (Stokes, Pennington, Monroe, Papadatou, & Relf, 1999). Helping others cope with their grief may also help grieving teens gain a new sense of purpose and promote the establishment of new supportive relationships (Worden, 2009; Yalom, 2005). Yalom noted that group counselling “is unique in being the only therapy that offers clients the opportunity to be of benefit to others” (p. 13).

Bereavement support groups typically offer conditions that facilitate satisfaction of the specific needs of grieving teenagers. Specifically, bereavement groups are ideally suited to meet four common needs of bereaved adolescents. These needs include (a) overcoming isolation, (b) learning grief-related information, (c) expressing emotions,

and (d) integrating the meaning of their losses into their worldviews (Tedeschi, 1996).

These four needs are discussed further below.

### *Overcoming Isolation*

Feelings of loneliness and isolation are predominant themes expressed by grieving adolescents, who often believe that their families do not want to be burdened or alternatively, that others cannot relate to their overwhelming feelings of loss (Sharpe et al., 2006). Given their typical self-conscious demeanors along with their need for acceptance, most bereaved teens do not want to appear different by expressing sad affect in front of their friends (Tedeschi, 1996). Orloff et al. (2009) also noted that for teenagers “social support is vitally important, and many bereaved teens fear losing their peer group if they unmask and share their depth of despair and sadness” (p. 292). Consequently, adolescents may block important avenues of support from both parents and friends.

In addition, grieving adolescents may feel disconnected from the concerns of their nonbereaved peers, who are understandably focused on more typical youth-related issues. Bereavement groups provide a community of peers who have similar loss experiences, a characteristic that teenagers often find both appealing and valuable (Stokes et al., 2009). As noted by Orloff et al., bereavement groups can provide therapeutic relief to adolescents by giving voice to these comforting statements: (a) “Hey, maybe I am not crazy,” (b) “I’m not alone,” (c) “Someone else cares what I’m going through,” (d) “My feelings matter and I get to express them,” and (e) “I get to express or not express what I feel in ways that help me” (pp. 303–304). Yalom (2005) described this therapeutic factor as *universality* and noted that when group members hear others “disclose concerns similar to their own, clients report feeling more in touch with the world and describe the

process as a ‘welcome to the human race’ experience” (p. 6). Yalom also noted the power of the group to instill hope, as members benefit from observing others improve as they adaptively cope with their grief.

#### *Learning Grief-Related Information*

In grief support groups, adolescents access accurate information about death and bereavement (Yalom, 2005). This valuable learning forum includes education that normalizes their varied emotional reactions, provides guidance about the length of time involved in bereavement, and offers suggestions for coping with the stressors associated with loss and grief (Tedeschi, 1996). Tedeschi noted that bereaved adolescents might also discuss death-related dreams, medical questions and concerns, causes of death, and funerals and other mourning rituals. Sometimes, other group members provide this educational information; sometimes the group facilitators fill in knowledge gaps (Tedeschi, 1996). At times, the group may agree to research missing information and report back in future group sessions (Tedeschi, 1996). This psychoeducational component of adolescent bereavement groups is critical because adolescents are often unable to access this information from other sources. Well-intentioned adults may believe that youth cannot handle such sensitive information and as a result, “the information sharing aspect of the group process is often a source of great relief and clarification” (Tedeschi, 1996, p. 308).

#### *Expressing Emotion*

Bereavement groups are typically characterized by empathy and shared understanding (Tedeschi, 1996). This nurturing environment often facilitates increased emotional expression, containment of strong emotions, and opportunities to examine and

increase self-awareness about the wide range of experienced emotions, including feelings of guilt, relief, and anger toward the deceased (Tedeschi, 1996). Being able to safely express, contain, and examine these conflicting and strong emotions facilitates adaptive coping to bereavement (Jessop & McCarthy, 2006). Tedeschi noted, “The ideology of bereavement groups becomes ‘emotions of all kinds are OK’” (p. 309). This type of social learning may be internalized by the group participants, to be applied in other contexts in their outside lives (Yalom, 2005). This learning can also provide members with corrective emotional experiences (Yalom, 2005) that help members change how they interact with others in the future. As group members experience benefits from their intragroup emotional disclosures, they may become more inclined to express emotion in intergroup relationships, particularly if these disclosures evoke “constructive interpersonal responses” (Yalom, 2005, p. 30) in others.

#### *Integrating Meaning of Loss into Worldview*

Tedeschi (1996) discussed a further consequence that often accompanies adolescent loss of supportive relationships: “At the crucial ages when adolescents are learning about self-identity, how to cultivate relationships, and how to understand life events, bereavement may remove from the world of adolescents the very people who play important roles in this learning” (p. 295). Bereaved adolescents have expressed a variety of grief-related challenges to their meaning systems, including “changes to their priorities in life, religious beliefs, assumptions about invulnerability, and a general sense of the meaningfulness of life” (Tedeschi, 1996, p. 309). Bereavement groups, with their inherent focus on existential factors such as death, isolation, and life purpose, offer an ideal meaning-reflection venue (Yalom, 2005). This protected space encourages teens to

explore the impact of their significant losses on their evolving identities and worldviews, thereby gaining new insight (Yalom, 2005). Bereavement groups can also provide a safe place to engage in reorientation-coping activities, through the introduction of interpersonal learning processes that allow youth to explore their continued relationships with the deceased along with their relationships with significant others who are also grieving the loss of the deceased (Yalom, 2005). Finally, engaging in supportive relationships with other members of the bereavement group fosters intimacy and provides additional learning about one's identity in relation to others (Tedeschi, 1996; Yalom, 2005). In short, bereavement support groups can provide "an arena to continue the developmental tasks of adolescence while coping with the tasks of mourning" (Tedeschi, 1996, p. 296).

Surveys and anecdotal evidence from group members indicate that positive outcomes arise from participation in bereavement support groups (Tedeschi, 1996). Yalom (2005) noted that bereavement group members identified the therapeutic factors of universality, imparting information, mutual aid, and group cohesiveness as the most helpful aspects of their group counselling. Stokes et al. (2009) reported some powerful anecdotal evidence, stating that they "frequently hear that meeting other bereaved young people has been a critical factor in building a confident self-identity" (p. 194). Stokes et al. invited grief counsellors to create opportunities that enable bereaved adolescents to come together: "In doing so, we will witness young people who show great empathy and have a greater appreciation of life and relationships than many of their nonbereaved peers—a privilege to witness and be part of" (p. 194).

### *Summary*

Researchers and clinicians agree that the therapeutic factors found within counselling groups can meet the grieving needs of teenagers (Stokes et al., 2009; Tedeschi, 1996; Yalom, 2005). Table 2 summarizes the connections between the counselling needs of grieving adolescents, the group program goals, and the therapeutic benefits of group interventions.

Table 2.

*Connections between Client Needs, Group Program Goals, and Therapeutic Group Factors*

Client need	Group program goals	Therapeutic group factors
<b>COGNITIVE</b>		
Need to learn about death, bereavement, and grief.	To access accurate information about death, bereavement, and grief	Imparting information. Mutual aid.
Need to learn how to adaptively cope with grief.	(Tedeschi, 1996).	
Need to enhance feelings of empowerment, safety, and control.	To learn how to adaptively cope to bereavement stressors (Stroebe & Schut, 2001).	

---

Client need	Group program goals	Therapeutic group factors
<b>AFFECTIVE</b>		
Need to express and regulate emotions.	To express and normalize emotions, thoughts, and behaviours related to death and loss experiences (Orloff et al., 2009).	Group cohesiveness. Universality. Mutual aid. Corrective experience.
Need to receive validation for emotional reactions.		
<b>BEHAVIOURAL</b>		
Need to engage in activities to memorialize death and relationship with deceased.	To facilitate an adaptive continued connection to the deceased (Klass et al., 1996; Kosminsky & Lewin, 2009).	Group cohesiveness. Instillation of hope. Insight.
Need to identify and enhance other supportive relationships.	To form, identify, and maintain supportive relationships, within and outside of the group (Worden, 2009; Yalom, 2005).	

---

Client need	Group program goals	Therapeutic group factors
<b>VALUATIONAL</b>		
Need to make sense of the loss.	To explore the impact of loss on meaning-making and personal identity and schemas (Gillies & Neimeyer, 2006; Kosminsky & Lewin, 2009).	Universality. Instillation of hope. Existential factors. Insight.
Need to incorporate new meanings into personal identities.		

### *Using Expressive Arts Activities in Adolescent Grief Groups*

Malchiodi (2005) wrote about the historically-consistent use of the arts as a means to promote psychological and physical healing and stated that expressive therapies “have been used since ancient times as preventative and reparative forms of treatment” (p. 4). In promoting nonverbal group activities, Malekoff (2004) noted, “Group work practitioners must, for once and for all, learn to relax and to abandon the strange and bizarre belief that the only successful group is one that consists of people who sit still and speak politely and insightfully” (p. 44). In this section, I review literature that highlights the therapeutic benefits of using expressive-arts activities, such as art, music, movement, and creative writing, in counselling. I also describe how these expressive-arts counselling benefits are connected to the needs of grieving adolescents.

### *The Therapeutic Benefits of Expressive-Arts Activities*

Expressive arts activities can offer unique benefits to counselling that are not always found in talk-focused therapy (Malchiodi, 2005). These qualities include: (a) use of diverse modalities for enhanced self-expression, (b) required active client participation, (c) stimulation of clients' imagination, and (d) integration of mind-body connections (Malchiodi, 2005). Riley (2004) also emphasized the utility of expressive arts to activate clients' innate emotional intelligence. In this section, I explore the literature that describes these therapeutic benefits.

*Enhances self-expression.* Although most counselling approaches facilitate client self-expression, expressive-arts focused counselling uses "self-expression through one or more modalities as a central part of the therapeutic process" (Malchiodi, 2005, p. 9). Self-expression becomes a central part of the counselling process in a number of ways. First, using expressive arts can expedite the process of self-exploration and allow clients to experience themselves in novel ways (Malchiodi, 2005). Second, expressive arts can help clients contain "feelings and perceptions that may deepen into greater self-understanding" (Malchiodi, 2005, p. 9). Finally, expressive arts activities often facilitate clients' "discovery of personal meaning and understanding" (Malchiodi, 2005, p. 9), by accessing clients' senses as sources of stories and memories. In this vein, Malchiodi wrote that expressive arts help individuals experience their stories, "allowing the practitioner to capitalize on clients' discoveries and use the activity to help them broaden their understanding" (p. 10). Cook (2009) noted, "Many adolescents find it difficult to express their feelings verbally; therefore, it is important for professionals to offer them alternative ways to explore their memories and emotions following a bereavement" (p. 193).

Expressive-arts activities “encourage expression of thoughts and feelings in a tangible form that can be viewed by self and others” (Nathan & Mirviss, 1998, p. 80).

*Requires active participation.* Counsellors who use expressive-arts activities encourage their clients to become dynamic participants in the therapeutic process. Clients who engage in expressive-arts work are required to invest active energy into their activities. Malchiodi (2005) noted, “The experience of doing, making, and creating can actually energize individuals, redirect attention and focus, and alleviate emotional stress, allowing clients to fully concentrate on issues, goals, and behaviors” (p. 10). Client participation is multisensory in nature, in that when individuals engage in expressive-arts activities, they often increase their awareness of visual, auditory, and tactile perceptions (Malchiodi, 2005). During the client’s engagement with expressive arts activities, counsellors are encouraged to take a non-knowing stance, in order to “enter the imagery of our clients and wait to discover if our visions are similar” (Riley, 2004, p. 187).

*Stimulates clients’ imagination.* Referring to imagination as the healing agent in all forms of self-expression, Malchiodi (2005) noted that clients engaged in expressive arts activities almost always use imaginative thinking to “generate self-expression, experimentation, and subsequent verbal expression” (p. 11). The use of imagination is therapeutic because it allows clients to move beyond preexisting beliefs by experimenting with new ways of thinking, feeling, and communicating (Malchiodi, 2005).

*Integrates mind-body connections.* Malchiodi (2005) indicated that many expressive arts therapies are considered to be mind-body interventions, which the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (2007) has defined as “techniques designed to enhance the mind’s capacity to affect bodily function and

symptoms” (Mind-Body Medicine section, ¶ 1). As an example of this connection, Malchiodi noted that music, art, and movement could be helpful in facilitating the body’s relaxation response. Riley (2004) discussed the therapeutic benefit of using expressive art to actualize messages that are being sent by the body. Expressive-arts activities encourage clients to use their tactile and visual senses, which facilitate the inclusion of “body memories to the therapeutic dialogue” (Riley, 2004, p. 186).

*Activates emotional intelligence.* From birth, humans experience the world through images (Riley, 2004). It is not until the third year of life that individuals begin to verbally express their understanding of the contents of their inner worlds (Riley, 2004). At that point, “the basic knowledge of relationships and a sense of security have already been laid firmly into the memory banks and remain as a body of knowledge all the rest of our lives” (Riley, 2004, p. 184). Engaging in expressive arts can assist clients in accessing these emotion-laden neurological imprints, which are often inaccessible unless individuals are given “tools that enable them to actualize those representations” (Riley, 2004, p. 184). Helping clients to access their images connects their emotional and cognitive awareness, thereby leading to new solutions to old problems. Riley wrote:

When we ask our clients to project an image (right-brain activity) and contemplate the meaning of the image (left-brain activity), we are offering an opportunity for an integrated experience that can lead to new creative choices. As clients consider change, they can attend to and make visible their emotions, which are part of past experience and present responses; thus all aspects of the decision-making process can be examined. (p. 185)

### *Connecting Bereaved Adolescents' Needs with Expressive-Arts Benefits*

Several authors have discussed the therapeutic reasons for incorporating expressive-arts activities into an adolescent bereavement group program (Malchiodi, 2005; Riley, 2004; see also Liebmann, 2004; Rogers, 2007). Group facilitators have used creative activities to assist grieving teenagers to (a) express their feelings and thoughts, (b) increase their self-awareness, (c) foster personal growth, (d) resolve issues with the deceased, (e) maintain connections with the deceased, (f) communicate with other members of their support networks, and (g) engage in process-focused exploration (Liebmann, 2004; Nathan & Mirviss, 1998; Rogers, 2007; Tedeschi, 1996). Table 3 summarizes the connections between the needs of bereaved youth, *the Expressions of Grief* group program's goals, and the therapeutic benefits of expressive-arts activities.

Table 3.

### *Connections between Client Needs, Group Program Goals, and Expressive-Arts Benefits*

Client need	Group program goals	Expressive-arts benefit
<b>COGNITIVE</b>		
Need to learn about death, bereavement, and grief.	To access accurate information about death, bereavement, and grief (Tedeschi, 1996).	Stimulates client imagination. Integrates mind–body connection.
Need to learn how to adaptively cope with grief.	To learn how to adaptively cope to bereavement stressors	Requires active participation.
Need to enhance		

---

Client need	Group program goals	Expressive-arts benefit
feelings of empowerment, safety, and control.	(Stroebe & Schut, 2001).	
<b>AFFECTIVE</b>		
Need to express and regulate emotions.	To express and normalize emotions, thoughts, and behaviours related to death and loss experiences (Orloff et al., 2009).	Enhances self-expression. Activates emotional intelligence. Integrates mind–body connections. Requires active participation.
Need to receive validation for emotional reactions.		
<b>BEHAVIOURAL</b>		
Need to engage in activities to memorialize death and relationship with deceased.	To facilitate an adaptive continued connection to the deceased (Klass et al., 1996; Kosminsky & Lewin, 2009).	Enhances self-expression. Activates emotional intelligence. Requires active participation.
Need to identify and enhance other supportive relationships.	To form, identify, and maintain supportive relationships, within and outside of the group	

---

---

Client need	Group program goals	Expressive-arts benefit
	(Worden, 2009; Yalom, 2005).	
<b>VALUATIONAL</b>		
Need to make sense of the loss.	To explore the impact of loss on meaning-making and personal identity schemas (Gillies & Neimeyer, 2006;	Stimulates client imagination.
Need to incorporate new meanings into personal identities.	Kosminsky & Lewin, 2009).	Activates emotional intelligence. Requires active participation.

---

### *Group Program Application*

Tedeschi (1996) noted that a variety of expressive-arts activities have been used with success in adolescent group bereavement programs. These techniques include journalling and creative writing, collages, poems, movement, stories, songs, and murals (Tedeschi, 1996). In selecting group-counselling activities, counsellors should always be guided by the “composition, needs, and reactions of the participants” (Tedeschi, 1996, p. 301). Techniques that work well with one group may not succeed with subsequent groups. Tedeschi noted, “Activities should be considered a means to promote constructive interaction, not an end in themselves” (p. 301). Thus, although this group manual specifies expressive-arts activities that have been chosen to promote the attainment of each session’s goals (see Table 3), facilitators should only utilize these

activities if they are aligned with the unique needs of their participating teens. In short, facilitators need to be prepared to creatively adjust the session activities if required.

### *Conclusion*

In this chapter, I reviewed extensive literature related to three topics: adolescent bereavement, adolescent bereavement group programs, and the benefits of using expressive-arts activities within these group programs. Within this review, I synthesized the needs of bereaved adolescents with the benefits of an expressive-arts-based group program intervention. I undertook this research with the intention of providing a current empirical foundation for the *Expressions of Grief* group program, as grief theory has evolved over the past 20 years (Rogers, 2007). I believe that practice should be informed by research and agree with Stroebe et al. (2008) who noted, “Bereavement needs to be understood from a sound base of theoretically oriented and empirically derived knowledge and not purely on the basis of subjective descriptive accounts, not even those of skilled individuals” (p. 12). Accordingly, this group program is founded on current bereavement literature that emphasizes (a) diversity, (b) assessment of risk instead of pathology, (c) individual meanings, and (d) adaptive coping processes (Machin, 2009). In undertaking this project, my overall goal was to create a theoretically-supported intervention that is also clinically useful for counsellors working with bereaved teenagers.

In the next chapter, I review the research methods that I used to conduct this literature review. I also outline the group-process theory that I incorporated into the design of the *Expressions of Grief* group program.

## Chapter Three: Method

This applied project includes a literature review that provides theoretical support for the proposed group program (see chapter 2) and a group program manual entitled *Expressions of Grief: An Arts-Based Group Program for Teens* (found in the Appendix). In this chapter, I articulate the research methodology I utilized to complete the literature review. I also discuss key considerations involved in the design of the group program.

### *Research Methodology*

This final project represents a culmination of my learning during my Master in Counselling graduate studies. In March 2009, I wrote a literature review about adolescent bereavement interventions for *Health Psychology* (CAAP 6635). In June 2009, for *Group Counselling and Process Skills* (CAAP 6637), I completed an additional literature review related to the utilization of group counselling interventions for bereaved adolescents. The extensive literature review contained within this applied project synthesizes all of the related research that I reviewed during my third year of graduate studies. As well, I added to and expanded these literature reviews to incorporate the search that I conducted immediately prior to writing this final project. My literature review process is described below.

Leedy and Ormrod (2005) noted that applied researchers should begin their projects by posing research questions that are both clearly stated and carefully limited. To this end, I asked several research questions that captured the purpose of this applied project. These questions included:

1. What is the impact of bereavement on adolescents?

2. Are group programs an effective way to address the concerns of bereaved teenagers?
3. How could the inclusion of expressive art activities increase the effectiveness of these group interventions?

Then, I engaged in a search for related academic literature that included all of the topics inherent in these three research questions. These topics included: (a) adolescent bereavement, (b) bereavement interventions, (c) group therapy, and (d) expressive-arts interventions. When conducting this literature review, I searched the University of Lethbridge and Calgary Public Library Catalogues, and six online research databases including PsycINFO, Ovid, ERIC, Academic Search Complete, MEDLINE, and EBSCO Host. I also consulted the World Wide Web resource entitled Google Scholar (<http://www.scholar.google.ca>). Within these library catalogues and online resources, I inserted the following search terms, alone and combined: adolescent, bereavement, grief, intervention, grief counselling, group therapy, expressive arts, art therapy, group counselling, psychoeducational groups, and peer support groups. My search parameters included peer-reviewed journal articles and books dated from 1967 to present.

Drawing on the University of Lethbridge library collection and the interlibrary loan system, I obtained and reviewed numerous relevant resources that were revealed through these catalogue and database searches. As I located relevant references, I examined the reference lists from those resources, and identified and located further sources of relevant literature (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Finally, I consulted with coworkers at Hospice Calgary for their recommended research-based and clinical resources.

### *Designing the Group Program*

The *Expressions of Grief* group program manual contains nine session plans, outlining details about advance preparation, required materials, session objectives, session content, worksheets, facilitator notes, evaluation measures, and additional facilitator resources. In June 2009, for credit in *Group Counselling and Process Skills* (CAAP 6637), I designed two of the session plans contained within this program manual. However, for this applied project, I redesigned those session plans to reflect my additional research and to incorporate learning from my experience facilitating a grief group. As well, for this project, I have designed seven new session plans in order to provide a complete group program.

During my clinical practicum in the fall of 2009, I co-facilitated a 10-week adolescent bereavement group at Hospice Calgary. This experience exposed me to the clinical reality of implementing adolescent bereavement groups, both the rewarding nature of the work and the challenges of working with this population. During the facilitation experience, I was provided with the opportunity to pilot several of the activities contained within my session plans, including the Clay Modelling and Memory Preservation activities. I gleaned information about the number of session activities that could be realistically incorporated into a group session and the types of activities that most adolescents enjoy engaging with. Finally, I was provided with opportunities to debrief each group session with my experienced and wise co-facilitators, and I learned about their perceptions of group dynamics and ways to address difficult group member behaviour. The knowledge I gained from this facilitation experience has been incorporated into this group program manual.

In designing the *Expressions of Grief* group program manual, I also carefully considered and incorporated group-process theory, including the stages of group development, the importance of pre-group preparation, strategies for opening and closing group sessions, balancing content and process, and engaging in program evaluation. These concepts, along with details about their inclusion in this group program, are discussed below.

### *Stages of Group Development*

Malekoff (2004) emphasized the need for group facilitators to “have a good knowledge base, reinforced by practice experience, of group developmental theory” (p. 53). Corey, Corey, and Corey (2010) described the five stages of group development as including (a) *pre-group*, introducing factors relevant to group formation; (b) *initial*, involving members’ orientation; (c) *transition*, characterized by members’ testing of group limits (Malekoff, 2004); (d) *working*, distinguished by group productiveness; and (e) *final*, focusing on learning application and bringing closure to the group experience. Groups generally do not progress through these stages in linear ways; groups can also proceed through these stages rapidly, plateau or regress to previous stages (Corey et al., 2010). However, group facilitators need to have an understanding of these stages, including the group’s typical behaviours and needs at each stage so as to “predict problems and intervene in appropriate and timely ways” (Corey et al., 2010, p. 107).

Malekoff noted:

Understanding that the group has a life of its own enables group workers to gently invite trust, aid group members to explore and establish norms, cultivate the intimacy that shared activity and action can bring, invite free expression as the

members' own unique gifts spring forth, and help the group to say goodbye in a meaningful way in the end. (p. 57)

Knowledge of these group developmental stages also informs session content as program planning involves choosing activities that will be congruent with the goals of each developmental stage (Corey et al., 2010). When creating the group session plans for the *Expressions of Grief* program, I predicted the likely stage of group development and then chose activities that would likely meet the needs of most members in that stage. Table 4 shows the relationship between the predicted stage of group development, the goals of that stage, and the group program's session activities.

Table 4.

*Connection between Group Development Stage, Goals of the Group Stage, and Session Plan Activities*

---

Group					
Session	development	No.	stage	Goals of the stage*	Session plan activities
Pre-group session	Pre-group			To learn about the group and member expectations, identify group and personal goals, determine member commitment to the group	Group introductions Group expectations Goal setting pre-assessment Group/personal goals

---

Group development			
Session No.	stage	Goals of the stage *	Session plan activities
One	Initial	Getting acquainted, learning how the group functions, beginning to express fears and hopes	Member introductions Group rituals
Two	Initial/ transition	Building safety, taking risks, identifying issues for deeper work	Agree/Disagree grief diversity activity  Uniqueness of grief reflection activity
Three	Transition/ working	Building safety, taking risks, identifying issues for deeper work	Working with Clay: Modelling my Grief  Helpful Grief Expression strategies
Four	Transition/ working	Disclosing deeper material, developing group cohesion, accepting and offering feedback	Collaging: Helpful and unhelpful grief coping strategies
Five	Working	Disclosing deeper material, developing group cohesion, accepting and	Sharing Loss Stories  Visualization activity

---

---

Group development			
No.	stage	Goals of the stage*	Session plan activities
offering feedback			
Six	Working	Disclosing deeper material, developing group cohesion, accepting and offering feedback	Life Review through Song activity
Seven	Working	Disclosing deeper material, developing group cohesion, accepting and offering feedback	Sharing and Preserving Memories activities
Eight	Final	Reviewing and integrating group learning, experiencing healthy endings to relationships, celebrating group success	Collective Wisdom art activity Post-group assessment Pot-luck snacks Giving gifts— hopes/strengths/saying goodbye to other members

---

\* For detailed descriptions about the goals of each group stage, please see Corey et al. (2010).

### *Pre-Group Preparation*

Numerous research studies support the importance of facilitating a pre-group session prior to the start of a group program (Corey et al., 2010). Pre-group preparation is positively correlated with increased group cohesion (Yalom, 2005), participants' satisfaction (Burlingame, Fuhriman, & Johnson, 2004), members' comfort with the group (Burlingame et al., 2004), increased attendance (Yalom, 2005), enhanced member self-disclosure (Yalom, 2005), and client improvement (Corey et al., 2010).

Corey et al. (2010) recommended the use of screening interviews and a pre-group session to adequately prepare members for group interventions. The pre-group session agenda typically includes a discussion about the members' expectations, clarification about the program's goals and objectives, and opportunities for members to ask questions and voice their hopes and concerns (Corey et al., 2010). Rather than using a lecture format, facilitators encourage members to interact with each other about preparatory topics and co-contribute to the group rules (Corey et al., 2010). The *Expressions of Grief* program manual includes a pre-group session plan that incorporates this suggested group-rules activity.

### *Opening and Closing Sessions*

Group process theory references important session structural practices, including the provision of guidelines for opening and closing sessions. Corey et al. (2010) noted that warm-up activities, often called check-in, are essential as session openers. Some suggested check-in questions include: (a) What would you like to get out of today's session, (b) what do you remember from our previous session, (c) how have you applied your learning from the previous session, (d) do you have unresolved feelings or

afterthoughts from the previous session, and (e) how are you feeling about being here today? (Corey et al., 2010). Similarly, at the end of a session, facilitators should attempt to summarize and integrate learning from the activities engaged in during that session. A closing checkout provides members with the opportunity to talk about what they liked and disliked in the session as well as offer thoughts about how they might apply what they have learned to their daily lives (Corey et al., 2010). Facilitators may also review the session agenda for the following week and provide information about any homework (Corey et al., 2010). The *Expressions of Grief* program manual includes check-in and checkout activities for each of the nine session plans.

#### *Balancing Content and Process*

The *Expressions of Grief* group program is designed to deliver psychoeducational content and provide opportunities for here-and-now processing (Yalom, 2005). Within each session plan, facilitators will deliver topic information, facilitate group discussions about the topic, and encourage members to share their topic knowledge with each other. Equally important to the *Expressions of Grief* program is the inclusion of group processing discussions, designed for members to share their immediate thoughts and feelings with other group members (Yalom, 2005). These group process discussions are incorporated into every session plan. These opportunities include (a) members' personal reactions to the session activities, and, if needed, (b) members' interpersonal concerns with other group members. Corey et al. (2010) recommended that process issues among members generally take priority over dealing with content topics. As such, *Expressions of Grief* facilitators need to remain keenly aware of group member dynamics and be flexible enough to change session plan activities if interpersonal concerns emerge.

### *Program Evaluation*

In most counselling settings, it is important for counsellors to be able to provide evaluative data that supports the efficacy of their client interventions (Corey et al., 2010). It is neither ethical nor prudent to facilitate a group program that does not meet the needs of its participants. Malekoff (2004) noted, “Establishing a group purpose and goals includes consideration of how goals and objectives will be measured” (p. 69). The *Expressions of Grief* group program contains processes for engaging members in session and outcome evaluations as well as recommendations for assessing the overall effectiveness of the program.

*Session evaluation.* The *Expressions of Grief* program manual includes Group Member Feedback Forms for participants to complete at the end of each session. This one-page form includes seven Likert-style questions, designed to assess bereaved adolescents’ needs as they relate to the program’s goals. In addition to these Likert questions, members are also asked to complete three sentence-starters:

1. One thing that worked well is....
2. One thing that could be different is....
3. One thing I can do to improve my group experience is....

The purpose of these sentence starters is to promote shared responsibility towards achieving successful outcomes from the group experience (Corey et al., 2010). Before distributing Group Session Feedback Forms, the facilitators may wish to advise group members that the purpose of asking for feedback is to promote increased satisfaction of members’ counselling needs.

*Outcome evaluation.* Issues faced by grieving adolescents are not likely to be fully resolved by the end of the group program (Tedeschi, 1996). However, there are a number of possible outcome measures that facilitators may consider implementing that could provide some data to support this program's efficacy. The outcome measure used in the *Expressions of Grief* group program is the YPGPS (Machin, 2009), described in further detail in chapter 2, RRLM. If desired, at the end of the group, facilitators could also readminister the Multi-Sector Social Support Inventory (Layne et al., 2009), an assessment tool that was used for prescreening and is discussed further in chapter 4, Group Membership and Screening. The presence of a positive social network is one of the most widely reported predictors of adaptive outcome for adolescents (Warren, Jackson, & Sifers, 2008). If used as an outcome measure, group facilitators could compare post-group Multi-Sector Social Support Inventory (MSSI) scores with the pre-group screening score to determine whether members' perceptions about their social support networks have changed over the course of the group program. Another potential outcome evaluation measure is the Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996), which could also be administered pre- and post group to assess the participants' perceptions of personal growth before and after the program. Instructions about how to obtain the Posttraumatic Growth Inventory can be found in chapter 4, Session Objectives and Evaluation Methods.

*Program evaluation.* During or after the final group session, facilitators can ask the participants to complete the Group Program Evaluation Form (found in the Appendix, Additional Facilitator Resources, Form #1) to assess members' perceptions about (a) the strengths and limitations of this program, and (b) the achievement of group and personal

goals. As well, after the program has concluded, facilitators are encouraged to engage in collaborative reflective practice in order to assess the effectiveness of their program delivery (Malekoff, 2004). Malekoff suggested several questions that could help facilitators critically evaluate their program and its implementation, including: (a) did the group serve the purpose for which it was designed, (b) were there problems in any phase of the group process, (c) what member feedback will lead the facilitators to modify their approach in future groups, and (d) what specific group member changes provide evidence of the group's effectiveness?

### *Conclusion*

In this chapter, I described the methods that I used to create the *Expressions of Grief* group program. Outlining and executing a thorough research methodology was important to ensure that I identified and reviewed a broad base of current theoretical literature. In designing the group program, I reviewed and incorporated group process theory to ensure that the session plans were congruent with the needs of the group as various stages of its development. I also provided theoretical explanations as to why I included various group-process activities in this group program, including the pre-group session, check in, check out, group-process discussions, and outcome and session evaluation measures. I included these theoretical explanations to help counsellors understand the importance of conducting these activities. Although the group program is intended to be flexibly implemented, I advocate for the importance of group facilitators to include these group-process activities in some manner during program delivery. In the next chapter, I review several group program planning considerations.

## Chapter Four: Planning Considerations

Group program planning has been described as the neglected component of group work (Malekoff, 2004). Malekoff noted the consequences of not engaging in a group-planning process when facilitating adolescent groups, including excessive member dropouts, increased member absences, chronic tardiness, lower levels of member motivation, lack of parental support and group cohesiveness, and decreased successful outcomes. In this chapter, I review program planning considerations for the *Expressions of Grief* group program (found in the Appendix), including (a) session objectives and evaluation methods, (b) group membership criteria and screening protocol, (c) group structure and organizational details, and (d) a program-marketing plan. I also discuss ethical implications that could arise during the implementation of this program.

### *Session Objectives and Evaluation Methods*

In chapter 2, I outlined the outcome goals for the *Expressions of Grief* group program (see Table 1). These goals incorporated theoretical concepts from the literature identifying the needs of bereaved adolescents. The outcome goals also integrated theory from task- and process-based bereavement coping models. When considering group program goals, I acknowledge that adolescents often experience feelings of ambivalence about participating in counselling groups (Kosminsky & Lewin, 2009). In addition, teenagers often do not know what type of help they need, so they may experience difficulties in articulating their objectives for their participation in the bereavement group (Kosminsky & Lewin, 2009). For these reasons, I wish to emphasize that a critical outcome goal, in addition to the goals listed in Table 1, will be the development of strong therapeutic alliances with these grieving teens.

To provide facilitators with session outcome goals, I have created a number of specific objectives that evolve from the program goals. These objectives have been incorporated into the group program manual as Session Objectives. In addition, I have specified evaluation methods to suggest ways for facilitators to measure successful attainment of these objectives. The *Expressions of Grief* group goals, the specific objectives, and the related evaluation criteria are summarized in Table 5 below.

Table 5.

*Group Program Goals, Session Objectives, and Evaluation Methods*

Group program goals	Session objectives	Evaluation methods
To access accurate information about death, bereavement, and grief (Tedeschi, 1996)	Members will learn accurate psychoeducational information about death, bereavement, and grief.	Members will share their learning about death, bereavement, and grief with other members.
To learn how to adaptively cope to bereavement stressors (Stroebe & Schut, 2001)	Members will increase their self-awareness about their needs as related to coping with grief.	Members will share their learning about their grief-coping needs.
	Members will increase their self-awareness of their helpful and less helpful grief-coping	Members will share their perspective about helpful and unhelpful grief coping strategies.
		Young Person's Grief

Group program goals	Session objectives	Evaluation methods
	<p>strategies.</p> <p>Members will identify commonalities and differences within the helpful and unhelpful grief-coping strategies of all of the members</p>	<p>Perspective Scale (Machin, 2009) will be administered during the pre-group session and final group session. Results can be compared to assess whether members' resiliency or vulnerability to their grief has changed over the course of the group program.</p>
<p>To express and normalize emotions, thoughts, and behaviours related to death and loss experiences (Orloff et al., 2009)</p>	<p>Members will explore their feelings, thoughts, and behaviours related to their loss and grief experiences.</p>	<p>Members have shared their loss stories and grief experiences with other members.</p>
	<p>Members will learn about commonalities in the shared loss experiences of other group members.</p> <p>Members will identify the unique qualities of their grief experiences.</p>	<p>Realization of group commonalities should enhance members' senses of belonging (Drumm, 2006). The Group Session Feedback Forms measure group cohesion.</p> <p>Members have shared with</p>

---

Group program goals	Session objectives	Evaluation methods
	Facilitators will normalize the uniqueness of grief.	others the unique qualities of their loss experiences.
To facilitate an adaptive continued connection to the deceased (Klass et al., 1996; Kosminsky & Lewin, 2009).	Members will identify what their relationship with the deceased meant and/or represented to them.  Members will reflect on and if desired, describe their continued relationship with their deceased loved ones.	Members have described the meaning of their lost relationship with other members.  Members have discussed potential new meanings for the deceased person within their current lives.
To form, identify, and maintain supportive relationships, within and outside of the group (Worden, 2009; Yalom, 2005).	Members will explore current supportive relationships.	Members have described their social support networks with other members.  The Multi-Sector Social Support Inventory (Layne et al., 2009) can be administered to assess the strength of members' social

---

---

Group program goals	Session objectives	Evaluation methods
<p>To explore the impact of loss on meaning-making and personal identity schemas (Gillies &amp; Neimeyer, 2006; Kosminsky &amp; Lewin, 2009).</p>	<p>Members will reflect on and describe ways in which their losses have influenced their self-development and senses of identity.</p>	<p>support systems. If administered pre-and post-group, this evaluative tool can also show increased or decreased perceptions of social support over the course of the group program.</p> <p>Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (Tedeschi &amp; Calhoun, 1996) can be administered pre- and post-group to assess members' perceptions of personal growth over the course of the group program.</p>

---

*Note.* The Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory can be completed for free online by accessing the American Psychological Association's practice website (<http://custcf.apa.org/ptgi>). The inventory is scored immediately upon its completion. Additional information on the development of this instrument can be found in Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996).

#### *Group Membership and Screening*

Group facilitators will want to pre-screen prospective group members for three reasons: (a) to initiate an effective working alliance; (b) to review and discuss potential

members' expectations, needs, hopes, and concerns about the group; and (c) to determine potential members' suitability for the group (Hines & Fields, 2002). Corey et al. (2010) noted that another primary reason for screening future group members is to prevent potential harm to clients, described by Malekoff (2004) as ensuring that potential members can participate in ways that their presence will not interfere with other members' attainment of the group's goals. In pre-screening potential members, the facilitators should ensure that these individuals' felt needs are congruent with the stated goals of the group program (Malekoff, 2004).

The proposed screening protocol for the *Expressions of Grief* group program is aligned with the Association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW) group member screening guidelines (Thomas & Pender, 2007). This screening protocol addresses three key areas, including group membership criteria, screening assessment procedures, and contraindications for group membership.

#### *Group Membership Criteria*

Group membership in the *Expressions of Grief* group program includes male and female adolescents, aged 15 to 18 years of age. Proposed members must have experienced loss resulting from the death of a significant person in their social support networks. As a general rule, this loss should have occurred more than 6 weeks and less than 2 years prior to the start of the group program (Worden, 2009). Proposed group members must be prepared and feel ready to participate in the tasks of mourning (Worden, 2009). Adolescents who are not yet ready to talk about their losses in a group setting may be deferred to a future group or referred to individual counselling (Tedeschi, 1996). Although all members will have a similar significant loss experience, group

facilitators should also try to recruit group members from diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences. Malekoff (2004) noted, “A group is a great place for young people to come face to face with various levels of difference, confront the impulse to isolate and objectify the unfamiliar, and reach for strength amid diversity” (p. 43).

To assess member readiness to participate in this group, I recommend that potential members attend a mandatory pre-screening interview. At this interview, the group facilitators can administer the screening assessment measures outlined below, and provide prospective members with sufficient information about the group to obtain members’ informed consent to participate. Potential members should express a voluntary interest and commitment to attend the group (Ritchie & Huss, 2000) and provide written informed consent to participate (see the Appendix, Additional Facilitator Resources, Form #2 for a Suggested Informed Consent form). For those members who are younger than 18 years of age, facilitators also need to obtain written parental consent. It is recommended that proposed members commit to attending a mandatory Pre-Group session (see the Appendix, Pre-Group session plan) and agree in advance to comply with the group member expectations as outlined in the *Expressions of Grief* Program Rules (see the Appendix, Pre-Group Session – Handout 2).

#### *Screening Assessment Procedures*

Group facilitators can use two methods to screen and select appropriate group members for the *Expressions of Grief* group program. These methods include conducting intake interviews and administering a standardized assessment measure.

*The intake interview.* The most applicable screening method for bereavement group inclusion is an intake interview between the potential group member and the group

facilitators (Ritchie & Huss, 2000). These intake interviews can “clarify matters of readiness for support group participation and ease anxieties in the potential participants” (Tedeschi, 1996, p. 297). This interview should be conducted by at least one of the two group facilitators, although whenever possible, both facilitators may participate (Corey et al., 2010). The topics addressed during this interview can include: (a) reasons why the adolescent is interested in joining the group (Murthy & Smith, 2005), including any individual goals that they wish to achieve in the group (Corey, Williams, & Moline, 1995); (b) the adolescent’s current loss experiences, including the nature of the adolescent’s relationship with the deceased, the death story, and the adolescent’s account of his or her quality of life before and since the death (Stokes et al., 2009); (c) details about the adolescent’s loss history, including “the number of previous losses experienced by the survivor and how they were grieved” (Valentine, 1996, p. 314); (d) details about any previous group experience, including any fears that the potential member has about group membership (Hannah, 2000; see also Malekoff, 2004); (e) an overview of the goals and purposes of the grief support group, including the expectations and commitment required of each group member and the role of the facilitators (Murthy & Smith, 2005); (f) a review of the adolescent’s questions and concerns about the group; and (g) provision and review of required documentation for group participation, including the Informed Consent form, an *Expressions of Grief* promotional poster (sample format at Appendix Additional Facilitator Resources, Form #3), the *Expressions of Grief* Program Rules (found in the Appendix, Pre-Group Session – Handout 2), and the facilitators’ business cards (Murthy & Smith, 2005). Although this interview format may seem overly detailed, it is important for potential members to completely understand what the group is about

and how they can best participate. Corey et al. (2010) noted that the more facilitators “can assist members in being informed about group process, the better are the chances that the group will be effective” (p. 117).

It is preferable if the prospective members’ parents or guardians attend the intake interview, and speak with the facilitators and their teenager, after the initial screening interview is completed (Malekoff, 2004). If the parents or guardians do not attend the intake interview, facilitators should telephone the parents or guardians to introduce themselves, discuss the groups’ goals and member expectations, and solicit and answer questions. Facilitators should advise parents that they are available to talk with them at any point during the nine-week program, while also emphasizing the importance of confidentiality and its limitations. It is also important that facilitators ensure that parents have signed the Informed Consent form indicating their agreement for their teenager’s participation in the group program (Murthy & Smith, 2005). Malekoff emphasized the importance of group facilitators forming collaborative working alliances with the bereaved adolescents’ parents or guardians.

*Standardized assessment measure.* The group facilitators may also chose to administer the MSSI (Layne et al., 2009). This instrument was designed to measure “youths’ perceptions of support from four sectors of their social network: nuclear family, extended family, friends and peers, and adults friends/mentors” (Warren et al., 2008, p. 110). For this group program, data obtained from the MSSI will address the presence of a critical membership criterion: a loss that resulted from the death of a significant person in the adolescent’s social support network.

In addition to identifying the significant-loss criterion, the MSSI data could also provide the group facilitators with additional intake information relevant to the goals of this group program. As its foundation, this group program integrates concepts outlined in the DPM (Stroebe & Schut, 2001). Data obtained from administering the MSSI directly addresses the adolescent's bereavement experience from the DPM's two bereavement coping orientations: loss and reorientation (Stroebe & Schut, 2001). From a loss-orientation perspective, the MSSI provides information about the adolescent's multidimensional stressors that result from the lost relationship. From a reorientation-coping perspective, the MSSI provides information about the adolescent's perceived sources of social stressors as well as available social support. Layne et al. (2009) noted,

A primary purpose of the MSSI's structural items is to conduct a post-disaster damage report by assessing which elements of the social network are compromised (due to deaths, involuntary separations, or disappearances) and which relationships remain intact and available for use in recruiting support.

(p. 167)

Layne et al. (2009) investigated the psychometric validity of the MSSI in three studies. These studies provided data that supported: (a) "good-fitting factor structure for the MSSI" (Layne et al., 2009, p. 166); (b) convergent validity of the MSSI with respect to measures of depression; and (c) "acceptable to good test-retest reliability, internal consistency reliability, and convergent validity in reference to measures of clinically relevant constructs" (Layne et al., 2009, p. 166). One potential limitation of using the MSSI is the reliability concerns that are inherent in all self-report measures. However, Layne et al. noted that since the measure is meant to assess perceived social support, this

limitation might not be significant. The group facilitators can obtain copies of the MSSI without charge from the author upon signing a data-sharing agreement (C. Layne, personal communication, June 27, 2009).

#### *Contraindications for Group Membership*

Ritchie and Huss (2000) categorized contraindications for group membership into three categories: practical barriers, treatment needs, and client personality traits. Practical barriers for inclusion into this proposed group would include: (a) insufficient or too many suitable members to run the group as planned; (b) the proposed member's inability to attend group meetings on the dates and times scheduled; and (c) issues related to unavailability of qualified facilitators—due to illness or other unforeseen circumstances (Ritchie & Huss, 2000). Contraindications related to treatment needs would include: (a) adolescents who are experiencing traumatic or maladaptive grief reactions (Valentine, 1996), and (b) adolescents who are not yet ready to process their loss with members of the group. Contraindicated client personality traits that could pose barriers to successful group counselling include (a) insufficient emotional maturity resulting in an inability to empathize with others; (b) excessive aggressiveness, hostility, or anger; (c) insufficient social skills to communicate and relate to others; and (d) diagnosable psychological disorders, including those with conduct disorders or those who present with elevated suicide risk (Ritchie & Huss, 2000). After engaging in the recommended screening protocol, the group facilitators should ensure that all proposed but contraindicated group members are offered alternative forms of bereavement treatment such as individual counselling or referrals to other treatment specialists or counselling groups (Ritchie & Huss, 2000). When informing interested adolescents that they will not be accepted into

the group, Corey et al. (2010) also suggested facilitators stress how the group is not currently appropriate for the teens' needs.

### *Group Structure and Organization*

There are numerous important planning and facilitative topics to consider when implementing the *Expressions of Grief* group program. Several of these issues are discussed further in the following section.

*Expectations for group members.* The primary topic and focus of discussion during all of the group sessions will be issues related to the members' bereavement experiences. Malekoff (2004) noted that some rules must be established prior to the start of the group, including rules related to confidentiality and safety. The facilitators can choose to incorporate the *Expressions of Grief* Program Rules (found in the Appendix, Pre-Group Session – Handout 2). If used, it is recommended that all prospective members receive a copy of these rules during their intake interviews. Additional group expectations will be discussed and implemented during the *Expressions of Grief* Pre-Group session (Corey et al., 2010). Malekoff encouraged facilitators to collaboratively develop some ground rules with group members and stated, "When a group formulates its own set of rules, they become a policy statement of sorts, reflecting the wishes of the group and providing the members with the challenge of living up to and enforcing these rules" (p. 77). Malekoff also noted the importance of reasonable limits and suggested that facilitators decide in advance what limits are nonnegotiable and which limits can be developed collaboratively with the group members.

*Member drop-out policy.* Although it is preferable to retain all members for the group's duration, this is a voluntary group and members have the right to leave the group

if they chose to. During the pre-group screening, potential group members should be advised that they are expected to commit to attending all nine group sessions (Corey et al., 2010). In the *Expressions of Grief* Program Rules (found in the Appendix, Pre-Group Session – Handout 2), members who wish to prematurely end their participation in the group are asked to inform the facilitators and the other group members of their decision to leave, and if possible, their reasons for leaving. Without applying undue pressure, it is important that the group facilitators explore the member's reasons for leaving, in the event that changes could be made to the group process that would encourage this member to remain (Corey et al., 1995). If group members are removed from the group by the facilitators, the remainder of the group will be advised of the reasons for the member's removal. If group members prematurely leave the group, the facilitators should consider engaging in guided self-reflection by asking the following questions: (a) did the member obtain the help he or she needed or in the alternative, was the member not yet ready to engage in the group bereavement tasks; (b) did the member feel unsafe or unsupported in the group; (c) could the facilitators have made different choices to help the group member remain in the group (Tedeschi, 1996)?

*Facilitators.* It is recommended that this group program be co-facilitated by two professional counsellors (Tedeschi, 1996), and assisted by a trained adult volunteer who can act as a co-facilitator if one of the facilitators is unable to attend a session. Each facilitator should have knowledge about the experience of bereavement (Tedeschi, 1996), along with a high degree of comfort with discussing death (Murthy & Smith, 2005) and emotional expressions of grief (Tedeschi, 1996). Facilitators should also have knowledge about adolescent developmental characteristics and the ability to effectively challenge

adolescent lapses in judgment (Tedeschi, 1996). Facilitators should be able to demonstrate cultural competencies, including knowledge about a wide range of cultural and religious grief practices (Murthy & Smith, 2005). For the *Expressions of Grief* group program, facilitators need to adopt the theoretical belief that there is no right or wrong way to grieve; “each group member remains the expert on his or her own grieving process, and the facilitator(s) and other participants support the creation of an individualized approach to addressing grief” (Tedeschi, 1996, p. 302). Facilitator expectations are outlined for group members in the *Expressions of Grief* Program Rules (found in the Appendix, Pre-Group Session – Handout 2).

*File notes.* I suggest that facilitators keep session notes related to the group’s processes. The facilitators should also maintain client records for each group member. The facilitators can co-write the group process session note in a 30-minute debriefing session, immediately following the group (Tudor, 1999). The group process session note could include topics such as the number of members present, changes to the group norms, and significant details about the content and process of the session (Tudor, 1999). After the Pre-Group session, the facilitators can divide members into two groups for the purpose of assigning responsibility for individual file notes. Facilitators can then complete file notes for each one of their assigned group members. The *Expressions of Grief* group program manual includes a suggested Client File Note Template (found in the Appendix, Additional Facilitator Resources, Form #4).

*Group characteristics.* The recommended group size for this adolescent group program ranges from 5 to 10 members, with an ideal group size of 8 (Corey et al., 2010; see also Malekoff, 2004). Group membership for this program is designed to be closed,

meaning that it is time-limited with the same members remaining in the group from the beginning to the end (Corey et al., 2010). Closed groups are the most appropriate format for adolescent bereavement groups because the development of relationships between group members is critical in creating an atmosphere of trust and a sense of community (Murthy & Smith, 2005; see also Tedeschi, 1996). It is suggested that the group meet once per week (Murthy & Smith, 2005) for 2-hour sessions (Tedeschi, 1996). This group program includes eight sessions (Murthy & Smith, 2005), plus one pre-group session. Group members must join the group before the Pre-Group session, which should be scheduled to occur 2 weeks before the program begins.

*Learning diversity.* McBride (2006) suggested that group facilitators deliver psychoeducational information in ways that cater to a variety of learning styles. The session plans for the *Expressions of Grief* group program include diversity in the information-delivery methods. For visual learners, information delivery is complemented by the use of flip charts and handouts. Expressive-arts activities incorporate visual mediums such as photography, drawing, and painting. Auditory learners have many opportunities to participate in group discussions as well as expressive activities that incorporate music and oral storytelling. Kinesthetic learners will be engaged through the use of activities that promote movement and group rituals.

*Location.* The group should meet in a large, private room that allows for a comfortable seating arrangement. Corey et al. (2010) recommended that the room contain soft chairs that are arranged in a circle. This room should also contain sufficient floor space for movement-based activities and be equipped with some hard flooring and work

tables that can be used for expressive-arts activities. Ideally, the room will also be wheelchair accessible.

*Multicultural competency.* The facilitators can engage in a pre-group self-assessment activity to further illuminate and clarify their own cultural beliefs and traditions surrounding issues related to death and dying, afterlife, and grieving (Wortman & Silver, 2001; see also Thomas & Pender, 2007). Questions that can be used to promote this cultural self-awareness can be found in the Appendix, Additional Facilitator Resources, Form #5. During the pre-screening interview, the facilitators should also explore the topic of cultural diversity with potential group members to (a) assess members' willingness to work with diverse individuals, and (b) to inform the members of the program expectation that diversity will be respected. Delucia-Waack and Donigian (2004) noted the importance of addressing cultural differences related to values at an earlier stage of the group's development. To this end, in Session Two, the Agree-Disagree-Don't-Know activity is included as a way to explore and enhance group awareness about members' diverse cultural beliefs, values, and traditions associated with death, dying, afterlife, and grieving (Delucia-Waack & Donigian, 2004).

*Facilitator debriefing.* The facilitators will require at least one day per week to conduct prospective-member screening for at least 4 weeks prior to the Pre-Group session. Once the program begins, the facilitators should reserve 2 to 3 hours each week for pre- and post-session preparation. This time can be used to finish individual client notes, prepare materials, and engage in peer and other supervision. The facilitators should meet and debrief for 30 to 60 minutes at the conclusion of each group session. During this time, the facilitators could also discuss the suggested facilitator debriefing questions

(found in the Appendix at the end of each Session Plan), write the group session note and assign duties related to preparation for the following week's session. After each session, the facilitators should also consider discussing their co-facilitation experience and "process the workings of the group" (Corey et al., 2010, p. 278). Topics that could be discussed include the balance of responsibilities over the course of the group, the compatibility of leadership styles, likes and dislikes about facilitating with each other, and respective understandings about turning points in the group (Corey et al., 2010).

#### *Group Marketing Plan*

In order for this group to be effective, adolescents who could benefit from participation in the group need to know about its existence. Corey et al. (2010) noted, "How a group is announced influences both the way it will be received by potential members and the kind of people who will join" (p. 113). The ASGW Best Practice Guidelines (Thomas & Pender, 2007) outlines information that should be included in group programming promotional information.

Four months before the program's start date, facilitators should create some *Expressions of Grief* marketing material, including a program brochure and marketing poster. This promotional information should refer to (a) the voluntary and closed nature of group; (b) the goals of the group; (c) important characteristics of the group experience, including personal sharing, expressive-arts focused activities, and the requirement to listen to and support other teens; (d) the need for parental permission to join; (e) dates, times, fees, and duration of the group; and (f) who to contact if they want to join (see also Murthy & Smith, 2005). This material will also specify the membership criteria, so it is clear who is appropriate for participation (Tedeschi, 1996). A copy of a suggested

promotional poster can be found in the Appendix, Additional Facilitator Resources, Form #3.

Three months before the program's start date, facilitators who work at counselling agencies may choose to prepare and present an in-house information session. The intent of this information session is to provide details about the membership selection criteria and the group goals to other counsellors. In counselling agencies, these counsellors will likely comprise the largest referral source for potential group members (Corey et al., 2010). At this session, facilitators can also ask their intraagency colleagues to advise as to how many potential group members they expect to refer to the group. If it appears that there are insufficient interested youth within the counselling agency's clientele, or if counsellors work in a smaller private practice setting, the facilitators can then commence an interagency group member recruitment drive.

In conducting an interagency recruitment drive, facilitators can create and disseminate a one-page introduction letter, to be distributed to professionals who work with adolescents, with their families, or with both adolescents and their families. These professionals may include mental health professionals at hospitals, cancer treatment centres, hospices and palliative care centres, community counselling agencies, distress centres, and schools. These introductory letters will be mailed to these professionals with copies of the marketing poster. Professionals who wish to make referrals to the group program will be asked to contact one of the group facilitators. Alternatively, professionals can also provide the group program information to their clients and suggest that their clients contact the group facilitators directly.

### *Ethical Implications*

It is recommended that the group facilitators adhere to the guiding principles of two ethical codes during the planning and implementation of this group program: the Canadian Psychological Association's (2001) "Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists" (CCEP) and the ASGW Best Practice Guidelines (Thomas & Pender, 2007). The CCEP principles and the CCEP-prescribed ethical decision-making model provide umbrella guidance (Canadian Psychological Association, 2001) along with a framework for addressing ethical dilemmas. As the CCEP does not outline specific group-counselling principles, the facilitators can also consult the ASGW's Best Practice Guidelines to obtain direction about group-specific ethical concerns. Further details related to key ethical concerns that may arise during delivery of the *Expressions of Grief* program are discussed below.

### *Informed Consent*

During the intake interview, the group facilitators should ensure that they engage prospective group members in discussions that will facilitate informed consent. As outlined by the CCEP (Canadian Psychological Association, 2001), facilitators will ensure that the prospective members understand: (a) the purpose and goals of the group, (b) the responsibilities of the members and facilitators, (c) confidentiality protections and limitations, (d) benefits and risks of participating or not participating, (e) alternative treatment options, (f) option to refuse or withdraw from the group, and (g) duration of this consent, including how to rescind it. Given the minor status of most of the group participants, this information will be explained in language that adolescents can understand and also provided in writing at the end of the verbal discussion (see

Appendix, Additional Facilitator Resources, Form #2 for a Suggested Informed Consent form). Although some participants might qualify as mature minors, the best practice will be to obtain parental or guardian consent for group participation (Corey et al., 2010; Ritchie & Huss, 2000). If group members are selected for inclusion in the group, it is recommended that these members, and their parents or guardians, sign and return the Informed Consent form to the group facilitators prior to the start of the Pre-Group session.

#### *Confidentiality*

The group facilitators will review confidentiality protections and limitations with all group members, ensuring that each member understands his or her role in maintaining confidentiality (Canadian Psychological Association, 2001). The facilitators will also discuss with prospective members the limits to confidentiality and the consequences of breaching confidentiality. Both of these topics are outlined in the proposed Informed Consent Form (found in the Appendix, Additional Facilitator Resources, Form #2). As most of the group members are minors, confidentiality expectations will also be discussed with the parents or guardians prior to the start of the program. The goal of this discussion will be to solicit parental agreement regarding the importance and need to protect group confidentiality whenever legally possible (Murthy & Smith, 2005).

#### *Facilitator Qualifications*

To meet the competency requirements contained with the CCEP and the ASGW Best Practices Guidelines, the group facilitators must have specialized knowledge and skills related to the following areas: (a) group dynamics and group facilitator competencies; (b) multicultural counselling competencies; (c) death, dying, and

bereavement; and (d) adolescent developmental needs and characteristics. To address these requirements, it is recommended that both facilitators are professional counsellors with group-process training, and at least one of the facilitators have adolescent-group facilitation experience. In addition, the facilitators should have bereavement counselling experience and demonstrate comfort in discussing death and emotional expressions of grief. Both facilitators should be culturally competent, with knowledge about a wide range of cultural and religious grief practices (Murthy & Smith, 2005).

### *Dual Relationships*

Given the social isolation of many grieving teens, group members may perceive the facilitators as unusually caring and understanding of their grief. This may result in group members who attempt to develop personal relationships with the facilitators. For this reason, it is particularly important for the facilitators to explain the importance of maintaining professional boundaries to all group members (Corey et al., 1995). In the Pre-Group session, the facilitators will review the importance of maintaining professional relationships with all members. In addition, the facilitators may wish to address the potential risk for the group of fostering relationships (or sub-grouping) between members outside of group sessions (Gumpert & Black, 2006). However, Worden (2009) suggested that the sub-grouping risk is not as relevant for bereavement groups where members may benefit from developing supportive extra-group relationships with other members.

### *Group Techniques*

Most of the group session activities are expressive-arts focused. In chapter 2, facilitators were provided with the empirical rationale for using expressive-arts in an adolescent bereavement group program. During the pre-screening interview, it is

important for facilitators to explain to potential group members how these expressive-arts activities relate to the group program goals (Corey et al., 1995). During the course of the group program, facilitators should continually assess the effectiveness of the group activities, and make changes to the group activities if such amendments better fit the cultural needs of group members (Corey et al., 1995). If members do not want to participate in certain activities, the facilitators will honour those members' wishes and provide them with alternative work that relates to that session's topic and objectives (Corey et al., 1995).

### *Conclusion*

Corey et al. (2010) noted, "We cannot overemphasize the importance of the preparatory period during which a group is organized" (p. 110). In this chapter, I reviewed important planning considerations for facilitators who intend to implement the *Expressions of Grief* group program. Group facilitators who engage in the planning processes recommended in this chapter will increase the likelihood of successful implementation of the *Expressions of Grief* group program. The degree of detail in this chapter was inspired in part by Malekoff (2004), who noted,

Planning is all about nurturing ideas and taking steps to transform the imagined into reality. Good groups don't appear by magic or as the result of charismatic leadership. It takes great care and careful preparation to grow a good group.  
(p. 87)

In the next chapter, I personally reflect upon my experiences that have inspired the creation of this project. I also clinically apply information gleaned from the literature

referenced in chapter 2 and outline the clinical and research implications of this group program.

## Chapter Five: Synthesis

The final chapter of this project describes how this project has professionally impacted my work as a graduate student researcher and as a grief counsellor. I begin by reflecting on the personal meaning of this project and provide the rationale for its creation. Then, I synthesize the literature review presented in chapter 2, describing how I used the information that I gleaned during my research to create the *Expressions of Grief* group program. In the next section, I highlight how this project, with its strengths and limitations, has impacted my work as a counsellor. To conclude, I suggest topics for future research exploration.

### *Personal Rationale*

My personal loss history is relevant as the impetus and motivation behind the development of this applied project. When I was 26 years old, my mother was diagnosed with terminal breast cancer. Eight months later she passed away. As the primary caregiver to my mother during her illness, I know first-hand that grieving often begins before your loved one dies, and that support among family and peers is often difficult to find. While my friends debated the merits of their jobs and their weekend plans, I nursed my dying mother. I adopted coping strategies that were often unhealthy for me and navigated my grief without professional counselling support. Eleven years later, I feel I have moved through the intensity of my grief, and through that process I experienced life-altering changes. This personal growth instigated my desire to assist other young people facing similar significant losses.

Now, as I look back on my experiences as a young adult who struggled with the death of a significant loved one, I have increased my self-awareness of how loss and grief

can impact one's identity. Within several years of losing my mother, I reprioritized my personal goals and my husband and I decided to start a family. In addition, I realized that my chosen career in law was not yielding professional or personal satisfaction. I left my job as a Crown Prosecutor and began to explore alternative career options, eventually choosing to retrain as a counsellor. Although these life changes may have happened without my loss experience, it is my belief that the death of my mother and my resulting grief shaped the course of my evolving identity. From a theoretical viewpoint, I recognize that both the developmental stage of adolescence and the life experience of bereavement are characterized by challenges to individuals' senses of identity. As a counsellor, my clinical interest in working with bereaved adolescents is directly related to my counselling approach that seeks to foster client authenticity by understanding and facilitating congruent identity development.

My interest in expressive-arts therapies is also linked to my grief experience. One strategy that I believe helped me to adaptively cope with my grief was my pursuit of artistic expression, particularly photography and scrapbooking. When I engaged with these activities, I found effective outlets for expressing my emotions. I have also explored the meaning of my mother's life, through creating memorial pieces honouring my mother's talents and experiences. Finally, I have been able to celebrate qualities and memories of my relationship with my mom, by creating scrapbook pages that I share with my children. These personal experiences with artistic expression spurred my desire to learn more about the benefits of expressive arts as a counselling intervention tool. Today, I work as a grief counsellor at a hospice, and I repeatedly witness the power of expressive arts to help meet the needs of grieving adolescents. Through all of these experiences, I

was convinced that creating a group program that included expressive-arts activities would be clinically worthwhile and personally rewarding. In short, my loss history has influenced my belief that counsellors who incorporate expressive arts into their bereavement-support toolbox offer their clients additional options for effective coping resources.

#### *Literature Review Synthesis*

Like all bereaved individuals, grieving teenagers experience the impact of grief in a myriad of ways, including emotional reactions, physical sensations, thoughts, behaviours, social difficulties, and searches for spiritual meaning (Corr et al., 2009). Most bereaved adolescents will experience uncomplicated grief (Cohen et al., 2006) with grief signs and experiences that counsellors can view as nonpathological. Completing this portion of the literature review increased my understanding about the normal uniqueness of grief. As a result, within this project, I have emphasized the importance of facilitator recognition of the diversity inherent in grief, with cultural and life experiences shaping how bereaved people experience grief and how they cope with the stressors that bereavement can bring (Rosenblatt, 2001). It is my hope that this emphasis will help guide group facilitators away from any tendency to pathologize grief and toward a focus on the normalcy of clients' subjective grief experiences.

Despite the uniqueness of grief, researchers have also identified several commonalities inherent in the grief experiences of most adolescents (Fleming & Adolph, 1986; McCarthy, 2006). In integrating these perspectives, I identified five common needs of grieving adolescents aged 15–18 years of age. These needs include: (a) emotional expression and regulation, (b) finding and incorporating new meanings into their

evolving identities, (c) identifying and enhancing supportive relationships, (d) identifying and developing bereavement coping strategies, and (e) enhancing feelings of empowerment to regain some sense of security and control. In the *Expressions of Grief* group program, I utilized these needs as the foundation for the creation of group program counselling goals.

Just as experiences of grief are unique, individuals' methods of coping with bereavement are diverse. Bereavement coping describes how individuals manage the situations in which bereavement places them (Stroebe et al., 2001). Researchers have developed both task models (Worden, 2009) and process models (Gillies & Neimeyer, 2006; Machin, 2009; Stroebe & Schut, 2001) to propose how individuals can adaptively cope with bereavement. In the *Expressions of Grief* group program, I incorporated group session activities that integrate theoretical concepts from both task and process bereavement-coping models.

Through completing the literature review related to group counselling, I discovered that group interventions are often used with bereaved adolescents. This is because group interventions can effectively address four common client needs: reduction of isolation, access to information, expression of emotion, and meaning reflection. Group programs often help bereaved teenagers overcome common feelings of isolation (Orloff et al., 2009; Tedeschi, 1996). In addressing this need, I chose the *Expressions of Grief* membership selection criteria with the intention of fostering this non-isolating environment, by creating an environment where teenagers can interact with other adolescents who have experienced significant loss. In this group program, I also created session plans that would allow the group facilitators to efficiently and effectively provide

grief-related information to the participants, who often lack access to resources or individuals who can answer their grief-related questions (Tedeschi, 1996). In group programs, bereaved individuals often report feeling more comfortable expressing their emotions (Tedeschi, 1996), due to the shared experiences of others in the group (Yalom, 2005). To facilitate the need for emotional expression, I chose to incorporate numerous opportunities for pair and group discussions and suggested that facilitators highlight shared group experiences within these discussions. Finally, group programs often provide participants with ideal meaning-reflection conditions (Yalom, 2005), which enable members to integrate the meanings of their losses into their world views (Tedeschi, 1996). In the *Expressions of Grief* group program, I included activities that may aid participants' meaning exploration, including the incorporation of process-based journalling and handouts that facilitate participant reflection.

The literature review related to the therapeutic use of expressive-arts highlighted the fact that people have been using expressive arts as healing aids for hundreds of years (Malchiodi, 2005). Counsellors who incorporate expressive arts in their work with clients have identified numerous therapeutic benefits to this practice, including enhanced self-expression, active client participation, enhanced mind-body connections, and activated emotional intelligence (Malchiodi, 2005; Riley, 2004). In this project, I have advocated that the therapeutic benefits associated with engaging in expressive-arts activities are directly connected to the needs of grieving adolescents. In the *Expressions of Grief* group program, I incorporated a variety of expressive-arts activities with the articulated objectives of promoting participants' expressions of their feelings and thoughts, increasing participants' self-awareness, and fostering participants' personal growth.

### *Project Application*

My graduate studies have taught me the importance of using the academic literature as a guide for my clinical practice. Through my own counselling practice, and in conversations with other grief counsellors, I have determined that there is a community need for resources that help counsellors connect current bereavement research with their intervention practices. As such, I created the *Expressions of Grief* group program with the intention of contributing a theoretical-based practice tool for counsellors working with bereaved adolescents. In this section, I explore the strengths of this project, highlighting the clinical need for adolescent bereavement support and strengths of the *Expressions of Grief* group program. I also outline the limitations of this project, focusing on the need to pilot this group program in its entirety, the possible lack of applicability of expressive arts for all teens, and the relevance of the debate about the efficacy of bereavement counselling interventions to this group program.

### *Project Strengths*

The project offers a counselling intervention for a population that requires effective support. Bereavement impacts many adolescents in significant ways. McCarthy (2006) noted research which has shown that bereavement in adolescence can carry implications for “educational and learning processes and outcomes, for early home leaving, for early sexual activities and poor health behaviours, and possibly for aggressive or delinquent behaviours” (p. 137). Other empirical studies have linked adolescent bereavement with high levels of distress and short-term depression (McCarthy, 2006). Research has also suggested that adolescents often experience long-term bereavement consequences that extend over many years of their lives (McCarthy,

2006). These potential, but serious, bereavement consequences support my belief in the clinical need for adolescent bereavement interventions such as the *Expressions of Grief* group program.

In addition to meeting a clinical need, this project offers an intervention that is both inclusive of diverse participants and cost-effective in its delivery. As such, it has the potential to provide support for many youth who may not have access to support from others in their social networks. Stokes et al. (1999) discussed the over-optimistic adult belief that bereaved adolescents will be well-supported by family and friends. These authors articulated reasons why adolescents may often need bereavement support outside of their social networks including: (a) adults are often concerned that they will say or do the wrong thing, (b) parents want to believe that their children are coping, (c) parents want to protect their children from painful experiences, (d) parents may be struggling with their own grief, and (e) adolescents may try to protect their parents by not speaking about their concerns and fears. Stewart and Sharp (2007) noted that children and adolescents with preexisting emotional difficulties, limited family resources, or those who have lost one parent to death often benefit from bereavement support interventions.

Within this project, I created a group program and accompanying facilitators' manual. Counsellors who wish to implement this intervention with bereaved teenagers may note the following strengths of the *Expressions of Grief* group program. First, as the foundation of this program, I incorporated extensive and current academic literature, with most of the referenced research bearing publication dates of 2000 or newer. Second, the program session plans include a variety of activities, which should be relevant and interesting for diverse groups of teenagers. Third, the group program manual is all-

inclusive. Facilitators who wish to offer the *Expressions of Grief* group program to clients will find that the manual contains all of the resources and information that they need to implement this intervention.

#### *Project Limitations*

In this project, I have created a group program that has not yet been facilitated in its entirety. In order to evaluate the program's relevance to bereaved adolescents, I need to pilot implement the complete program, and then review its effectiveness based on evaluative feedback. In this review, I will consider and possibly incorporate participants' suggestions, outcome measure results, and issues that arise during the facilitators' reflective-practice reviews. However, I will also exercise some caution in making amendments to the program on the basis of one pilot program. Each *Expressions of Grief* group will be unique, as will the members' needs within each group. As such, significant changes to this group program will be based on multiple sources of feedback or new peer-reviewed empirical information.

For counsellors who wish to implement the *Expressions of Grief* program with bereaved teenagers, there are other potential limitations. First, with its expressive-arts focus, the activities within this program may not appeal to some adolescents. In my clinical work, I have learned that not all adolescents are interested in experimenting with expressive-arts activities. I believe that some of these teens may change their opinions after trying these activities within the safety of the group. However, the program's focus on expressive arts activities has the potential of alienating some youth. In part, I attempted to overcome this limitation by incorporating prescreening procedures and suggesting that facilitators offer alternative activities if members express hesitation about

participating in the planned program. Ultimately, I acknowledge that teenagers who are firmly disinterested in expressive-arts will experience limited benefit from participating in this program. Second, the program is designed for high-school aged students, so the age diversity of the participants is relatively homogeneous.

While undertaking this project, I was also mindful of disagreements within the academic literature about the effective use of bereavement interventions. There are three current research-based meta-analyses that examined the efficacy of grief interventions (Currier et al., 2007; Currier et al., 2008; Stroebe, Schut, & Stroebe, 2005), and all of these studies yielded results that questioned bereavement intervention effectiveness. However, I suggest counsellors exercise caution before adopting the belief that bereavement interventions are not effective. Critical analyses of these research studies reveal a number of concerns, including researchers' tendencies to pathologize grief and the use of inappropriate outcome evaluation measures. I will further identify the nature of these concerns and then discuss how they are related to potential limitations of the *Expressions of Grief* group program.

Currier et al. (2007) discussed the potential impact on efficacy research results when bereavement researchers adopt the medical community's tendency to "pathologize grief" (p. 258). Most efficacy studies have measured successful intervention outcome in terms of an absence of psychiatric symptoms or disorders (Currier et al., 2007). Only 4 of the 13 studies in Currier et al.'s meta-analysis "directly assessed grief, per se, and only one of these investigations used a well-established or even standardized measure of grief" (p. 258). Without relevant and valid pre- and post-intervention assessments of grief, it is

difficult to form definitive conclusions about the effectiveness of bereavement interventions.

Further, I propose that current research designs have not measured outcomes that could support findings of grief counselling efficacy. Grief may not be a condition that adolescents recover from, but rather, a circumstance that permanently and significantly alters who they are (Sandler, Wolchik, & Ayers, 2008). I assert that the grief-as-a-disease model is perpetuated when researchers measure successful intervention outcome by assessing whether intervention participants experienced accelerated relief from distress. Corr et al. (2009) noted the artificiality inherent in practitioners' and researchers' attempts to assess recovery from grief. Rather than identify "fixed end points" (Corr et al., 2009, p. 234), these authors highlighted two central questions: (a) what type of activities constitute productive grieving, and (b) what impact do these activities have on bereaved individuals? It is important for counsellors to understand that although most bereaved persons demonstrate resiliency and experience improvement their lives, many will "re-mourn their losses as they find themselves in different places in their future lives" (Corr et al., 2009, p. 234).

In an effort to incorporate a non-pathologizing grief assessment tool, the *Expressions of Grief* program includes a recently developed measure of grief, the YPGPS (Machin, 2009). With its focus on bereaved persons' subjective perceptions, this instrument provides useful information about participants' perceptions of their grief and about how their grief may have been addressed by the group intervention. However, I would caution facilitators against relying on this pre- and post-assessment measure as the sole indicator of this program's effectiveness. I suggest that the *Expressions of Grief*

group program would benefit from continued exploration of additional pre- and post-measures of intervention efficacy as research into this area continues to evolve.

For example, facilitators can also consider incorporating outcome measures that examine the presence of adaptive coping factors such as increased personal growth or enhanced resiliency (Sandler et al., 2008). Stokes et al. (1999) highlighted the importance of assessing the efficacy of bereavement interventions in terms of their stated aims.

Within the *Expressions of Grief* program, I recommended the use of pre- and post-assessment instruments that could help facilitators assess the presence or absence of adaptive coping factors, including the Multi-Sector Social Support Inventory (Layne et al., 2009) and the Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). I also acknowledge that there are outcome evaluation limitations within this group program. For example, I designed the Group Program Evaluation Form (found in the Appendix, Additional Facilitator Resources, Form #1) to assess this group intervention in relation to the program's goals and objectives. However, this evaluation form has never been utilized with group participants or been the subject of empirical validation research so its merits as a reliable outcome measure have not yet been ascertained. It may also be valuable to have more qualitative measures of the group's efficacy. The experience of grief is life-altering in ways that quantitative measures may not appropriately assess. The depth of experience and value of the group's therapeutic potential may only be fully understood by incorporating interpretive and clinical assessments.

#### *Future Research Initiatives*

In completing this project, I have gained some insight about research that would further adolescent bereavement theory and thereby improve the practice of adolescent

grief counselling interventions. One area that I would recommend for future research would be qualitatively-based inquiries into adolescents' perspectives on the helpful and less helpful characteristics of group bereavement interventions. In developing this group program, I relied on research that outlined the needs of bereaved teenagers and research that discussed the characteristics of adolescent group interventions, and then connected these needs with the known benefits of adolescent group interventions. However, it would have been more helpful to reference research that incorporated the voices of bereaved adolescents describing how these teens perceive group interventions as meeting their bereavement needs. Aligned with this suggestion, Currier et al. (2007) urged researchers to clearly highlight the theoretical foundations and the operational procedures for the interventions they are studying. This practice would facilitate the assessment of "critical mechanisms within intervention programs, thus eliminating treatment components that are not particularly helpful" (Currier et al., 2007, p. 258).

Another recommended research focus would be to study how bereaved adolescents incorporate the meaning of their losses into their evolving identities, with a focus on how these losses can facilitate personal growth processes in youth. Gillies and Neimeyer (2006) reviewed qualitative and quantitative research studies that examined meaning-making processes in response to loss and noted:

Often the meanings realized by the bereaved are that life is more painful and challenging and that goals will be more difficult to achieve than they had previously believed; so personal growth does not mean becoming less distressed but learning how to become someone who can carry the weight of her or his distress. (p. 53)

Returning to the question posed by Stroebe and Schut (2001): What is adaptive coping to bereavement? Intervention effectiveness research has measured levels of distress or psychiatric symptoms and concluded that preventative interventions do not appear to facilitate expedited reduction of these symptoms. However, to date, research has not explored whether preventative bereavement interventions facilitate personal growth or enhance adaptive coping to bereavement. Gillies and Neimeyer (2006) suggested,

The persons who most fully adapt [to bereavement] are able to integrate images of what they do and who they are, and they are able to recognize the positive and negative themes in their life stories, facing the distress of grief with a positive outlook. (p. 53)

I wonder if measures of personal growth were used as outcome measures for adolescent bereavement intervention studies, what would be the impact on efficacy results.

Finally, to consider outcome in this preventative-focused way requires the development of assessment tools that could measure processes indicative of bereavement-inspired personal growth: for example, assessments to measure meaning-making activities such as sense making, benefit finding, and identity change (Gillies & Neimeyer, 2006). Longitudinal studies that track processes of meaning reconstruction would also be helpful, in order to examine the relationship between distress and meaning reconstruction (Gillies & Neimeyer, 2006). Finally, Gillies and Neimeyer noted that bereavement meanings are informed by cultural and social environments; research that further illuminates these interpersonal meaning-making contexts would also be informative.

### *Conclusion*

In this chapter, I shared some personal experiences that inspired me to undertake this final project. Then, I synthesized my literature review, focusing on how I utilized current academic literature as the theoretical foundation for the *Expressions of Grief* group program. I also provided readers with several clinical strengths and limitations of the group program, emphasizing how this project has impacted my work as a grief counsellor. Finally, I provided some suggestions for future research initiatives. Counsellors who wish to implement the *Expressions of Grief* group program can reference the group program manual, which is reproduced in its entirety in the Appendix. Given the dearth of written bereavement-support resources (Orloff et al., 2009), it is my hope that the *Expressions of Grief* group manual will be an important addition to the clinical community, improving the quality of adolescent bereavement group programs and, thereby, the lives of grieving teenagers.

## References

- Balk, D. E. (1996). Models for understanding adolescent coping with bereavement. *Death Studies, 20*, 367–387. Retrieved March 20, 2009, from MEDLINE database.
- Balk, D. E. (2007). Working with children and adolescents: An overview of theoretical and practical issues. In K. J. Doka (Ed.), *Living with grief: Before and after the death* (pp. 209–227). Washington, DC: Hospice Foundation of America.
- Balk, D. E., & Corr, C. A. (2001). Bereavement during adolescence: A review of research. In M. S. Stroebe, R. O. Hansson, W. Stroebe, & H. Schut (Eds.), *Handbook of bereavement research: Consequences, coping, and care* (pp. 199–218). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Burlingame, G. M., Fuhriman, A. J., & Johnson, J. (2004). Current status and future directions of group therapy research. In J. L. DeLucia-Waack, D. A. Gerrity, C. R. Kalodner, & M. T. Riva, (Eds.), *Handbook of group counseling and psychotherapy* (pp. 651–660). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Canadian Psychological Association. (2001). Canadian code of ethics for psychologists In C. Sinclair & J. Pettifor (Eds.), *Companion manual to the Canadian code of ethics for psychologists* (3rd ed., pp. 29–104). Ottawa, ON, Canada: Canadian Psychological Association.
- Christ, G. H. (2000). Impact of development on children's mourning. *Cancer Practice, 8*, 72–81. Retrieved March 2, 2009, from MEDLINE database.
- Cohen, J. A., Mannarino, A. P., & Deblinger, E. (2006). *Treating trauma and traumatic grief in children and adolescents*. New York: Guilford Press.

- Cook, A. S. (2009). Ethics and adolescent grief research: A developmental analysis. In D. E. Balk & C. A. Corr (Eds.), *Adolescent encounters with death, bereavement, and coping* (pp. 39–57). New York: Springer.
- Corey, G., Williams, G. T., & Moline, M. E. (1995). Ethical and legal issues in group counseling. *Ethics & Behavior*, 5(2), 161–183. Retrieved June 5, 2009, from Academic Search Complete database.
- Corey, M. S., Corey, G., & Corey, C. (2010). *Groups: Process and practice* (8th ed.). Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Corr, C. A., Nabe, C. M., & Corr, D. M. (2009). *Death and dying, life and living* (6th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Currier, J. M., Holland, J. M., & Neimeyer, R. A. (2007). The effectiveness of bereavement interventions with children: A meta-analytic review of controlled outcome research. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*, 36, 253–259. Retrieved April 17, 2010, from MEDLINE database.
- Currier, J. M., Neimeyer, R. A., & Berman, J. S. (2008). The effectiveness of psychotherapeutic interventions for bereaved persons: A comprehensive quantitative review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 134, 648–661. doi:10.1037/0033-295X.134.5.648
- Delucia-Waak, J., & Donigian, J. (2004). *The practice of multicultural group work*. Pacific Grove, CA: Wadsworth.
- Drumm, K. (2006). The essential power of group work. *Social Work with Groups*, 29(2/3), 17–31. doi:10.1300/J009v29n0202

- Fleming, S. J., & Adolph, R. (1986). Helping bereaved adolescents: Needs and responses. In C. A. Corr & J. N. McNeil (Eds.), *Adolescence and death* (pp. 97–118). New York: Springer.
- Fleming, S. J., & Balmer, L. (1996). Bereavement in adolescence. In C. A. Corr & D. E. Balk (Eds.), *Handbook on adolescent death and bereavement* (pp. 139–154). New York: Springer.
- Gillies, J., & Neimeyer, R. A. (2006). Loss, grief, and the search for significance: Toward a model of meaning reconstruction in bereavement. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 19, 31–65. doi:10.1080/10720530500311182
- Gumpert, J., & Black, P. N. (2006). Ethical issues in group work: What are they? How are they managed? *Social Work with Groups*, 29(4), 61–74. doi:10.1300/J009v29n04\_05
- Hannah, P. J. (2000). Preparing members for the expectations of social work with groups: An approach to the preparatory interview. *Social Work with Groups*, 22(4), 51-66. Retrieved April 17, 2010, from EBSCOHOST database.
- Hines, P. L., & Fields, T. H. (2002). Pregroup screening issues for school counsellors. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 27, 358–376. doi:10.1080/714860199
- Jessop, J., & McCarthy, J. R. (2006). The social contexts of bereavement experiences and interventions. In J. R. McCarthy (Ed.), *Young people's experience of loss and bereavement: Towards an interdisciplinary approach* (pp. 142–176). Berkshire, England: Open University Press.
- Klass, D., Silverman, P. R., & Nickman, S. L. (1996). *Continuing bonds: New understandings of grief*. Washington, DC: Taylor & Francis.

- Kosminsky, P., & Lewin, D. (2009). Counseling approaches for bereaved adolescents. In D. E. Balk & C. A. Corr (Eds.), *Adolescent encounters with death, bereavement, and coping* (pp. 327–344). New York: Springer.
- Layne, C. M., Warren, J. S., Hilton, S., Lin, D., Pasalic, A., Fulton, J., et al. (2009). Measuring adolescent perceived support amidst war and disaster: The Multi-Sector Social Support Inventory. In B. K. Barber (Ed.), *Adolescents and war: How youth deal with political violence* (pp. 145–176). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Leedy, P. D., & Ormrod, J. E. (2005). *Practical research: Planning and design* (8th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.
- Liebmann, M. (2004). *Art therapy for groups: A handbook of themes and exercises* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Machin, L. (2009). *Working with loss & grief: A new model for practitioners*. London, England: Sage.
- Malchiodi, C. A. (2005). Expressive therapies: History, theory, and practice. In C. A. Malchiodi (Ed.), *Expressive therapies* (pp. 1–15). New York: Guilford Press.
- Malekoff, A. (2004). *Group work with adolescents: Principles and practice* (2nd ed.). New York: Guilford Press.
- McBride, D. (2006). *CAAP 6637: Psychoeducational groups: Session planning* (course materials). (Available from the University of Lethbridge, 4401 University Drive West, Lethbridge, AB, Canada T1K 3M4)
- McCarthy, J. R. (2006). *Young people's experience of loss and bereavement: Towards an interdisciplinary approach*. Berkshire, England: Open University Press.

- McCarthy, J. R. (2007). 'They all look as if they're coping, but I'm not': The relational power/lessness of 'youth' in responding to experiences of bereavement. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 10, 285–303. doi:10.1080/13676260701362574
- Murthy, R., & Smith, L. (2005). *Grieving, sharing, and healing: A guide for facilitating early adolescent bereavement groups*. Champaign, IL: Research Press.
- Nathan, A. A., & Mirviss, S. (1998). *Therapy techniques: Using the creative arts*. Ravensdale, WA: Idyll Arbor.
- National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine. (2007). *What is CAM?* Retrieved April 17, 2010, from  
<http://nccam.nih.gov/health/whatiscam/overview.htm>
- Neimeyer, R. A. (2001). *Meaning reconstruction & the experience of loss*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Noppe, I. C., & Noppe, L. D. (1997). Evolving meanings of death during early, middle, and later adolescence. *Death Studies*, 21, 253–275. Retrieved March 29, 2009, from EBSCOHOST database.
- Orloff, S. F., Armstrong, D., & Remke, S. S. (2009). Camps and support groups for adolescents. In D. E. Balk & C. A. Corr (Eds.), *Adolescent encounters with death, bereavement, and coping* (pp. 291–308). New York: Springer.
- Perschy, M. K. (2004). *Helping teens work through grief*. New York: Routledge.
- Relf, M., Machin, L., & Archer, N. (2008, February). *Guidance for bereavement needs assessment in palliative care*. Retrieved April 17, 2010, from  
<http://www.healthcareforlondon.nhs.uk/assets/End-of-life-care/Bereavement-needs-assessment-guide.pdf>

- Riley, S. (2004). The creative mind. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Association*, 21, 184–190. Retrieved March 2009, 2010, from ERIC database.
- Ritchie, M. H., & Huss, S. N. (2000). Recruitment and screening of minors for group counseling. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 25, 146–156.  
doi:10.1080/01933920008411458
- Rogers, J. E. (Ed.). (2007). *The art of grief: The use of expressive arts in a grief support group*. New York: Routledge.
- Rosenblatt, P. C. (2001). A social constructionist perspective on cultural differences in grief. In M. S. Stroebe, R. O. Hansson, W. Stroebe, & H. Schut (Eds.), *Handbook of bereavement research: Consequences, Coping, And Care* (pp. 285–300). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Sandler, I. N., Wolchik, S. A., & Ayers, T. S. (2008). Resilience rather than recovery: A contextual framework on adaptation following bereavement. *Death Studies*, 32, 59–73. doi:10.1080/07481180701741343
- Servaty-Seib, H. L. (2004). Connections between counseling theories and current theories of grief and mourning. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, 26, 125–145. Retrieved March 10, 2009, from EBSCOHOST database.
- Sharpe, S., McCarthy, J. R., & Jessop, J. (2006). The perspectives of young people. In J. R. McCarthy (Ed.), *Young people's experience of loss and bereavement: Towards an interdisciplinary approach* (pp. 53–93). Berkshire, England: Open University Press.

- Stewart, J. L., & Sharp, L. M. (2007). A cognitive-behavioral group approach to grief and loss. In R. W. Christner, J. L. Stewart, & A. Freeman (Eds.), *Handbook of cognitive-behavior group therapy with children and adolescents: Specific settings and presenting problems* (pp. 253–272). New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Stokes, J., Pennington, J., Monroe, B., Papadatou, D., & Relf, M. (1999). Developing services for bereaved children: A discussion of the theoretical and practical issues involved. *Mortality*, 4, 291–307. Retrieved March 29, 2009, from Academic Search Complete database.
- Stokes, J., Reid, C., & Cook, V. (2009). Life as an adolescent when a parent has died. In D. E. Balk & C. A. Corr (Eds.), *Adolescent encounters with death, bereavement, and coping* (pp. 177–197). New York: Springer.
- Stroebe, M. S., Hansson, R. O., Schut, H., & Stroebe, W. (2008). Bereavement research: Contemporary perspectives. In M. S. Stroebe, R. O. Hansson, H. Schut, & W. Stroebe (Eds.), *Handbook of bereavement research and practice: Advances in theory and intervention* (pp. 3–25). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Stroebe, M. S., Hansson, R. O., Stroebe, W., & Schut, H. (2001). Introduction: Concepts and issues in contemporary research on bereavement. In M. S. Stroebe, R. O. Hansson, W. Stroebe, & H. Schut (Eds.), *Handbook of bereavement research: Consequences, coping, and care* (pp. 3–22). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

- Stroebe, M. S., & Schut, H. (2001). Models of coping with bereavement: A review. In M. S. Stroebe, R. O. Hansson, W. Stroebe, & H. Schut (Eds.), *Handbook of bereavement research: Consequences, coping, and care* (pp. 375–404). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Stroebe, W., Schut, H., & Stroebe, M. S. (2005). Grief work, disclosure and counseling: Do they help the bereaved? *Clinical Psychology Review*, 25, 395–414.  
doi:10.1016/j.cpr2005.01.004
- Tedeschi, R. G. (1996). Support groups for bereaved adolescents. In C. A. Corr & D. E. Balk (Eds.), *Handbook of adolescent death and bereavement* (pp. 293–311). New York: Springer.
- Tedeschi, R. G., & Calhoun, L. G. (1996). The posttraumatic growth inventory: Measuring the positive legacy of trauma. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 9, 455–471. Retrieved from June 16, 2009 from MEDLINE database.
- Thomas, R. V., & Pender, D. A. (2007). Association for specialists in group work: Best practices guidelines 2007. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 33, 111–117.  
doi:10.1080/01933920801971184
- Tudor, K. (1999). *Group counseling*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Valentine, L. (1996). Professional interventions to assist adolescents who are coping with death and bereavement. In C. A. Corr & D. E. Balk (Eds.), *Handbook of adolescent death and bereavement* (pp. 312–328). New York: Springer.
- van Deurzen, E. (2005). Philosophical background. In E. van Deurzen & C. Arnold-Baker (Eds.), *Existential perspectives on human issues* (pp. 3–14). Hampshire, England: Palgrave MacMillian.

- Warren, J. S., Jackson, Y., & Sifers, S. K. (2008). Social support provisions as differential predictors of adaptive outcomes in young adolescents. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 37, 106–121. doi:10.1002/jcop.20273
- Worden, J. W. (1996). *Children and grief: When a parent dies*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Worden, J. W. (2009). *Grief counseling and grief therapy*. New York: Springer.
- Wortman, C. B., & Silver, R. C. (2001). The myths of coping with loss revisited. In M. S. Stroebe, R. O. Hansson, W. Stroebe, & H. Schut (Eds.), *Handbook of bereavement research: Consequences, coping, and care* (pp. 405–429). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Yalom, I. D. (2005). *The theory and practice of group psychotherapy* (5th ed.). New York: Basic Books.

Appendix:

*Expressions of Grief: An Arts-Based Group Program for Teens*

## Group Program Manual



Created by Kathleen Fraser, BA (Psych), LLB

University of Lethbridge  
Master of Counselling Applied Project

Kathleenfraser715@gmail.com

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Pre-Group Session: What to Expect? .....	107
Advance Preparation.....	108
Required Supplies:.....	108
Session Objectives:.....	108
Session Plans .....	109
Facilitator Debriefing Questions .....	114
References.....	114
Pre-Group Session – Handout 1: Group Member Feedback Form.....	115
Pre-Group Session – Handout 2: Program Rules .....	116
Pre-Group Session – Handout 3: Group Program Goals .....	118
Pre-Group Session – Handout 4: Young Person’s Grief Perspective Scale .....	119
Pre-Group Session – Handout 5: Personal Goals Worksheet .....	120
 Session #1: Building Connections .....	121
Advance Preparation.....	122
Required Supplies:.....	122
Session Objectives:.....	122
Session Plans .....	123
Facilitator Debriefing Questions .....	127
References.....	127
Session #1 – Handout 1: Group Member Feedback Form .....	128
Session #1 – Handout 2: My Coat of Arms .....	129
 Session #2: My Grief is Unique.....	130
Advance Preparation.....	131
Required Supplies:.....	131
Session Objectives:.....	131
Session Plans .....	132
Facilitator Debriefing Questions .....	136
Reference.....	136
Session #2 – Handout 1: Group Member Feedback Form .....	137
Session #2 – Handout 2: Agree-Disagree Group Activity Instructions.....	138
Session #2 – Handout 3: Similarities and Differences in Grief.....	139
 Session #3: My Grief Experience.....	140
Advance Preparation.....	141
Required Supplies:.....	141
Session Objectives:.....	141
Session Plans .....	142
Facilitator Debriefing Questions .....	146
Reference.....	146

Session #3 – Handout 1: Group Member Feedback Form .....	147
Session #4: Coping with Grief.....	148
Advance Preparation.....	149
Required Supplies:.....	149
Session Objectives:.....	149
Session Plans .....	150
Facilitator Debriefing Questions .....	155
References .....	155
Session #4 – Handout 1: Group Member Feedback Form .....	156
Session #4 – Handout 2: Body Armour Worksheet.....	157
Session #5: The Story of My Loss .....	158
Advance Preparation.....	159
Required Supplies:.....	159
Session Objectives:.....	159
Session Plans .....	160
Facilitator Debriefing Questions .....	166
References .....	166
Session #5 – Handout 1: Group Member Feedback Form .....	167
Session #5 – Handout 2: Visualization Script .....	168
Session #5 – Handout 3: My Significant Songs .....	169
Session #6: Meaningful Music .....	170
Advance Preparation.....	171
Required Supplies:.....	171
Session Objectives:.....	171
Session Plans .....	172
Facilitator Debriefing Questions .....	178
References .....	178
Session #6 – Handout 1: Group Member Feedback.....	179
Session #6 – Handout 2: My Significant Songs .....	180
Session #6 – Handout 3: Sharing Memories Idea Sheet .....	181
Session #7: Sharing Memories .....	182
Advance Preparation.....	183
Required Supplies:.....	183
Session Objectives:.....	183
Session Plans .....	184
Facilitator Debriefing Questions .....	189
References .....	189
Session #7 – Handout 1: Group Member Feedback.....	190
Session #7 – Handout 2: Sharing My Wisdom.....	191

Session #8: Collective Wisdom.....	192
Advance Preparation.....	193
Required Supplies:.....	193
Session Objectives:.....	193
Session Plans .....	194
Facilitator Debriefing Questions .....	199
References .....	199
Session #8 – Handout 1: Group Member Feedback.....	200
Session #8 – Handout 2: Young Person’s Grief Perspective Scale.....	201
Additional Facilitator Resources .....	202
Form #1: Group Program Evaluation Form.....	203
Form #2: Sample Informed Consent Form.....	205
Form #3: Sample Promotional Poster .....	209
Form #4: Client File Note Template .....	210
Form #5: Increasing Counsellor Cultural Awareness.....	211

## *Expressions of Grief: An Arts-Based Group Program for Teens*

# Group Program Manual



**Pre-Group Session: What to Expect?**

## *Expressions of Grief: An Arts-Based Group Program for Teens*

### Pre-Group Session: What to Expect?

**Session Length: 2 hours**

#### **ADVANCE PREPARATION**

- ✓ Purchase and prepare break refreshments
- ✓ Gather all required supplies
- ✓ Arrange chairs in a circle
- ✓ Photocopy Group Member Feedback Form (see Handout 1) for all group members
- ✓ Photocopy additional copies of the *Expressions of Grief* Program Rules (see Handout 2)
- ✓ Write group program goals (see Handout 3) on flipchart paper and post in a prominent place in the room
- ✓ Write pre-group session agenda on flipchart paper and post on an easel
- ✓ Photocopy sufficient number of *Young Person's Grief Perspective Scale* (see Handout 4) for all group members
- ✓ Photocopy sufficient number of Personal Goals Worksheet (see Handout 5) for all group members

#### **Required Supplies:**

- Boxes of Kleenex
- Break refreshments
- Nametags for each member
- *Expressions* journals for each member (11"x17" bound books with blank pages inside)
- Adhesives and sticky foam squares
- Two flipchart pads of paper and two easels
- Variety of colored markers
- Copies of Member Feedback Forms
- Copies of the *Expressions of Grief* Program Rules
- Copies of the *Young Person's Grief Perspective Scale*
- Copies of the Personal Goals worksheet
- Pens and pencils

#### **Session Objectives:**

1. To introduce the members to each other.
2. To review and discuss member and facilitator roles and expectations.
3. To complete pre-group assessment with the *Young Person's Grief Perspective Scale* (Machin, 2009) to assess members' current responses to their losses.
4. To review the group program goals.
5. To create individual member goals.
6. To introduce the proposed use of the *Expressions* journals.
7. To prepare members for the first group session.

### Session Plans

<b>Time</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Supplies</b>	<b>Instructions</b>	<b>Facilitator Notes</b>
5 min	Check In: Introduction of members	Group Introductions	• Nametags	Ask members to share their names, and one hobby or activity that they like to do.	Nametags will be distributed to members as they arrive for this session.  Facilitators will demonstrate by introducing themselves first.
5 min	Introduce session agenda	Agenda review	• Flipchart agenda	Review the session's intended activities and allotted time frames.	Ask group if there are any concerns or questions about the session agenda and address those concerns or questions.
5 min	Review group expectations	Program rules review	• Extra copies of the Program Rules	Highlight themes from the <i>Expressions of Grief</i> Program Rules with all members of the group.  Provide members with individual copies of these Program Rules if they do not already have a copy.	Facilitators should have already reviewed the Program Rules with group members during their intake interviews.
10 min	Discuss group expectations	Dyad Activity—Creating a Safe Space	None	Ask members, “What are the ground rules that you need others to follow in order for you to feel safe in this group?”  Break group members into dyads and ask members to discuss one fear, concern, or uncertainty they	Remember, members may have different degrees of comfort with sharing personal information.  If members are not comfortable sharing their fears or concerns, encourage members to share

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
				have about being in the group and one idea that will help them feel more comfortable or safer.	their values and beliefs with respect to privacy and sharing personal information with others.
15 min	Discuss group expectations	Group Process Activity—Creating a Safe Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flipchart paper and coloured markers</li> </ul>	Facilitate group discussion about creating a safe space in this group. Encourage each member to share one idea that they discussed in their dyad.	One facilitator will scribe the group-generated expectations on the flip chart paper titled “Our Safe Space”. This flip chart poster will be hung in the group room for future sessions.
5 min	Conduct pre-group assessment	Administration of <i>Young Person’s Grief Perspective Scale</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pencils</li> <li>Sufficient copies of the <i>Young Person’s Grief Perspective Scale</i> for all members</li> </ul>	<p>Distribute pencils and ask members to complete the <i>Young Person’s Grief Perspective Scale</i> before they take their refreshment break.</p> <p>Ask members to ensure their names are on the assessment sheet and to fold the sheet in half and hand it to one of the facilitators prior to taking their break.</p>	<p>There are no quantitative scoring instructions for this assessment scale (Machin, 2009).</p> <p>Facilitators can review these assessment scales to increase their understandings of members’ current grief experiences. This assessment scale will be readministered in the last group session, so facilitators can note any changes in the members’ grief after completing the group program.</p>

<b>Time</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Supplies</b>	<b>Instructions</b>	<b>Facilitator Notes</b>
10 min	Break		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Break refreshments</li> </ul>	<p>Ask members to take a personal break to use washrooms and enjoy refreshments.</p> <p>Ask members to limit their break to 10 minutes.</p>	One facilitator will take completed assessments to her office and ensure that they are securely stored until the facilitators have an opportunity to review them.
15 min	Review group program goals	Information Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group Goals poster</li> </ul>	Facilitators will review the group program goals (see Handout 2).	Facilitators will also review the importance of members identifying their personal reasons for attending the group. Explain that identifying these personal reasons will help members clarify their personal goals that they wish to work toward during this group process.
15 min	Create individual goals	Group Brainstorm Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flipchart paper</li> <li>• Coloured markers</li> </ul>	<p>Ask the group this question: "Why did you want to join this group?"</p> <p>Scribe all of the reasons on flipchart paper. Try to obtain reasons from each member in the group (Malekoff, 2004).</p>	When members share personal reasons, model encouragement, curiosity, and active listening. Let group members know that it is okay for others to have similar and different reasons for joining the group.

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
5 min	Introduce the <i>Expressions</i> Journals	Information delivery	• <i>Expressions</i> journals	Facilitators will give an <i>Expressions</i> journal to each group member. Group members will be invited to make the journal “their own” over the next eight sessions with photos, pictures, journalling, and creative writing. Facilitators will explain that these journals should be brought to every group session and that members should ensure that they store their journals in a safe place in order to keep the information as private as they chose to (Rogers, 2007).	Alternatively, facilitators could offer to store these journals in a locked filing cabinet at the group site. Both options could be given to group members if there is a secure storage space at the group facility.
10 min	Create individual goals	Individual journalling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal Goals worksheet</li> <li>• Pens and pencils</li> <li>• <i>Expressions</i> Journals</li> <li>• Reasons for Joining Flipchart</li> <li>• Adhesives or sticky foam squares</li> </ul>	<p>Invite each member to record two or three personally meaningful reasons for joining this group on the Personal Goals worksheet. Then, ask participants to create personal goals from these reasons; facilitators will assist members with this task by offering possible goals from the brainstormed list of reasons.</p> <p>As members complete their worksheet, ask them to attach the worksheet into their journals.</p>	<p>Help members write possible personal goals from their list of reasons for attending the group.</p> <p>Link common goals that are shared by more than one member.</p> <p>Offer to stay after the pre-group session to further assist those members who are having difficulty identifying their personal goals.</p>

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
5 min	Prepare for next group session	Information delivery	None	<p>For homework, ask members to continue to reflect on their personal goals and to add any additional thoughts to their Personal Goals worksheet.</p> <p>Give an overview of the agenda for the next session (in two weeks) and remind members to bring their journals to group every week.</p>	
10 min	Check out	Go-round discussion- Sharing today's impressions	None	Ask members to reflect on today's session and share one thing that stands out for them as a result of participating in the group today.	Ensure that each member has opportunity to share one thing.
5 min	Obtain session feedback	Individual activity- Completing Member Feedback Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback forms</li> <li>• Pens and pencils</li> </ul>	Explain purpose of feedback form and what the facilitators will do with the information. Inform members that they do not need to put their names on their forms unless they chose to.	Ask members to leave name tags and feedback forms in the group room before they leave.

You have finished facilitating the Pre-Group Session.

To debrief this group session, facilitators are encouraged to consider and discuss the questions on the next page.

### **Facilitator Debriefing Questions**

#### **To assess group dynamics, consider asking:**

- What were our reactions to the group check-in and check-out processes?
- What changes could we make to increase members' feelings of safety?
- What group members did we most and least want to work with? Why?
- What clients will each facilitator assume primary responsibility for with respect to preparing the individual client notes?

#### **To assess effectiveness of session delivery, consider asking:**

- How engaged were the group members during the "creating safety" and "personal goal-setting" exercises?
- Did each member identify at least one personal goal? If not, why not?
- When did the group seem to have the most and least amount of energy? Why?

### **References**

Machin, L. (2009). *Working with loss and grief: A new model for practitioners*. London: Sage.

Malekoff, A. (2004). *Group work with adolescents: Principles and practice* (2nd ed.). New York: Guilford Press.

Rogers, J. E. (Ed.). (2007). *The art of grief: The use of expressive arts in a grief support group*. New York: Routledge.

**Pre-Group Session – Handout 1:**  
**Group Member Feedback Form**  
***What to Expect?***

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Name (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide your honest feedback about today's group session by numerically ranking your experience of this session. Please use the following ranking system.

1=Not at all    2=A little bit    3=Some of the time    4=Most of the time    5=All of the time

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I felt comfortable talking about my feelings and thoughts.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I felt like I could trust the other group members.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I felt supported by the group facilitators.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I learned helpful information in this session.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I participated in the activities that we did in this session.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I shared my feelings and my thoughts with the other group members.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I feel like today's session will help me meet my personal goals.**

**One thing that worked well is:**

**One thing that could be different is:**

**One thing that I could do differently to improve my group experience is:**

## Pre-Group Session – Handout 2: Program Rules

### *Expressions of Grief: An Arts-Based Group Program for Teens*

#### **My Rights as a Group Member include . . .**

- I can expect to be treated with respect by the group facilitators and the other group members.
- I can expect that I won't feel pressured to participate in the group in any way that I do not want to.
- I can expect that I will be free to work towards my goals in ways that work best for me.
- I can expect that I will get an equal opportunity to participate in the group activities and an equal opportunity to speak during the group time.
- I have the right to choose how much private information I wish to share with the group. If I become concerned about my privacy, I know I can address this concern with the group and/or the facilitators at any time.
- I have the right to choose whether or not to join this group.

#### **My Responsibilities as a Group Member include . . .**

- I will remember that other members will have their own ways of grieving and that there is no right or wrong way to grieve.
- I will treat other members with respect even if their values and beliefs are different from mine.
- I will talk honestly about myself to the other group members. If the group is not meeting my needs, I will tell the facilitators and if possible, the other members of the group.
- I will not interrupt or speak to other group members when members are speaking.
- I will turn off my cell phone during group sessions.
- When speaking, I will try and stay on the topic that is being discussed.
- I will not tell other people about who is in the group. I will not share other people's stories with anyone outside of the group. I also agree not to discuss specific group members with other members in the group unless the entire group is present.
- I will make every effort to attend all group sessions. If I am going to miss a session, I will contact one of the group leaders as soon as I know I cannot come to the session.
- I understand that members who miss more than one group session may be asked to leave the group.

- If I wish to stop coming to the group, I will inform the facilitators and the other group members of my decision to leave, and if possible, I will provide my reasons for leaving.
- I will make an effort to arrive at all group sessions 10 minutes early; I can rely on each session ending at its scheduled time.

### **Group Facilitators' Responsibilities include . . .**

- The group facilitators are not experts in how I should be grieving. Instead, the facilitators will help me find ways to best express and cope with my grief. For each member, these strategies might be different.
- The facilitators are responsible for ensuring that the group feels safe for all of the members, by: (a) discussing disagreements between the members; (b) making sure all group members follow the group rules; and (c) introducing group activities and telling group members what will happen in each group session.
- The group facilitators will assist all the group members in identifying their strengths and resources as these will assist members coping with their grief.

**Pre-Group Session – Handout 3:**  
**Group Program Goals**  
*Expressions of Grief: An Arts-Based Group Program for Teens*

- ✓ To create a supportive community of teenagers who have experienced the recent death of a loved one.
- ✓ To learn accurate information about death and grief.
- ✓ To learn about, and to share with others, helpful ways to cope with your grief.
- ✓ To explore your grief-related thoughts, feelings, and behaviours.
- ✓ To explore your past and present relationship with your deceased loved one.
- ✓ To make sense of your loss and explore how your loss has changed who you are as a person.

**Pre-Group Session – Handout 4:**  
***Young Person's Grief Perspective Scale***

Indicate (circle) your agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

1. **I feel OK about being sad.**

*Strongly agree/agree/neither agree or disagree/disagree/strongly disagree*

2. **I can't stop thinking about [\_\_\_\_\_].**

*Strongly agree/agree/neither agree or disagree/disagree/strongly disagree*

3. **Although I am sad, I also feel able to cope with life since [\_\_\_\_\_] died.**

*Strongly agree/agree/neither agree or disagree/disagree/strongly disagree*

4. **I think I should be brave.**

*Strongly agree/agree/neither agree or disagree/disagree/strongly disagree*

5. **I feel as if this sadness will never get better.**

*Strongly agree/agree/neither agree or disagree/disagree/strongly disagree*

6. **I can't let other people see how sad I am.**

*Strongly agree/agree/neither agree or disagree/disagree/strongly disagree*

7. **I don't think anything will ever be the same since [\_\_\_\_\_] died.**

*Strongly agree/agree/neither agree or disagree/disagree/strongly disagree*

8. **I think it's best to get on with life (school, friends, etc.) after someone has died.**

*Strongly agree/agree/neither agree or disagree/disagree/strongly disagree*

9. **I know it's bad at the moment but I think things will get better.**

*Strongly agree/agree/neither agree or disagree/disagree/strongly disagree*

**Pre-Group Session – Handout 5:**  
**Personal Goals Worksheet**

*Expressions of Grief: An Arts-Based Group Program for Teens*

I joined this group because . . . .

1.

2.

3.

The goals that I wish to work toward during this group are:

1.

2.

3.

*Expressions of Grief: An Arts-Based Group Program for Teens*

## Group Program Manual



*Session #1: Building Connections*

## *Expressions of Grief: An Arts-Based Group Program for Teens*

### *Session #1: Building Connections*

**Session Length:** 2 hours

#### **ADVANCE PREPARATION**

- ✓ Purchase and prepare break refreshments
- ✓ Gather or purchase all required supplies
- ✓ Arrange chairs in a circle
- ✓ Hang "Our Safe Space" flipchart poster in the group room
- ✓ Write session agenda on flipchart paper and post on easel in the group room
- ✓ Photocopy Member Feedback Forms (see Handout 1) for all group members
- ✓ Photocopy Coat of Arms worksheet (see Handout 2) for all group members (make five extra copies)

#### **Required Supplies:**

- Boxes of Kleenex
- Break Refreshments
- Nametags for each member
- Two flipchart pads of paper and two easels
- Variety of colored markers
- Copies of Member Feedback Form
- Copies of Coat of Arms worksheet
- Pens and pencils
- Packages of coloured pencils and pencil sharpeners (1 for every 2 members)
- Expressions journals
- Adhesives or sticky foam squares
- Unscented candle and lighter

#### **Session Objectives:**

1. To increase feelings of trust and safety among group members.
2. To introduce members to each other.
3. To introduce group process.
4. To introduce the meaning and importance of *ritual* (Malekoff, 2004; Rogers, 2007).
5. To create a group ritual for use during the group program.
6. To prepare members for the next group session.

### Session Plans

<b>Time</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Supplies</b>	<b>Instructions</b>	<b>Facilitator Notes</b>
5 min	Check in	“Tuning In”	• Candle and lighter	<p>At the start of the group session, light the candle. Ask group members to take a moment to bring their attention to the present, through focusing on the candle burning in the middle of the room<sup>1</sup>.</p> <p>After one minute, ask each member to share a thought or feeling about being in the group room for today’s session.</p>	If members do not initially respond to this question, facilitators can model by providing their answers.
5 min	Increase members’ feelings of trust and safety	Dyads—Debriefing the Pre-Group Session	None	Ask members to find a partner and spend five minutes discussing their thoughts and feelings that arose after attending the pre-group session.	Group is in the beginning (forming) stage; dyad work should increase member participation.
10 min	Increase members’ feelings of trust and safety	Group Discussion—Debriefing the Pre-Group Session	None	Ask members to share with the group one topic or issue that they discussed with their dyad partner.	

---

<sup>1</sup> Rogers (2007) suggested candle burning as a suitable ritual for adolescent bereavement groups to help bring members into the present and to signal that the grief work is about to begin.

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
5 min	Introduce session agenda	Agenda review	• Flipchart agenda	Overview of the intended activities and time frames for each planned activity in this session.	Ask group if there are any concerns or questions about the session agenda and address those concerns or questions.
25 min	Introduce art activity	Expressive Arts Activity-- Creating a Coat of Arms	• Coat of Arms worksheets <sup>2</sup> • Colored pencils and sharpeners	Hand out Coat of Arms worksheets and ask the members to spend 20 minutes completing this activity. Using words, pictures, colours, or a combination, please include your answers to the six questions on the worksheet, creating a personal Coat of Arms. Tell members that we will use these Coats of Arms to introduce ourselves to the other group members.	Advising members that they will be asked to share their Coat of Arms before they do the activity should help increase member trust. Members can then choose what information they will include on their Coat of Arms, knowing that they will be sharing it with others.
10 min	Break		• Break refreshments	Ask members to take a personal break to use washrooms and enjoy refreshments.	Some members may use this break time to finish their Coat of Arms.
20 min	Introduce members to each other and to the facilitators	Go-round Coat of Arms group presentations	None	Ask members to introduce themselves to the other group members by presenting information represented on their Coat of Arms.	If members do not wish to show their Coat of Arms, ask them if they would be comfortable telling the group their thoughts about one or two of the Coat of Arms worksheet questions.

<sup>2</sup> Worksheet is derived from Perschy (2004). Perschy noted, "Permission is given to photocopy for grief group use" (p. 48).

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
				Ask members to only share the information that they are comfortable sharing. Members can choose whether they wish to show their completed Coat of Arms to the other members.	
10 min	Introduce group process discussions	Group Discussion about Coat of Arms activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Journals</li> <li>• Adhesives or sticky foam squares</li> </ul>	Ask members: What was like to do the Coat Arms activity? What was it like to share your Coat of Arms with each other? What did you like and not like about this activity?	
5 min	Introduce the meaning and importance of rituals	Information delivery	None	Facilitators will introduce the concept of rituals and talk about how they can be helpful to the grieving process.	Rogers (2007) wrote about the importance of rituals in grief work. Chapter 13 of Rogers' book provides extensive background information on this topic for facilitators who are interested in learning more.
10 min	Create a group ritual	Group discussion	None	Facilitators ask: What ritual could we do in our group to start and/or end our sessions?	Offer ritual ideas if group members do not have their own ideas.
5 min	Prepare for next group session	Information delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Journals</li> <li>• Adhesive or sticky foam squares</li> </ul>	<p>If taking the journals home, remind members to bring them back to the next session.</p> <p>Provide an overview of the agenda for next week's session.</p>	Assist members to attach their Coat of Arms into their Expressions journals with adhesives or sticky foam squares.

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
5 min	Check out	Go-round discussion- Sharing today's impressions	None	Ask members to reflect on today's session and share one thing that stands out for them as a result of participating in the group today.	Ensure that each member has opportunity to share one thing.
5 min	Obtain session feedback	Individual activity- Completing Member Feedback Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback forms</li> <li>• Pens and pencils</li> </ul>	Remind members of the purpose of the feedback form and that they do not need to put their names on their forms unless they chose to.	<p>Ask members to leave name tags and session feedback forms in the group room before they leave.</p> <p>Check in with any members and their parents if facilitators feel that member(s) may need additional support after leaving this group session.</p>

You have finished facilitating Session One.

To debrief this session, facilitators are encouraged to consider and discuss the questions on the next page.

### **Facilitator Debriefing Questions**

#### **To assess group dynamics, consider asking:**

- What behaviour did we see that would support the existence or absence of member trust?
- Do we think that the group is becoming more cohesive? Why or why not?
- Do members seem prepared to move toward the working stage of group development? If not, what could we do to prepare members for advancement?

#### **To assess effectiveness of session delivery, consider asking:**

- How engaged were the group members during the Coat of Arms activity?
- What opinions were shared about the Coat of Arms activity during the process discussion? Are there changes we would make to this activity for the next group based on the members' feedback?
- Did each group member's introduction reveal something about his or her personal grief experience?

### **References**

Malekoff, A. (2004). *Group work with adolescents: Principles and Practice* (2nd ed.). New York: Guilford Press.

Perschy, M. K. (2004). *Helping teens work through grief*. New York: Routledge.

Rogers, J. E. (Ed.). (2007). *The art of grief: The use of expressive arts in a grief support group*. New York: Routledge.

**Session #1 – Handout 1:**  
**Group Member Feedback Form**  
***Building Connections***

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide your honest feedback about today's group session by numerically ranking your experience of this session. Please use the following ranking system.

1=Not at all    2=A little bit    3=Some of the time    4=Most of the time    5=All of the time

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I felt comfortable talking about my feelings and thoughts.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I felt like I could trust the other group members.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I felt supported by the group facilitators.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I learned helpful information in this session.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I participated in the activities that we did in this session.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I shared my feelings and my thoughts with the other group members.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I feel like today's session will help me meet my personal goals.**

**One thing that worked well is:**

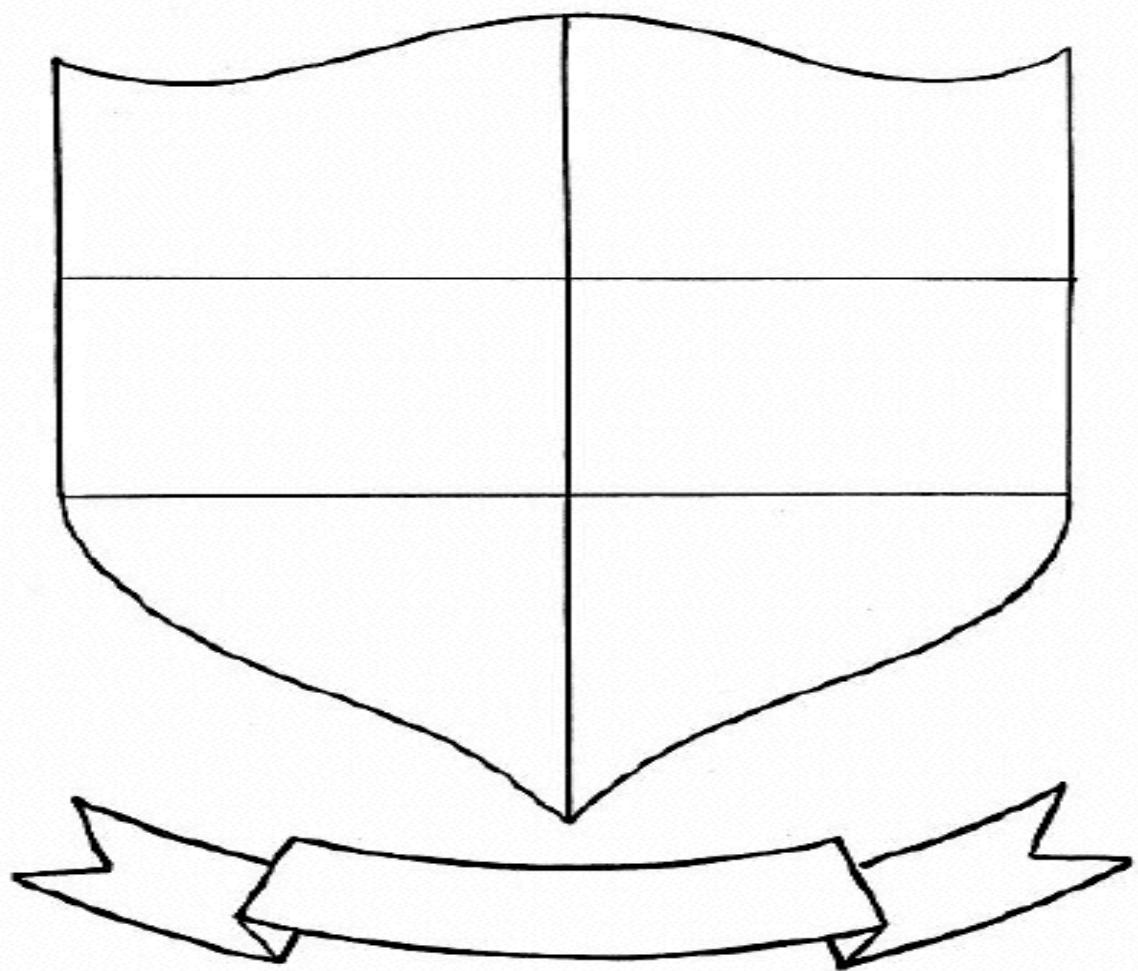
**One thing that could be different is:**

**One thing that I could do differently to improve my group experience is:**

## Session #1 – Handout 2: My Coat of Arms

**In your Coat of Arms, please include:**

- Symbol of one thing you like to do.
- Symbol representing a goal that you accomplished in the last 3 years.
- Symbol that reminds you of the person who died.
- Symbol representing the worst thing about grief.
- Words or symbols: why have you come to this group?
- Symbol of one change you have experienced since your loved one died.



## *Expressions of Grief: An Arts-Based Group Program for Teens*

# Group Program Manual



### *Session #2: My Grief is Unique*

## *Expressions of Grief: An Arts-Based Group Program for Teens*

### Session #2: My Grief is Unique

**Session Length: 2 hours**

#### **ADVANCE PREPARATION**

- ✓ Purchase and prepare break refreshments
- ✓ Gather all required supplies
- ✓ Arrange chairs in a circle
- ✓ Write Agree, Disagree, and Don't Know signs on 12 x 12" white poster board with black marker and hang with hanging putty in an open space that allows for unobstructed group member movement between these signs.
- ✓ Hang "Our Safe Space" flipchart poster in the group room
- ✓ Write session agenda on flipchart paper and post on easel in the group room
- ✓ Photocopy the Member Feedback form for all group members (see Handout 1)
- ✓ Photocopy one copy of the Agree-Disagree-Don't Know instruction sheet (see Handout 2) and add any additional statements that facilitators want the group to consider
- ✓ Photocopy Similarities and Differences in Grief worksheet (see Handout 3) for all group members (make 5 extra copies)

#### **Required Supplies:**

- Boxes of Kleenex
- Break refreshments
- Member nametags
- Two flipchart pads of paper and two easels
- Pens and pencils
- Agree, Disagree, and Don't Know signs and hanging putty
- Copies of Member Feedback Forms (see Handout 1)
- One copy of the Agree-Disagree activity instructions (see Handout 2)
- Copies of Similarities and Differences in Grief worksheet (see Handout 3)
- *Expressions* journals
- Adhesive or sticky foam squares
- Unscented candle and lighter
- Other ritual items as agreed by group in Session 1

#### **Session Objectives:**

1. To increase feelings of trust and safety among group members.
2. To provide accurate psychoeducational information about death, bereavement, and grief.
3. To explore members' feelings, thoughts, and behaviours related to their loss and grief experiences.
4. To normalize the uniqueness of grief experiences.
5. To increase member understanding about how their experience of grief is both unique and similar to others' experiences.
6. To prepare group members for the next group session.

### Session Plans

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
10 min	Check in	What Makes Me Unique?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candle and lighter</li> <li>• Other ritual items as agreed by group in Session 1</li> </ul>	<p>At the start of the group session light the candle. Ask group members to take a moment to bring their attention to the present, through focusing on the candle burning in the middle of the room. After one minute, ask each member to name one thing that they think makes them unique.</p>	If members do not initially respond to this question, facilitators can model by providing their answers.
5 min	Introduce session agenda	Agenda Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flipchart agenda</li> </ul>	<p>Overview this session's intended activities and time frames for each planned activity.</p>	Ask group if there are any concerns or questions about the session agenda and address those concerns or questions.
45 min	<p>Provide accurate psychoeducational information about death, bereavement, and grief.</p> <p>Explore members' feelings, thoughts, and behaviours related to their loss and grief experiences</p>	Agree-Disagree Group Activity <sup>3</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree-Disagree Instructions</li> <li>• Agree-Disagree-Don't Know signs and hanging putty</li> </ul>	<p>Detailed instructions for the Agree-Disagree activity are found in Handout 2 of this session plan.</p> <p>Facilitators can start this activity by explaining these instructions to the group members and answering any questions or concerns raised by the members.</p>	<p>Participants are using their bodies to help express their opinions or experiences, which may be a more comfortable way of expression for some (e.g., kinesthetic learners, introverts).</p> <p>The facilitator who is not reading the statements should be observing (and responding if necessary) to members' reactions.</p>

<sup>3</sup> Activity is described in Perschy (2004). Activity is also currently used in Hospice Calgary's adolescent grief group (M. Bolin, personal communication, October 7, 2009).

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
133	Normalize the uniqueness of grief experiences.			Run this activity for 45–60 minutes depending on number of group members and amount of processing members engage in during the activity.	Invite members to comment on their reactions after each statement and subsequent movement.
10 min	Break		• Break refreshments	Ask members to take a personal break to use washrooms and enjoy refreshments.	
10 min	Engage in a group process discussion Normalize the uniqueness of grief experiences Increase member understanding about how their experience of grief is both unique and similar to others' experiences.	Group Discussion about the Agree/Disagree Activity	• None	Facilitators will ask members to return to their seats. Once everyone is seated, facilitators will ask: "What was it like for you to participate in agree/disagree activity?"  Depending on content of members' participation, facilitators might also ask members to share one thing they were curious about or surprised at while doing this activity.	Facilitators will model acceptance of diverse beliefs and values related to death, grief, and bereavement.  Facilitators will emphasize members' insight that relates to acceptance of this diversity.
15 min	Normalize the uniqueness of grief experiences Increase member understanding about how their experience of grief is both	Individual Reflection	• Similarities and Differences in Grief worksheet • Journals • Adhesive or sticky foam	Distribute the Similarities and Differences in Grief worksheet.  Ask members to take 15 minutes of quiet time to identify three of their common and unique grief experiences and beliefs in relation to the other	Facilitators will circulate and assist members who are having trouble completing the assignment.

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
	unique and similar to others' experiences		squares	members. Facilitators can invite members to write, draw, or use other creative modes of expression to express both the commonalities and unique experiences.	
15 min	Increase member understanding about how their experience of grief is both unique and similar to others' experiences.	Go-round group discussion	None	Ask members to share one commonality or one unique grief aspect with the other group members.	Ensure that each member has an opportunity to speak.
5 min	Prepare for the next group session	Information delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Expressions</i> journals</li> <li>• Adhesive or sticky foam squares</li> </ul>	<p>If taking the journals home, remind members to bring them back to the next session.</p> <p>Provide an overview of the agenda for next week's session.</p>	Assist members to attach their Similarities and Differences worksheet into their <i>Expressions</i> journals with adhesive or sticky foam squares.
5 min	Check out	Go-round discussion-Sharing today's impressions	None	Ask members to reflect on today's session and share one thing that stands out for them as a result of participating in the group today.	Ensure that each member has opportunity to share one thing.
5 min	Obtain session feedback	Individual activity-Completing Member Feedback Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback forms</li> <li>• Pens and pencils</li> </ul>	Remind members of the purpose of the feedback form and that they do not need to put their names on their forms unless they chose to.	<p>Ask members to leave name tags and session feedback forms in the group room before they leave.</p> <p>Check in with any members and their parents if facilitators feel</p>

135

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
					that member(s) may need additional support after leaving this group session.

You have finished facilitating Session #2.

To debrief this session, facilitators are encouraged to consider and discuss the questions on the next page.

### **Facilitator Debriefing Questions**

**To assess group dynamics, consider asking:**

- Based on session feedback forms, do all members feel safe? If not, what changes could we make to increase members' feelings of safety?
- What group members do we most and least want to work with? Why?
- When did the group seem to have the most and least amount of energy? Why?

**To assess effectiveness of session delivery, consider asking:**

- How engaged were the group members during the Agree/Disagree/Don't-Know activity?
- Did each member identify at least one commonality and unique quality in his or her grief experience?

### **Reference**

Perschy, M. K. (2004). *Helping teens work through grief*. New York: Routledge.

**Session #2 – Handout 1:**  
**Group Member Feedback Form**  
***My Grief is Unique***

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Name (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide your honest feedback about today's group session by numerically ranking your experience of this session. Please use the following ranking system.

1=Not at all    2=A little bit    3=Some of the time    4=Most of the time    5=All of the time

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I felt comfortable talking about my feelings and thoughts.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I felt like I could trust the other group members.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I felt supported by the group facilitators.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I learned helpful information in this session.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I participated in the activities that we did in this session.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I shared my feelings and my thoughts with the other group members.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I feel like today's session will help me meet my personal goals.**

**One thing that worked well is:**

**One thing that could be different is:**

**One thing that I could do differently to improve my group experience is:**

## Session #2 – Handout 2:

### Agree-Disagree Group Activity Instructions

Using two pieces of 12x12 poster paper and a black marker, write **Agree** on one piece of poster paper and **Disagree** on the other piece of poster paper. Post these signs at opposite ends of the group room, ensuring that there is lots of room for members to travel back and forth between these signs. Create and place a third sign (**Don't Know**) in a middle spot, between **Agree** and **Disagree**.

**Ask members to stand up and listen to the statements read by one of the facilitator's. After the statement is read, group members are to walk toward the sign that best represents their opinion about the statement. After everyone in the group moves, the facilitators will ask all the members if they wish to comment about why they chose to move in the directions they did.**

*NOTE: The facilitator reading the statements should ensure that he or she leaves sufficient time between these statements for members to move to their chosen side of the room. In addition, the facilitator should start with statements that do not address grief and slowly incorporate the grief-themed statements throughout the last half of the activity. These are suggested statements only. Please add any other statements that they would like the group to consider.*

**Ideas for the facilitator-read statements include:**

- Summer is the best season of the year.
- Looking at the stars is a relaxing thing to do.
- Watching movies is more fun with friends than alone.
- Nothing is better than a sunny day at the beach.
- Writing in my journal is a good way to clear my head.
- School should start at noon.
- Winter sports are too risky.
- It is okay to cry in public.
- Sometimes drawing is a good way to express things that are hard to talk about.
- Life isn't fair.
- Scary movies are adventurous.
- Pizza is my favourite food.
- There are people in my life who understand my grief.
- It is very scary to think about dying.
- I am able to remember and talk about the good things that happened with my loved one who died.
- I know what to do when I feel angry.
- The person who died is still connected to me.
- I came to this group because someone else wanted me to come.
- I will talk to a trusted adult when I feel sad or alone.
- I share my grief feelings with my friends.
- It is important to say goodbye to people who die.
- It is normal to cry and feel sad after someone dies.
- It is normal to feel mad after someone dies.
- It is okay to laugh and enjoy life after someone dies.
- People need to get over their grief in order to move on with their lives.

**Session #2 – Handout 3:**  
**Similarities and Differences in Grief**  
*Expressions of Grief: An Arts-Based Group Program for Teens*

**My Grief is Like Others' in These Ways:**

**My Grief is Unique in These Ways:**

## *Expressions of Grief: An Arts-Based Group Program for Teens*

### **Group Program Manual**



***Session #3: My Grief Experience***

## *Expressions of Grief: An Arts-Based Group Program for Teens*

### Session #3: My Grief Experience

**Session Length: 2 hours**

#### **ADVANCE PREPARATION**

- ✓ Purchase and prepare break refreshments
- ✓ Gather all required supplies
- ✓ Arrange chairs in a circle
- ✓ Hang "Our Safe Space" flipchart poster in the group room
- ✓ Cut air-dry clay into individual pieces and wrap in airtight plastic and Ziploc bags
- ✓ Put plastic table cloths on work tables along with clay-modelling tools and containers of water
- ✓ Write session agenda on flipchart paper and post on easel in the group room
- ✓ Photocopy sufficient copies of the Member Feedback Form (see Handout 1)
- ✓ Set up CD player with instrumental CD in sculpting work space

#### **Required Supplies:**

- Boxes of Kleenex
- Break refreshments
- Nametags for each member
- Two flipchart pads of paper and two easels
- CD player and instrumental CD
- Adhesives or sticky foam squares
- Plastic table cloths
- Air-dry clay (from art supply store) and play dough
- Clay modelling tools
- Containers for water
- Hand cream
- Polaroid camera
- *Expressions* Journals
- Copies of Member Feedback Forms
- Unscented candle and lighter
- Other ritual items as agreed by group in Session 1

#### **Session Objectives:**

1. To increase feelings of trust and safety among group members.
2. To provide accurate psychoeducational information about grief.
3. To explore members' feelings, thoughts, and behaviours related to their grief experiences.
4. To normalize the uniqueness of grief experiences.
5. To encourage members to express to others their grief-related feelings and thoughts.
6. To increase member awareness of additional grief-expression strategies.
7. To prepare group members for the next group session.

### Session Plans

<b>Time</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Supplies</b>	<b>Instructions</b>	<b>Facilitator Notes</b>
5 min	Check in	“Weather Report”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candle and lighter</li> <li>• Other ritual items as agreed by group in Session 1</li> </ul>	Ask the group to take a moment to bring their attention to the present by focusing on the candle burning in the middle of the room. After one minute, ask: If you were the weather, what would the weather forecast be right now?	If members do not initially respond to this question, facilitators can model by providing their answers.
5 min	Introduce session agenda	Agenda review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flipchart agenda</li> </ul>	Overview this session’s intended activities and time frames for each planned activity.	<p>Ask group if there are any concerns or questions about the session agenda and address those concerns or questions.</p> <p>Ask members if it would be okay to play music during their expressive arts activity.</p>
10 min	Provide accurate psycho-educational information about grief	Information Delivery: How do we experience grief?	None	Provide members with some psycho-educational information about the many ways that people experience grief.	
30 min	Explore members’ feelings, thoughts, and behaviours related to their	Expressive arts activity: Modelling my Grief (Liebmann, 2004)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Packages of air-dry clay and containers of play dough</li> <li>• Clay modelling</li> </ul>	<p>Use your clay to sculpt something that represents your experience of grief.</p> <p>This is an independent quiet project. Please respect the</p>	Facilitators should be sensitive to any member hesitancy about engaging in this activity and try and help members work through feelings of self-consciousness, fear, or

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
	grief experiences		tools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Containers of water</li> <li>• Music player and instrumental CD</li> <li>• Hand cream</li> </ul>	reflective work being done by others and refrain from talking during this exercise. If you do not wish to do the activity, please let us know.  Request that members keep their minds open to all of their thoughts and feelings while doing this activity.	shyness.  Some members may not like the feeling of the clay on their hands. Offer play dough as an alternative.  Playing quiet instrumental music may help members relax and better engage with the activity. Play an instrumental CD if members previously agreed to this.  If one or more members express disinterest in doing the activity, facilitators can take a few minutes to process (with the group) the members' lack of interest. Using discretion, facilitators will determine when to move forward from this process discussion and provide the opportunity for some members to engage in the clay modelling activity while others quietly write or draw in their journals while listening to the music.
10 min	Break	Photographing clay sculptures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Break refreshments</li> <li>• Polaroid Camera</li> </ul>	Ask members to take a personal break to use washrooms and enjoy refreshments.  Ask members to limit their break to 10 minutes.	During the break, the facilitators can offer to take photographs of the clay sculptures so that members can insert these pictures into their <i>Expressions</i> journals.

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
30 min	<p>Engage in a group process discussion</p> <p>Encourage members to express to others their grief-related feelings and thoughts</p> <p>Normalize the uniqueness of grief experiences</p>	Group Discussion—Debriefing the Clay-Modelling activity	None	<p>Facilitators can begin this discussion by asking: "What was the clay modelling experience like for you?"</p> <p>Other process questions that facilitators could ask include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) What did you like about this experience?</li> <li>(b) What did you not like about this experience?</li> <li>(c) What did you learn about your grief?</li> <li>(d) What is your sculpture saying about (or to) you?</li> </ul>	<p>Facilitators should actively listen for and link commonalities in members' experiences.</p> <p>Facilitators will normalize the wide diversity of grief experiences.</p>
15 min	<p>Provide accurate psychoeducational information about grief</p> <p>Increase member awareness of additional grief-expression strategies</p>	Group Brainstorm Activity—How can we express our grief?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flipchart paper</li> <li>• Coloured markers</li> </ul>	<p>Facilitators will write Helpful Grief Expression Strategies across the top of the flipchart paper.</p> <p>To begin this activity, summarize the group's opinion about the helpfulness of the clay-modelling activity as a way to express thoughts and feelings about the grief experience.</p> <p>Then, ask group members for other strategies, resources, or activities that members have</p>	<p>This is a list that could be added to throughout the duration of the group program if facilitators saved this list and then brought it to subsequent sessions.</p> <p>Encourage members to use clay or play dough at home if they wish to explore experiences that they are having trouble talking about. Provide members with a list of places where they can purchase their own clay supplies.</p> <p>One group member (or facilitator) will scribe all of the group's suggestions</p>

145

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
				found useful to express their grief-related feelings and thoughts.	on the flipchart paper. Invite members to record the strategies that they feel might be helpful for them in their <i>Expressions</i> journals.
5 min	Prepare for the next group session	Information delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Journals</li> <li>Adhesive or sticky foam squares</li> </ul>	If taking the journals home, remind members to bring their <i>Expressions</i> journals to the next session.  Provide an overview of the agenda for next week's session.	Assist members in attaching their sculpture pictures into their <i>Expressions</i> journals.
5 min	Check out	Go-round discussion-Sharing today's impressions	None	Ask members to reflect on today's session and share one thing that stands out for them as a result of participating in the group today.	Ensure that each member has opportunity to share one thing.
5 min	Obtain session feedback	Individual activity-Completing Member Feedback Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback forms</li> <li>Pens and pencils</li> </ul>	Remind members of the purpose of the feedback form and that they do not need to put their names on their forms unless they chose to.	Ask members to leave name tags and session feedback forms in the group room before they leave.  Check in with any members and their parents if facilitators feel that member(s) may need additional support after leaving this group session.

You have finished facilitating Session #3.

To debrief, facilitators are encouraged to consider and discuss the questions on the next page.

### **Facilitator Debriefing Questions**

**To assess group dynamics, consider asking:**

- What behaviour did we see that would support or negate the presence of increased levels of trust?
- Do we think that the group is cohesive? Why or why not?
- Are any members displaying behaviours characteristic of the transition stage of group development? If so, did we address those behaviours effectively?
- What could we do to move members toward the working stage of group development?

**To assess effectiveness of session delivery, consider asking:**

- How engaged were the group members during the clay-sculpting activity?
- Were their members who did not wish to sculpt? If so, what did we do to facilitate other activities? Were these activities helpful to the member(s) or not? How do we know?
- Did each group member contribute to the clay-sculpting process discussion? If not, why not?
- Did the group members strategize alternative grief expression strategies? If not, why not?

### **Reference**

Liebmann, M. (2004). *Art therapy for groups: A handbook of themes and exercises* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.

**Session #3 – Handout 1:**  
**Group Member Feedback Form**  
***My Grief Experience***

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Name (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide your honest feedback about today's group session by numerically ranking your experience of this session. Please use the following ranking system.

1=Not at all    2=A little bit    3=Some of the time    4=Most of the time    5=All of the time

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I felt comfortable talking about my feelings and thoughts.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I felt like I could trust the other group members.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I felt supported by the group facilitators.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I learned helpful information in this session.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I participated in the activities that we did in this session.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I shared my feelings and my thoughts with the other group members.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I feel like today's session will help me meet my personal goals.**

**One thing that worked well is:**

**One thing that could be different is:**

**One thing that I could do differently to improve my group experience is:**

## *Expressions of Grief: An Arts-Based Group Program for Teens*

### **Group Program Manual**



#### ***Session #4: Coping with Grief***

## *Expressions of Grief: An Arts-Based Group Program for Teens*

### Session #4: Coping with Grief

**Session Length: 2 hours**

#### **ADVANCE PREPARATION**

- ✓ Gather required supplies
- ✓ Purchase and prepare break refreshments
- ✓ Arrange chairs in a circle
- ✓ Hang "Our Safe Space" flipchart poster in the group room
- ✓ Spread drop cloths in two separate spaces; assemble art supplies on a central table between the drop cloths
- ✓ Write session agenda on flipchart paper and post on easel in the group room
- ✓ Photocopy sufficient copies of the Member Feedback form (see Handout 1)
- ✓ Photocopy sufficient copies of the Body Armour worksheet plus 5 extra copies (see Handout 2)
- ✓ Set up CD player with instrumental CD in collaging work space

#### **Required Supplies:**

- Boxes of Kleenex
- Break refreshments
- Nametags for each member
- Two flipchart pads of paper and two easels
- CD player and instrumental CD
- Two canvas drop cloths
- Heavy paper—12" by 9"—one for each member plus 5 extras
- Tempura paint, paintbrushes and containers for water
- Scissors (one pair for every two members) and magazines
- Paper of different weights (construction, tissue, etc.)
- Buttons, ribbons, stickers
- Glue gun, white glue, and glue sticks
- *Expressions* journals and adhesives and/or sticky foam squares
- Wall-sized picture of body armour and hanging putty
- Copies of Member Feedback Forms
- Copies of Body Armour worksheet
- Unscented candle and lighter
- Other ritual items as agreed by group in Session 1

#### **Session Objectives:**

1. To increase feelings of trust and safety among group members.
2. To increase members' self-awareness of their needs as related to coping with grief.
3. To increase members' awareness of their own perspectives about helpful and less helpful grief-coping strategies.
4. To identify group commonalities and differences about what is helpful and unhelpful in coping with grief.
5. To normalize members' unique ways of coping with grief.
6. To prepare group members for the next group session.

### Session Plans

<b>Time</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Supplies</b>	<b>Instructions</b>	<b>Facilitator Notes</b>
10 min	Check in	“Super-Hero Powers”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candle and lighter</li> <li>• Other ritual items as agreed by group in Session 1</li> </ul>	<p>At the start of the group session light the candle.</p> <p>Ask group members to take a moment to bring their attention to the present, through focusing on the candle burning in the middle of the room.</p> <p>After one minute, ask: If you could have any super-hero power, which one would you pick and why?</p>	If members do not initially respond to this question, facilitators can model by providing their answers.
5 min	Introduce the session agenda	Agenda review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agenda flipchart</li> </ul>	<p>Review this session’s agenda with the group members.</p>	<p>Answer any questions or concerns raised by the group members.</p> <p>Ask members if it would be okay to play music during their expressive arts activity.</p>
45 min	Increase members’ awareness of their own perspectives about helpful and less helpful grief-coping strategies	Expressive-Arts Activity: Collaging <sup>4</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CD player and instrumental CD</li> <li>• One piece of heavy paper—12” by 9 for each member</li> </ul>	<p>Ask members to sit quietly and think about people and actions that have been very helpful and not as helpful as they have been coping with the death of their loved one.</p>	<p>Play quiet instrumental music during this activity if members have given their consent.</p> <p>If one or more members express disinterest in doing the activity, facilitators can take a few minutes to process (with the group) the members’ lack of interest. Using discretion,</p>

<sup>4</sup> Some additional suggestions about how to facilitate a collage activity are found on pages 95–100 in Rogers’ (2007) book.

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tempura paint, paintbrushes, containers for water</li> <li>• Scissors (one pair for every two members)</li> <li>• Magazines</li> <li>• Construction and tissue papers</li> <li>• Buttons, ribbons, stickers</li> <li>• Glue</li> </ul>	<p>After 2 minutes of reflection time, ask members to create a collage that illustrates both helpful and unhelpful words/objects/actions for coping with their grief.</p> <p>Encourage members to use whatever materials feel most comfortable to them, including pictures and words in magazines, tactile objects, and paint.</p>	<p>facilitators will determine when to move forward from this process discussion and provide the opportunity for some members to engage in the collaging activity while others quietly write or draw in their journals while listening to the music.</p> <p>Give members updates about the time remaining while they are engaged in the activity.</p>
10 min	Break		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Break refreshments</li> <li>• Adhesives or sticky foam squares</li> </ul>	<p>Ask members to take a personal break to use washrooms and enjoy refreshments.</p> <p>Ask members to limit their break to 10 minutes.</p>	<p>Facilitators will place adhesives or sticky foam squares on tables and will encourage members to attach their <i>Expressions</i> journals.</p>
10 min	Engage in a group process discussion Increase members' self-awareness of their	Group Discussion—Debriefing the Collaging activity	None	Facilitators can begin this discussion by asking: What was the collaging experience like for you?	Facilitators should actively listen for and link commonalities in members' experiences.

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
	<p>needs as related to coping with grief</p> <p>Increase members' awareness of their own perspectives about helpful and less helpful grief-coping strategies.</p>			<p>Other process questions that facilitators could ask include: (a) What did you like about this experience? (b) What did you not like about this experience? (c) What did you learn about how you can cope with your grief? (d) What does your collage say about (or to) you?</p>	
25 min	<p>Identify group commonalities and differences about what is helpful and unhelpful in coping with grief</p> <p>Normalize members' unique ways of coping with grief</p>	Group Discussion: Creating Body Armour <sup>5</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wall-sized picture of body armour and hanging putty</li> <li>• Coloured markers</li> <li>• Copies of the Body Armour worksheet</li> </ul>	<p>Facilitators will ask each group member to share at least one helpful grief coping strategy. These coping strategies will be written on the body armour by the member who suggested them.</p> <p>Members can choose whether they wish to show their collages to the other group members or summarize one or two ideas that they learned from collaging.</p> <p>Members can write all the strategies that they believe</p>	<p>Facilitators will normalize the wide diversity of grief coping- strategies and how different words and actions may be experienced as helpful or unhelpful depending on the person experiencing them.</p> <p>This body armour could be added to throughout the duration of the group program if facilitators brought it to subsequent sessions.</p> <p>Facilitators can encourage members to attach their Body Armour worksheets into their <i>Expressions</i> Journal.</p>

<sup>5</sup> Liebmann (2004) suggested creating body armour as a representation of how group members can face current challenges in their lives.

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
				they would find helpful on their personal Body Armour worksheets.	
5 min	Prepare group members for the next group session	Information delivery	None	<p>Remind members to bring their <i>Expressions</i> journals to the next session.</p> <p>Provide an overview of the agenda for next week's session. Advise members that each group member will be invited to tell their story of how their loved one died. Remind members of the Program Rules and encourage members to carefully consider which parts of their story that they feel safe to tell.</p>	Facilitators will encourage members to tell their story in a way that feels right to them. If members wish to write out their story before our next session, or if they wish to compose a poem that tells their story, these alternative ways of storytelling are both acceptable and encouraged.
5 min	Check out	Go-round discussion- Sharing today's impressions	None	Ask members to reflect on today's session and share one thing that stands out for them as a result of participating in the group today.	Ensure that each member has opportunity to share one thing.

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
5 min	Obtain session feedback	Individual activity- Completing Member Feedback Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback forms</li> <li>Pens and pencils</li> </ul>	Remind members of the purpose of the feedback form and that they do not need to put their names on their forms unless they chose to.	<p>Ask members to leave name tags and session feedback forms in the group room before they leave.</p> <p>Given that the program is half over, facilitators may want to check in with all the members and their parents to see if there are any questions or concerns.</p>

You have finished facilitating Session #4.

To debrief, facilitators are encouraged to consider and discuss the questions on the next page.

### **Facilitator Debriefing Questions**

#### **To assess group dynamics, consider asking:**

- What behaviour did we see that would support or negate the presence of member trust?
- Do we think that the group is cohesive? Why or why not?
- Are members displaying behaviours characteristic of the working stage of group development? If not, did we address any transition-type behaviours effectively?
- What could we do to move members toward the working stage of group development?

#### **To assess effectiveness of session delivery, consider asking:**

- How engaged were the group members during the collaging activity?
- Were their members who did not wish to collage? If so, what did we do to facilitate other activities? Were these activities helpful to the member(s) or not? How do we know?
- Did each group member contribute to the collaging-process discussion? If not, why not?
- Did the group members share their helpful and unhelpful grief-coping strategies? If not, why not?

### **References**

Liebmann, M. (2004). *Art therapy for groups: A handbook of themes and exercises* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Rogers, J. E. (Ed.). (2007). *The art of grief: The use of expressive arts in a grief support group*. New York: Routledge.

**Session #4 – Handout 1:**  
**Group Member Feedback Form**  
**Coping with Grief**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Name (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide your honest feedback about today's group session by numerically ranking your experience of this session. Please use the following ranking system.

1=Not at all    2=A little bit    3=Some of the time    4=Most of the time    5=All of the time

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I felt comfortable talking about my feelings and thoughts.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I felt like I could trust the other group members.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I felt supported by the group facilitators.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I learned helpful information in this session.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I participated in the activities that we did in this session.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I shared my feelings and my thoughts with the other group members.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

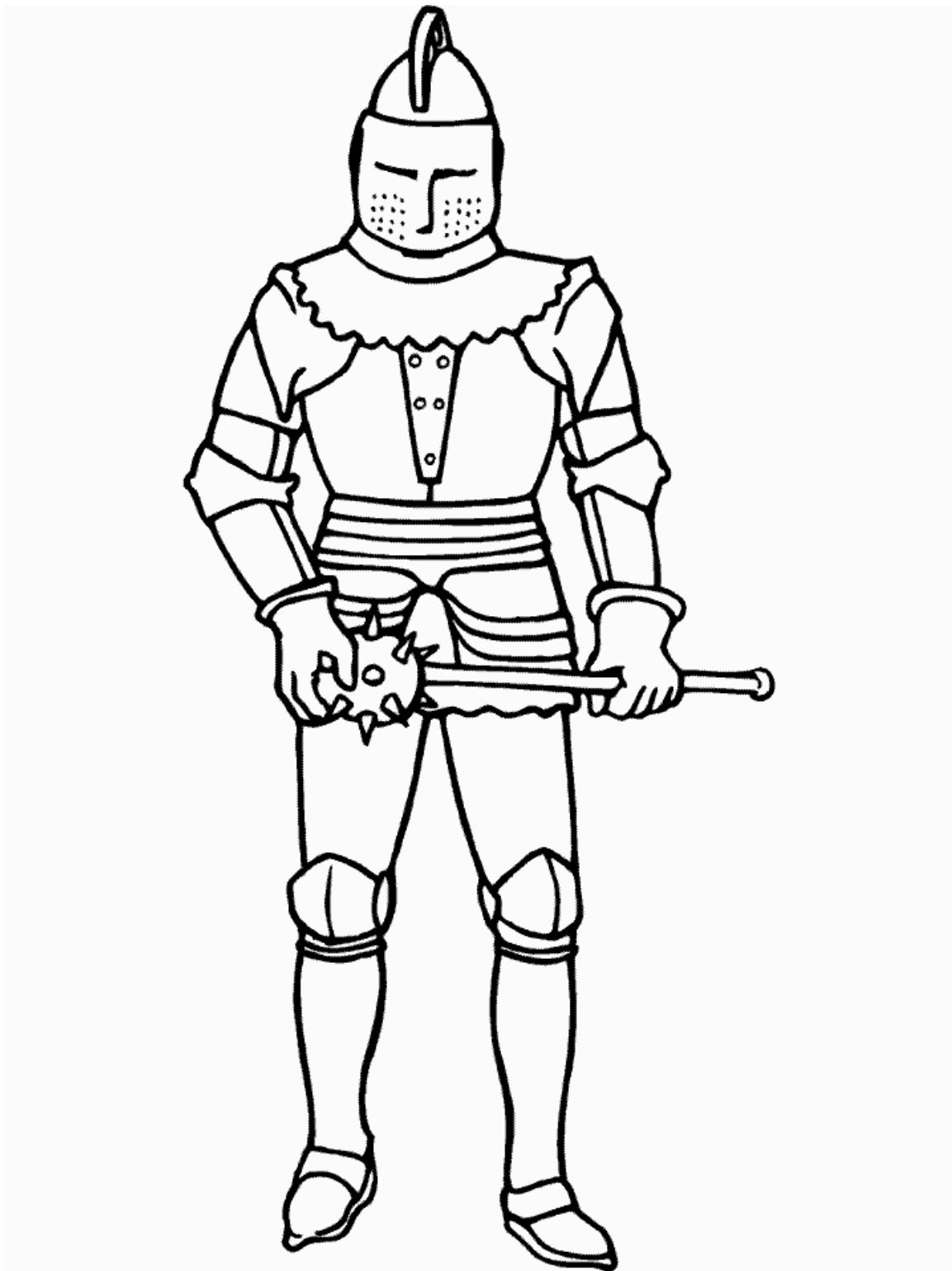
**I feel like today's session will help me meet my personal goals.**

**One thing that worked well is:**

**One thing that could be different is:**

**One thing that I could do differently to improve my group experience is:**

**Session #4 – Handout 2:**  
**Body Armour Worksheet**



*Expressions of Grief: An Arts-Based Group Program for Teens*

## Group Program Manual



### Session #5: *The Story of My Loss*

## *Expressions of Grief: An Arts-Based Group Program for Teens*

### *Session #5: The Story of My Loss*

**Session Length: 2 hours**

#### **ADVANCE PREPARATION**

- ✓ Gather required supplies
- ✓ Purchase and prepare break refreshments
- ✓ Arrange chairs in a circle
- ✓ Hang "Our Safe Space" flipchart poster in the group room
- ✓ Write session agenda on flipchart paper and post on easel in the group room
- ✓ Photocopy sufficient copies of the Group Feedback Form (see Handout 1)
- ✓ Copy visualization script (see Handout 2) and practice reading it several times; if desired, you can pre-record it and play it in the group session
- ✓ Photocopy sufficient copies of the My Significant Songs worksheet (see Handout 3)

#### **Required Supplies:**

- Boxes of Kleenex
- Break refreshments
- Nametags for each member
- Two flipchart pads of paper and two easels
- Copies of Member Feedback Forms
- Copy of visualization script
- Copies of My Significant Songs worksheet
- *Expressions* journals
- Unscented candle and lighter
- Other ritual items as agreed by group in Session 1

#### **Session Objectives:**

1. To enhance feelings of trust and cohesion among group members.
2. To help members explore their feelings, thoughts, and behaviours related to their loss experiences.
3. To normalize members' loss experiences.
4. To facilitate member reflection about the meaning of their loss: How has their loss changed them?
5. To facilitate members' identification of what their relationships with the deceased meant to them.
6. To encourage members to reflect upon, and if desired, describe their continued relationship with their deceased loved ones.
7. To prepare group members for the next group session.

### Session Plans

<b>Time</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Supplies</b>	<b>Instructions</b>	<b>Facilitator Notes</b>
5 min	Check in	Mirror Image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candle and lighter</li> <li>• Other ritual items as agreed by group in Session 1</li> </ul>	<p>At the start of the group session light the candle.</p> <p>Ask group members to take a moment to bring their attention to the present, through focusing on the candle burning in the middle of the room. After one minute, ask: Name one way that you are most like the loved one that you lost.</p>	If members do not initially respond to this question, facilitators can model by providing their answers.
5 min	Introduce the session agenda	Agenda review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agenda flipchart</li> </ul>	<p>Review this session's agenda with the group members.</p>	<p>Answer any questions or concerns raised by the group members.</p> <p>Members will likely feel vulnerable while telling their loss stories. Thus, facilitators should reinforce the Group Program rules before the start of this activity, emphasizing the importance of members choosing the aspects of their stories that they feel safe enough to tell.</p> <p>Ensure that Kleenex boxes are easily accessible.</p> <p>Advise members of their time limits for their storytelling, allotting equal time based on the number of members and the amount of total time allotted for this activity.</p>

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
					<p>Before the activity begins, ask members how they would like you to let them know when their time limit has elapsed.</p> <p>Advise members that one half of the group members will tell their stories before the break and one half will tell their stories after the break.</p>
30 min	<p>Help members explore their feelings, thoughts, and behaviours related to their loss experiences</p> <p>Normalize members' loss experiences</p> <p>Facilitate member reflection about the meaning of their loss (How has their loss changed them?)</p>	Expressive Arts Activity: Oral Storytelling <sup>6</sup>	None	<p>Ask if there is a group member who would like to go first. Invite this member to tell the story of their loss, encouraging that member to start and stop his or her narrative at points of his or her choosing.</p> <p>As one member finishes his or her story, ask who would like to tell their story next. Allow the members to choose their order of presentation.</p>	<p>Facilitators need to take extra care to ensure that the environment stays safe for members who are telling their stories. Disruptions by other members need to be handled by the facilitators quickly.</p> <p>Normalize crying if it occurs.</p> <p>Ensure that all members have equal time to share their stories.</p>

<sup>6</sup> Some ideas for facilitating a loss storytelling activity can be found in Perschy's (2004) book.

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
10 min	Break		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Break refreshments</li> <li>• <i>Expressions</i> journals</li> <li>• Adhesives or sticky foam squares</li> </ul>	<p>Ask members to take a personal break to use washrooms and enjoy refreshments.</p> <p>Ask members to limit their break to 10 minutes.</p>	<p>Facilitators will place adhesives or sticky foam squares on the tables and will encourage members who composed written stories and poems to insert these into their journals.</p> <p>During the break, facilitators can check in with group members who have told their stories to ensure that they felt safe and heard.</p>
30 min	<p>Help members explore their feelings, thoughts, and behaviours related to their loss experiences</p> <p>Normalize members' loss experiences</p> <p>Facilitate member reflection about the meaning of their loss (How has their loss changed them?)</p>	Expressive Arts Activity: Oral Storytelling	None	<p>Continue storytelling process as started before the break.</p> <p>As one member finishes his or her story ask who would like to tell their story next.</p>	<p>Facilitators need to take extra care to ensure that the environment stays safe for members who are telling their stories. Disruptions by other members need to be handled by the facilitators quickly.</p> <p>Normalize crying and other strong affective reactions if they occur.</p> <p>Ensure that all members have equal opportunity to share their stories. Allow the members to choose the order of presentation.</p> <p>After all stories are told, thank members for sharing their loss stories.</p>

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
15 min	<p>Facilitate members' identification of what their relationship with the deceased meant and/or represented to them.</p> <p>Encourage members to reflect upon, and if desired, describe their continued relationship with their deceased loved ones.</p>	Group Activity: Visualization exercise <sup>7</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visualization script (see Handout 1) or if desired, tape with previously recorded visualization</li> </ul>	<p>Dim the lights and ask members to relax into a comfortable position. Close your eyes and begin to breathe deeply, slowing down your breath. Do not talk or disrupt others during this activity. I am going to read you a story. Try to imagine yourself in the story. If you feel unsafe at any time, please open your eyes and one of the facilitators will check in with you to ensure that you are okay.</p>	<p>Facilitators may choose to pre-record the visualization script so that they are both available to assist any group members who struggle with the visualization activity.</p>
10 min	<p>Engage in a group process discussion.</p> <p>Facilitate members' identification of what their relationship with the deceased meant to them.</p>	Group Discussion: Debriefing the visualization	None	<p>Ask group members to share one thought about how they felt during the visualization activity.</p> <p>Invite group members to reflect on these two questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What did your relationship with your deceased loved one mean to you?</li> </ul>	<p>Given time constraints, there will likely be insufficient time to discuss members' answers to the two reflective questions.</p> <p>Encourage members to reflect and journal, do some creative writing or create an art piece about their visualization experience and their answers to the two reflective questions.</p>

<sup>7</sup> If desired, facilitators could use this activity as the basis for an entire group session. Ideas on how to facilitate an art activity after engaging group members in a visualization activity can be found in Liebmann's (2004) book.

164	Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
		Encourage members to reflect upon, and if desired, describe their continued relationship with their deceased loved ones.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What type of relationship would you like to have with your deceased loved one in the future?</li> </ul>	Members can also be encouraged to put their journaling or writing into their <i>Expressions</i> journals.
5 min	Prepare the group members for next group session	Information delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Copies of my Significant Songs worksheet</li> </ul>	<p>Remind members to bring their <i>Expressions</i> journals to the next session.</p> <p>Provide an overview of the agenda for next week's session entitled "Meaningful Music".</p> <p>Distribute Significant Songs worksheet and ask members to complete this worksheet for homework.</p> <p>Advise members that each group member will be invited to share one song from their significant song list at our next session.</p>	<p>Ask members about the format that they will use to bring music to share. Ensure that members have a choice of formats (digital MP3 or CD).</p> <p>If members have concerns about their ability to bring their song choice, encourage members to inform facilitators of their song choice in advance of the next session.</p> <p>Facilitators can then make arrangements to have those songs available for the session.</p>	
5 min	Check out	Go-round discussion-Sharing today's impressions	None		Ask members to reflect on today's session and share one thing that stands out for them as a result of participating in the group today.	Ensure that each member has opportunity to share one thing.

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
5 min	Obtain session feedback	Individual activity- Completing Member Feedback Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback forms</li> <li>• Pens and pencils</li> </ul>	Remind members of the purpose of the feedback form and that they do not need to put their names on their forms unless they chose to.	<p>Ask members to leave name tags and session feedback forms in the group room before they leave.</p> <p>Check in with any members and their parents if facilitators feel that member(s) may need additional support after leaving this group session.</p>

You have finished facilitating Session #5.

To debrief this session, facilitators are encouraged to consider and discuss the questions on the next page.

### **Facilitator Debriefing Questions**

#### **To assess group dynamics, consider asking:**

- What behaviour did we see that would support or negate the presence of higher levels of trust?
- Do we think that the group is cohesive? Why or why not?
- Are members displaying behaviours characteristic of the working stage of group development? If not, did we address any transition-type behaviours effectively?
- What could we do to move members toward the working stage of group development?
- How can we begin to prepare members for the ending of the group?

#### **To assess effectiveness of session delivery, consider asking:**

- How engaged were the group members during the oral storytelling activity?
- Were their members who did not wish to tell their stories? If so, what other activities were offered to the member that would satisfy the session objectives?
- How did members react during the visualization activity?

### **References**

Liebmann, M. (2004). *Art therapy for groups: A handbook of themes and exercises* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Perschy, M. K. (2004). *Helping teens work through grief*. New York: Routledge.

Rogers, J. E. (Ed.). (2007). *The art of grief: The use of expressive arts in a grief support group*. New York: Routledge.

**Session #5 – Handout 1:**  
**Group Member Feedback Form**  
***The Story of My Loss***

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Name (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide your honest feedback about today's group session by numerically ranking your experience of this session. Please use the following ranking system.

1=Not at all    2=A little bit    3=Some of the time    4=Most of the time    5=All of the time

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I felt comfortable talking about my feelings and thoughts.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I felt like I could trust the other group members.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I felt supported by the group facilitators.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I learned helpful information in this session.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I participated in the activities that we did in this session.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I shared my feelings and my thoughts with the other group members.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I feel like today's session will help me meet my personal goals.**

**One thing that worked well is:**

**One thing that could be different is:**

**One thing that I could do differently to improve my group experience is:**

## Session #5 – Handout 2:

### Visualization Script

You are lying on a sandy beach, dawn barely breaking on the horizon. You hear the sounds of gentle waves, waves sloshing into the sandy gullies and tidal pools. You are feeling rested, listening to the ocean sounds. Gulls begin their morning cry, swooping over the sea, swooping to catch their breakfast. The sun is past the horizon, a ball of fire. It warms the sand beneath you. Gentle breeze, rhythmic waves, warm sand. You are feeling relaxed and comfortable on the beach.

As you slowly open your eyes, you see a tiny red boat in the ocean, chugging along. Slowly the boat makes a half circle, and heads toward the shore, towards where you are sitting, relaxed and smiling.

As the boat draws onto the sand, you notice a person standing at its' helm. The person is familiar, comforting. The person removes a hat and you recognize them as your loved one who died.

You say, "Why are you here? Please come and sit with me on the beach."

Your loved one says, "I cannot leave this boat, but I will remain close to shore so we may speak. I have a message for you. This is what I want you to remember..."

You listen carefully, absorbing your loved one's words into your heart, committing them to memory. When your loved one stops speaking, you look up at them. There is a sparkle in their eyes, a kindness upon their face.

Your loved one says: "And is there something you want me to know? I am listening." You smile and you say, "Yes. Yes, there is something I would like to say. I want you to know..."

Your loved one listens carefully, nodding their head. Then your loved one turns to face the sea. "It is nearly time for me to return."

You look around, surprised at your surroundings. It is growing darker and the breezes off the water are cooling and fresh. You stand up and you and your loved one are within a foot of each other. Your loved one turns to you and the two of you look intently at each other. Your loved one speaks again.

"Do you know," your loved one says. "I have always wanted to tell you..."

"Yes, thank you," you reply. "And I want to tell you these words..."

With your words just a whisper now, your loved one takes the till of the little boat, waves farewell, eases into the darkening waves and disappears.

You return to lie down upon the soft sand, still warm from the heat of the sun. You feel rested, your eyes flicker in the light. You breathe easily. You smile.

### Session #5 – Handout 3: My Significant Songs

Many people have songs that they associate with meaningful times in their lives. Think about some music that represents important times and relationships in your life. These might include: music you loved as a child, music that you love now, music that your deceased loved one liked, music played at your loved one's funeral, music from memorable vacations, etc. Make a list of some of these important experiences, relationships, or both experiences and relationships, and list the songs that you help you connect to them.

<b>IMPORTANT EXPERIENCES/RELATIONSHIPS</b>	<b>SIGNIFICANT SONG(S)</b>

## *Expressions of Grief: An Arts-Based Group Program for Teens*

### **Group Program Manual**



#### **Session #6: Meaningful Music**

## *Expressions of Grief: An Arts-Based Group Program for Teens*

### Session #6: Meaningful Music

**Session Length: 2 hours**

#### **ADVANCE PREPARATION**

- ✓ Gather required supplies
- ✓ Purchase and prepare break refreshments
- ✓ Arrange chairs into a circle
- ✓ Hang “Our Safe Space” flipchart poster in the group room
- ✓ Download any music selections for members who requested facilitator assistance
- ✓ Set up MP3 and CD players in the group room
- ✓ Write session agenda on flipchart paper and post on easel in the group room
- ✓ Select and write icebreaker questions<sup>8</sup> on the beach ball with permanent markers
- ✓ Photocopy sufficient copies of the Member Feedback Form (see Handout 1)
- ✓ Photocopy 5 extra copies of the previously-distributed My Significant Songs worksheet (see Handout 2)
- ✓ Photocopy sufficient copies of the Sharing Memories Idea Sheet (see Handout 3)

#### **Required Supplies:**

- Boxes of Kleenex
- Break refreshments
- Nametags for each member
- Two flipchart pads of paper and two easels
- MP3 player and CD player
- Music for members who requested facilitators’ assistance
- Vinyl or plastic inflatable beach ball and coloured permanent markers
- Copies of Member Feedback Forms
- Copies of My Significant Songs worksheet
- Copies of the Sharing Memories Idea Sheet
- Adhesives or sticky foam squares
- *Expressions* journals
- Unscented candle and lighter
- Other ritual items as agreed by group in Session 1

#### **Session Objectives:**

1. To enhance feelings of trust and cohesion among group members.
2. To explore members’ past and current significant experiences and relationships.
3. To facilitate member reflection about the meaning of their loss: How has their loss changed them?
4. To facilitate members’ identification of what their relationship with the deceased meant to them.
5. To encourage members to reflect upon, and if desired, describe their continued relationship with their deceased loved ones.
6. To prepare group members for the next group session.

<sup>8</sup> Suggestions for questions can be found at <http://www.residentassistant.com/games/icebreakers/beachball.htm>

### Session Plans

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
15 min	Check in	Beach Ball Buzz	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beach ball, covered with icebreaker questions</li> <li>• Candle and lighter</li> <li>• Other ritual items as agreed by group in Session 1</li> </ul>	<p>Group members stand and form a circle. The facilitator<sup>9</sup> will begin the activity by tossing the ball to another member. The person who catches the ball will read out loud the question that is closest to their left thumb. The member will tell the others his or her answer to that question and then toss the ball to a new member who has not yet participated.</p> <p>Ask members to return to their seats. Light the candle. Ask the group to take a moment to bring their attention to the present, through focusing on the candle burning in the middle of the room. After one minute, ask: Share one sentence about the activity with the others in a “go around” format.</p>	<p>The beach ball buzz activity will continue for approximately 8 minutes until every member gets at least one opportunity to answer a question.</p> <p>If question under member’s left thumb has already been answered by that member or if the member chooses not to answer it, the facilitator will suggest that the member answer another question under his or her right thumb.</p> <p>The facilitator will suggest to the group that their sentence can be a comment about their opinion or feeling about the exercise, a surprising or funny thing that they learned about someone else, or any thought or feeling that the activity instigated.</p>

---

<sup>9</sup> Facilitator participation in the check-in activity is optional.

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
5 min	Introduce the session agenda	Agenda review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agenda flipchart</li> <li>• Extra copies of My Significant Songs worksheet</li> </ul>	<p>Review this session's agenda with the group members.</p> <p>Provide extra copies of the My Significant Songs worksheet to members who forgot to bring the one handed out at the previous session.</p>	<p>Answer any questions or concerns raised by the group members.</p> <p>Members may feel vulnerable about sharing their significant songs<sup>10</sup>. Giving members the choice of one song and its accompanying story allows members to choose one significant song that they feel comfortable sharing with the group.</p> <p>Advise members of their time limits for their song-sharing, allotting equal time based on the number of members and the amount of total time allotted for this activity.</p> <p>Before the activity begins, ask members how they would like you to let them know when their time limit has elapsed.</p> <p>Advise members that one half of the group members will share one of their significant experiences and song choices before the break and one half will share after the break.</p>

<sup>10</sup> Rogers (2007) noted that people often feel an intense connections with music and may find it difficult to share their song choices. Rogers recommended giving participants the option to share their music selections without playing the song or to share only one of the songs from their song biography. For this reason, and in the interests of allotted time, this session plan incorporates members' sharing of only one of their music choices. Facilitators could allow time for additional sharing if the entire group wants to do that.

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
40 min	<p>Explore members' past and current significant experiences and relationships</p> <p>Facilitate member reflection about the meaning of their loss (How has their loss changed them?)</p> <p>Facilitate members' identification of what their relationship with the deceased meant and/or represented to them</p> <p>Encourage members to reflect upon, and if desired, describe their continued relationship with their deceased loved ones</p>	Expressive Arts Activity: Life Review Through Song <sup>11</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MP3 and CD player</li> </ul>	<p>Ask if there is a group member who would like to go first. Invite this member to share the story behind their significant song choice before playing their song choice for the other members.</p> <p>As one member finishes his or her presentation, ask who would like to go next.</p>	<p>Facilitators need to take extra care to ensure that the environment stays safe for members who are sharing their story and song. Disruptions by other members need to be handled by the facilitators quickly.</p> <p>Ensure that all members have equal time to share their stories and songs.</p> <p>Allow the members to choose the order of presentation.</p>
10 min	Break		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Break refreshments</li> <li>• Adhesives or sticky foam squares</li> </ul>	<p>Ask members to take a personal break to use washrooms and enjoy refreshments.</p> <p>Ask members to limit their break to 10 minutes.</p>	<p>Facilitators will put out adhesives or sticky foam squares and encourage members to attach their My Significant Songs worksheets into their <i>Expressions</i> journals.</p>

<sup>11</sup> Rogers (2007) provided complete instructions for the Life Review through Song activity on page 102.

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
40 min	<p>Explore members' past and current significant experiences and relationships</p> <p>Facilitate member reflection about the meaning of their loss (How has their loss changed them?)</p> <p>Facilitate members' identification of what their relationship with the deceased meant to them</p> <p>Encourage members to reflect upon, and if desired, describe their continued relationship with their deceased loved ones</p>	Expressive Arts Activity: Life Review Through Song	None	<p>Continue music-sharing process as started before the break.</p> <p>As one member finishes his or her presentation, ask who would like to go next.</p>	<p>Facilitators need to take extra care to ensure that the environment stays safe for members who are telling their stories. Disruptions by other members need to be handled by the facilitators quickly.</p> <p>Ensure that all members have equal opportunity to share their stories.</p> <p>Allow the members to choose the order of presentation.</p>
10 min	Engage members in a group process discussion	Group Discussion: Debriefing Life Review through Song activity	None	Ask members to share their reactions to the Life Review Through Song activity.	Thank all group members for sharing their stories and songs.

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
5 min	Prepare the group members for next group session	Information delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copies of the Sharing Memories Idea Sheet</li> </ul>	<p>Remind members to bring their <i>Expressions</i> journals to the next session.</p> <p>Advise members that the facilitators will prepare a Master play list of the music that was shared in this session. This list will be distributed to all members at next week's session.</p> <p>Introduce topic of next week's session: Sharing Memories. Ask members to bring items and pictures that represent memories of their loved ones. Distribute copies of the Sharing Memories Idea Sheet.</p>	<p>Ask members for their consent to include their music selection on the Master list. Check with each group member to ensure that the facilitators have an accurate record of the song title and artist for each member's selection.</p> <p>Remind members that pictures of memory items work well if they (or other family members) prefer that the memory item itself not be brought to the group (due to size, value, etc.).</p> <p>Remind members that there are two sessions left in the group program so that members can begin to prepare for this ending (Malekoff, 2004).</p>
5 min	Check out	Go-round discussion-Sharing today's impressions	None	Ask members to reflect on today's session and share one thing that stands out for them as a result of participating in the group today.	Ensure that each member has opportunity to share one thing.
5 min	Obtain session feedback	Individual activity- Completing Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback forms</li> <li>• Pens and</li> </ul>	Remind members of the purpose of the feedback form and that they do not need to put their names on	<p>Ask members to leave name tags and session feedback forms in the group room before they leave.</p> <p>Check in with any members and</p>

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
		Feedback Form	pencils	their forms unless they chose to.	their parents if facilitators feel that member(s) may need additional support after leaving this group session.

You have finished facilitating Session #6.

To debrief this session, facilitators are encouraged to consider and discuss the questions on the next page.

### **Facilitator Debriefing Questions**

#### **To assess group dynamics, consider asking:**

- What behaviour did we see that would support or negate the presence of higher levels of trust?
- Do we think that the group is cohesive? Why or why not?
- Are members displaying behaviours characteristic of the working stage of group development? If not, did we address any transition-type behaviours effectively?
- What could we do to move members toward the working stage of group development?
- Have we begun to prepare members for the ending of the group? Do we anticipate any members having difficulty with this ending? If so, how can we support those members?

#### **To assess effectiveness of session delivery, consider asking:**

- How engaged were the group members during the Life Review through Song activity?
- Were their members who did not wish to share their stories or songs? If so, what other activities were offered to the member that would satisfy the session objectives?

### **References**

Malekoff, A. (2004). *Group work with adolescents: Principles and Practice* (2nd ed.). New York: Guilford Press.

Rogers, J. E. (Ed.). (2007). *The art of grief: The use of expressive arts in a grief support group*. New York: Routledge.

**Session #6 – Handout 1:**  
**Group Member Feedback**  
***Meaningful Music***

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Name (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide your honest feedback about today's group session by numerically ranking your experience of this session. Please use the following ranking system.

1=Not at all    2=A little bit    3=Some of the time    4=Most of the time    5=All of the time

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I felt comfortable talking about my feelings and thoughts.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I felt like I could trust the other group members.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I felt supported by the group facilitators.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I learned helpful information in this session.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I participated in the activities that we did in this session.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I shared my feelings and my thoughts with the other group members.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I feel like today's session will help me meet my personal goals.**

**One thing that worked well is:**

**One thing that could be different is:**

**One thing that I could do differently to improve my group experience is:**

### Session #6 – Handout 2: My Significant Songs

Many people have songs that they associate with meaningful times in their lives. Think about some music that represents important times and relationships in your life. These might include: music you loved as a child, music that you love now, music that your deceased loved one liked, music played at your loved one's funeral, music from memorable vacations, etc. Make a list of some of these important experiences, relationships, or both experiences and relationships, and list the songs that you help you connect to them.

<b>IMPORTANT EXPERIENCES/RELATIONSHIPS</b>	<b>SIGNIFICANT SONG(S)</b>

### Session #6 – Handout 3: Sharing Memories Idea Sheet

At our next session, we will share memories that connect us to our deceased loved ones. We will also create a memory box or scrapbook page that will feature one or more of these memories.

Please bring 1-6 photographs or other memory items to our next group session.

Some topic ideas for memory items could be:

- My favourite memories of my loved one
- Things I have in common with my loved one
- What I remember most about my loved one
- Things I do that help me with my grief
- What I liked (or miss) and/or did not like (or don't miss) about my loved one
- My loved one was special (or unique) because . . .

Depending on your topic, you may choose to bring different memory items including:

- Photographs of the person who died;
- Photographs of yourself or others that remind you of the person who died;
- Photographs of a memorable event or holiday;
- Photographs of special places like a cabin or park;
- Other memory items including ticket stubs, vacation brochures, ribbons and awards, menus from special events or favourite restaurants, CD jackets from favourite albums, or any other item that has meaning from your loved one's life

Paper, adhesives, memory boxes, and pens will be provided. If you would like to use any “special papers” or stickers, please bring them with you to our next session.

## *Expressions of Grief: An Arts-Based Group Program for Teens*

### **Group Program Manual**



#### **Session #7: *Sharing Memories***

***Expressions of Grief: An Arts-Based Group Program for Teens***  
***Session #7: Sharing Memories***

**Session Length: 2 hours**

**ADVANCE PREPARATION**

- ✓ Gather required supplies
- ✓ Purchase and prepare break refreshments
- ✓ Arrange chairs into a circle
- ✓ Hang “Our Safe Space” flipchart poster in the group room
- ✓ Place all art supplies on a table at the side of the group room; cover working tables with plastic tablecloths
- ✓ Put water in water containers (to be used by those who paint)
- ✓ Write session agenda on flipchart paper and post on easel in the group room
- ✓ Photocopy sufficient copies of the Member Feedback Form (see Handout 1)
- ✓ Photocopy sufficient copies of the Sharing My Wisdom worksheet (see Handout 2)

**Required Supplies:**

- Boxes of Kleenex
- Break refreshments
- Nametags for each member
- Two flipchart pads of paper and two easels
- Polaroid camera
- Adhesives or sticky foam squares
- Photographs and memory boxes
- Cardstock and decorative paper
- Coloured pens
- Acrylic paints, paint brushes, water containers
- Plastic tablecloths
- Paper towels
- Copies of Member Feedback Forms
- Copies of the Sharing My Wisdom worksheet
- Unscented candle and lighter
- Other ritual items as agreed by group in Session 1

**Session Objectives:**

1. To enhance feelings of trust and cohesion among group members.
2. To help members explore their feelings, thoughts, and behaviours related to their loss experiences.
3. To facilitate members’ identification of what their relationship with the deceased meant and/or represented to them.
4. To encourage members to reflect upon, and if desired, describe their continued relationship with their deceased loved ones.
5. To facilitate member reflection about the meaning of their loss: How has their loss changed them?
6. To prepare group members for the last group session.

### Session Plans

<b>Time</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Supplies</b>	<b>Instructions</b>	<b>Facilitator Notes</b>
10 min	Check in	Favourite childhood memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candle and lighter</li> <li>• Other ritual items as agreed by group in Session 1</li> </ul>	At the start of the group light the candle. Ask the group to take a moment to bring their attention to the present, through focusing on the candle burning in the middle of the room. After one minute, ask: Describe one of your favourite childhood memories.	If members do not initially respond to this question, facilitators can model by providing their answers.
5 min	Introduce the session agenda	Agenda review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agenda flipchart</li> </ul>	Review this session's agenda with the group members.	Answer any questions or concerns raised by the group members.
30 min	<p>Help members explore their feelings, thoughts, and behaviours related to their loss experiences</p> <p>Facilitate members' identification of what their relationship with the deceased meant and/or represented to them</p>	Sharing Memories <sup>12</sup>	None	Ask if there is a group member who would like to go first and share the memory items that he or she brought. Invite this member to share his or her memory items that he or she links to their deceased loved one, along with information about how these items represent important memories.	<p>Facilitators need to take extra care to ensure that the environment stays safe for members who are sharing their memory items.</p> <p>Disruptions by other members need to be handled by the facilitators quickly.</p> <p>Ensure that all members have equal time to share their memory items.</p>

<sup>12</sup> A similar activity, entitled “Treasures from the Past,” can be found on pages 139–140 in Murthy and Smith’s (2005) book.

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
	<p>Encourage members to reflect upon, and if desired, describe their continued relationship with their deceased loved ones</p> <p>Facilitate member reflection about the meaning of their loss (How has their loss changed them?)</p>			<p>As one member finishes his or her presentation, ask for additional volunteers.</p>	Allow the members to choose the order of presentation.
10 min	Break		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Break refreshments</li> <li>• Polaroid camera</li> <li>• Copies of the Master Play List of significant songs</li> <li>• Adhesives or sticky foam squares</li> </ul>	<p>Ask members to take a personal break to use washrooms and enjoy refreshments.</p> <p>Advise members that during the break, facilitators will take Polaroid pictures of any 3D memory items if group members want to use pictures of these items for their scrapbook pages or memory boxes.</p> <p>Distribute the Master Play List of music that was shared in the previous session.</p>	<p>Facilitators can encourage members to attach the Master Play List into their <i>Expressions</i> journal.</p> <p>Facilitators can assist members in photographing 3D memory items for use in the memory box/scrapbook activity.</p>

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
40 min	<p>Help members explore their feelings, thoughts, and behaviours related to their loss experiences</p> <p>Facilitate members' identification of what their relationship with the deceased meant to them</p> <p>Encourage members to reflect upon, and if desired, describe their continued relationship with their deceased loved ones</p> <p>Facilitate member reflection about the meaning of their loss (How has their loss changed them?)</p>	Expressive Arts Activity: Preserving Memories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Photographs</li> <li>• Cardstock paper</li> <li>• Decorative paper</li> <li>• Adhesives or sticky foam squares</li> <li>• Memory boxes</li> <li>• Coloured pens</li> <li>• Acrylic paints</li> <li>• Paint brushes</li> <li>• Water containers</li> <li>• Plastic tablecloths</li> <li>• Paper towels</li> </ul>	<p>Invite group members to create a scrapbook page or memory box that they can use to contain their memories of their deceased loved one.</p>	<p>Group members will likely require additional time to complete their memory items. Encourage members to continue activity on their personal time.</p> <p>If there is sufficient interest, and resources are available, offer to hold a special Memory Preservation workshop after the group program is finished.</p>

<b>Time</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Supplies</b>	<b>Instructions</b>	<b>Facilitator Notes</b>
10 min	Engage members in a group process discussion	Group Discussion: Debriefing the Preserving Memories activity	None	Ask members to share their experience of creating a Memory Preservation piece.	Members can show others what they created and/or share how they felt while doing the activity.
5 min	Prepare group members for last group session	Information delivery	• Copies of Sharing My Wisdom worksheet	Remind members to bring their <i>Expressions</i> journals to the next session.  Introduce next week's agenda and distribute Sharing My Wisdom worksheet. Ask members to reflect on the worksheet questions before our next session.  Canvas members' willingness to participate in a potluck snack break as part of our final session celebration. If there is interest, invite members to bring a small snack that was one of their deceased loved ones' favourite foods.	Remind members that the next session is our last group session (Malekoff, 2004).  Tell members that we will be creating an art piece that will be shared with future teen bereavement groups.

<b>Time</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Supplies</b>	<b>Instructions</b>	<b>Facilitator Notes</b>
5 min	Check out	Go-round discussion- Sharing today's impressions	None	Ask members to reflect on today's session and share one thing that stands out for them as a result of participating in the group today.	Ensure that each member has opportunity to share one thing.
5 min	Obtain session feedback	Individual activity- Completing Member Feedback Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback forms</li> <li>• Pens and pencils</li> </ul>	Remind members of the purpose of the feedback form and that they do not need to put their names on their forms unless they chose to.	<p>Ask members to leave name tags and session feedback forms in the group room before they leave.</p> <p>Check in with any members and their parents if facilitators feel that member(s) may need additional support after leaving this group session.</p>

**You have finished facilitating Session #7.**

To debrief this session, facilitators are encouraged to consider and discuss the questions on the next page.

### **Facilitator Debriefing Questions**

#### **To assess group dynamics, consider asking:**

- What behaviour did we see that would support or negate the presence of higher levels of trust?
- Do we think that the group is cohesive? Why or why not?
- Are members displaying behaviours characteristic of the working stage of group development? If not, did we address any transition-type behaviours effectively?
- Have you prepared members for the ending of the group? Do we anticipate any members having difficulty with this ending? If so, how can we support these members?

#### **To assess effectiveness of session delivery, consider asking:**

- How engaged were the group members during the Sharing and Preserving Memories activities?
- Were there members who did not wish to share their memory items or do a memory preservation activity? If so, what other activities were offered to the member that would satisfy the session objectives?

### **References**

Malekoff, A. (2004). *Group work with adolescents: Principles and Practice* (2nd ed.). New York: Guilford Press.

Murthy, R., & Smith, L. (2005). *Grieving, sharing, and healing: A guide for facilitating early adolescent bereavement groups*. Champaign, IL: Research Press.

**Session #7 – Handout 1:**  
**Group Member Feedback**  
***Sharing Memories***

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Name (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide your honest feedback about today's group session by numerically ranking your experience of this session. Please use the following ranking system.

1=Not at all    2=A little bit    3=Some of the time    4=Most of the time    5=All of the time

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I felt comfortable talking about my feelings and thoughts.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I felt like I could trust the other group members.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I felt supported by the group facilitators.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I learned helpful information in this session.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I participated in the activities that we did in this session.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I shared my feelings and my thoughts with the other group members.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I feel like today's session will help me meet my personal goals.**

**One thing that worked well is:**

**One thing that could be different is:**

**One thing that I could do differently to improve my group experience is:**

## Session #7 – Handout 2:

### Sharing My Wisdom

Think about the advice that you would like to pass along to other grieving teens in future bereavement support groups. Here are a few reflective questions that might give you some ideas.

**What did you do that helped you meet your goals in this group?**

**What is one of the most important things that you have learned about grief?**

**What activities have most helped you in coping with your grief?**

*Expressions of Grief: An Arts-Based Group Program for Teens*

## Group Program Manual



### Session #8: Collective Wisdom

***Expressions of Grief: An Arts-Based Group Program for Teens***  
***Session #8: Collective Wisdom***

**Session Length: 2 hours**

**ADVANCE PREPARATION**

- ✓ Gather required supplies
- ✓ Call members and remind them about the potluck snack; if some members can't bring food, purchase additional snacks and drinks.
- ✓ Arrange chairs in a circle
- ✓ Hang "Our Safe Space" flipchart poster in the group room
- ✓ Place all art supplies on a table at the side of the group room; cover working tables with plastic tablecloths
- ✓ Put water in water containers (to be used by those who paint)
- ✓ Write session agenda on flipchart paper and post on easel in the group room
- ✓ On a large floor space, spread plastic tablecloths and unroll a large banner of paper; place paints, brushes, water containers, and coloured pens in several different areas around the paper banner
- ✓ Attach ribbons to lengths of 8.5 x 11 cardstock (to be worn around members' necks)
- ✓ Photocopy Group Member Feedback Form (see Handout 1) for all group members
- ✓ Photocopy sufficient number of *Young Person's Grief Perspective Scale* (see Handout 2) for all group members

**Required Supplies:**

- Boxes of Kleenex
- Member nametags
- Two flipchart pads of paper and two easels
- Pencil crayons, coloured markers, pens, and pencils
- Polaroid camera and adhesives or sticky foam squares
- Roll of paper
- Acrylic paints, paint brushes, and water containers
- Plastic tablecloths and paper towels
- 8.5 x 11 cardstock and ribbon
- Copies of Member Feedback Forms
- Copies of *Young Person's Grief Perspective Scale*
- Unscented candle and lighter
- Other ritual items as agreed by group in Session 1

**Session Objectives:**

1. To consolidate group learning.
2. To facilitate members' closure of group experience.
3. To complete post-group assessment with the *Young Person's Grief Perspective Scale* (Machin, 2009) to assess members' current responses to their losses.
4. To assess the attainment of individual member goals.

### Session Plans

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
5 min	Check in	“Tuning In”	• Candle and lighter	At the start of the group session light the candle. Ask group members to take a moment to bring their attention to the present, through focusing on the candle burning in the middle of the room. After one minute, ask each member to share a thought or feeling about being in the group room for today’s session.	If members do not initially respond to this question, facilitators can model by providing their answers.
5 min	Introduce the session agenda	Agenda review	• Agenda flipchart	Review this session’s agenda with the group members.	Answer any questions or concerns raised by the group members.
30 min	Consolidate group learning  Assess the attainment of individual and group member goals	Expressive Arts Activity: Collective Wisdom—Creating a Graffiti Wall <sup>13</sup>	• Roll of paper • Coloured pens • Acrylic paints • Paint brushes • Water containers • Polaroid camera	Invite members to create a graffiti wall that will be used to provide their feedback and wisdom to grieving teens in a future bereavement group.	Facilitators can take Polaroid pictures of the graffiti wall for members’ <i>Expressions</i> journal.  Members may also want close-up pictures of their own contributions, pictures of the entire graffiti wall, or both.

<sup>13</sup> This activity is described in Liebmann’s (2004) book on page 267.

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plastic tablecloths</li> <li>• <i>Expressions</i> journals</li> <li>• Adhesives or sticky foam squares</li> </ul>	<p>They can write words, draw pictures, or do both.</p> <p>While members create their graffiti, invite members to share how they feel about their level of goal attainment for the group.</p>	
5 min	Complete the post-group assessment	Administration of <i>Young Person's Grief Perspective Scale</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pencils</li> <li>• Copies of the <i>Young Person's Grief Perspective Scale</i></li> </ul>	<p>Distribute pencils and ask members to complete the <i>Young Person's Grief Perspective Scale</i> before they take their refreshment break.</p> <p>Ask members to ensure their names are on the assessment and to fold the sheet in half and hand it to one of the facilitators prior to taking this break.</p>	<p>There are no quantitative scoring instructions for this assessment scale (Machin, 2009).</p> <p>Facilitators can review these assessment scales to increase their understandings of members' current grief experiences.</p> <p>This assessment scale is being readministered in this session so facilitators can note any changes in the members' grief as compared to the pre-session scales.</p>

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
20min	Break	Potluck <sup>14</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drinks</li> <li>• Potluck snacks contributed by members</li> </ul>	Invite members to share food that they brought with the other members.	Facilitators can circulate during the break and ask members why they chose to bring their food selections.
25 min	Facilitate members' closure of group experience	Group Activity: Gifts <sup>15</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8.5 x 11 cardstock with ribbon attached across the length</li> <li>• Pencils and pens for each member</li> </ul>	<p>Ask members to place 8.5 x 11 cardstock (with ribbon attached) on their backs.</p> <p>Ask members to circulate amongst each other, identifying something they have valued about each member and one hope that they have for that member.</p> <p>Members write these strengths and hopes on each other's cards without revealing to that member what they are writing.</p>	<p>Group members can identify themselves as the author of their comments or leave them as anonymous.</p> <p>Facilitators should circulate to ensure that all comments are positive and encouraging.</p>

<sup>14</sup> The potluck idea is discussed in Murthy and Smith's (2005) book on pages 167–169.

<sup>15</sup> A similar idea is discussed in Liebmann's (2004) book on page 282.

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
15 min	Engage members in a group process discussion	Group Discussion: Debriefing the Gifts activity	None	<p>Ask members to return to their seats and read their cards.</p> <p>Ask members to share one thought or feeling after reading the card.</p>	
5 min	Check out	Go-round discussion-Sharing today's impressions	None	Ask members to reflect on today's session and share one thing that stands out for them as a result of participating in the group today.	Ensure that each member has opportunity to share one thing.
5 min	Obtain session feedback	Individual activity- Completing Member Feedback Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copies of Member Feedback forms</li> <li>• Pens and pencils</li> <li>• Copies of Group Member Program Evaluation forms (if desired)</li> </ul>	<p>Remind members of the purpose of the feedback form and that they do not need to put their names on their forms unless they chose to.</p> <p>Thank group members for their hard work during this group program.</p> <p>Encourage members to celebrate their attainment of their goals.</p> <p>Tell group members about any planned follow-up sessions and</p>	<p>Ask members to leave name tags and session feedback forms in the group room before they leave.</p> <p>Check in with any members and their parents if facilitators feel that member(s) may need additional support after leaving this group session.</p> <p>A disadvantage of sending the Group Member Program Evaluation form to members after the program is over is that members may forget to send it back.</p>

Time	Objective	Activity	Supplies	Instructions	Facilitator Notes
				<p>how they can access additional support if they need it.</p> <p>If desired, distribute Group Member Program Evaluation form (see Additional Facilitator Resources, Form #1). An alternative is to mail or email this form to group members to allow them to complete it privately and at their leisure.</p>	

Congratulations! You have finished facilitating Session #8 and the *Expressions of Grief* group program. To debrief this session, facilitators are encouraged to consider and discuss the questions on the next page.

### **Facilitator Debriefing Questions**

#### **To assess group dynamics, consider asking:**

- Do we think that the group is cohesive? Why or why not?
- Did we adequately prepare members for the ending of the group?
- Do we believe that any members had difficulty with this ending? If so, how did we support these members? Do we need to do any follow-up support?

#### **To assess effectiveness of session delivery, consider asking:**

- How engaged were the group members during the Collective Wisdom and Gifts activities?
- Were there members who did not wish to participate in the Collective Wisdom or Gifts activities? If so, what other activities did we offer to these members that satisfied the session objectives?

### **References**

- Liebmann, M. (2004). *Art therapy for groups: A handbook of themes and exercises* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Murthy, R., & Smith, L. (2005). *Grieving, sharing, and healing: A guide for facilitating early adolescent bereavement groups*. Champaign, IL: Research Press.

**Session #8 – Handout 1:**  
**Group Member Feedback**  
***Collective Wisdom***

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Name (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide your honest feedback about today's group session by numerically ranking your experience of this session. Please use the following ranking system.

1=Not at all    2=A little bit    3=Some of the time    4=Most of the time    5=All of the time

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I felt comfortable talking about my feelings and thoughts.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I felt like I could trust the other group members.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I felt supported by the group facilitators.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I learned helpful information in this session.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I participated in the activities that we did in this session.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I shared my feelings and my thoughts with the other group members.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

**I feel like today's session will help me meet my personal goals.**

**One thing that worked well is:**

**One thing that could be different is:**

**One thing that I could do differently to improve my group experience is:**

**Session #8 – Handout 2:**  
***Young Person's Grief Perspective Scale***

Indicate (circle) your agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

1. **I feel OK about being sad.**

*Strongly agree/agree/neither agree or disagree/disagree/strongly disagree*

2. **I can't stop thinking about [\_\_\_\_\_].**

*Strongly agree/agree/neither agree or disagree/disagree/strongly disagree*

3. **Although I am sad, I also feel able to cope with life since [\_\_\_\_\_] died.**

*Strongly agree/agree/neither agree or disagree/disagree/strongly disagree*

4. **I think I should be brave.**

*Strongly agree/agree/neither agree or disagree/disagree/strongly disagree*

5. **I feel as if this sadness will never get better.**

*Strongly agree/agree/neither agree or disagree/disagree/strongly disagree*

6. **I can't let other people see how sad I am.**

*Strongly agree/agree/neither agree or disagree/disagree/strongly disagree*

7. **I don't think anything will ever be the same since [\_\_\_\_\_] died.**

*Strongly agree/agree/neither agree or disagree/disagree/strongly disagree*

8. **I think it's best to get on with life (school, friends, etc.) after someone has died.**

*Strongly agree/agree/neither agree or disagree/disagree/strongly disagree*

9. **I know it's bad at the moment but I think things will get better.**

*Strongly agree/agree/neither agree or disagree/disagree/strongly disagree*

## *Expressions of Grief: An Arts-Based Group Program for Teens*

### Group Program Manual



Additional Facilitator Resources

**Form #1:**  
**Group Program Evaluation Form**  
***Expressions of Grief: An Arts-Based Group Program for Teens***

This feedback will be used to improve future *Expressions of Grief* group programs. We appreciate receiving your feedback!

Please provide your honest feedback about the *Expressions of Grief* group experience by numerically ranking your feelings. Please use the following ranking system.

1=Strongly Disagree   2=Disagree   3=Not sure   4=Agree   5=Strongly Agree

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

***This program has made an important difference in my life.***

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

***I felt comfortable when I attended the group meetings.***

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

***I felt supported by the group facilitators.***

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

***I learned helpful information that I will use in my life.***

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

***The group activities helped me cope with my grief.***

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

***I felt safe to share my grief experiences with the group.***

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

***I know what I can do to continue my grief work.***

Please answer the following questions with as much detail as you would like to share.

**My favourite parts of the program were:**

**My least favourite parts of the program were:**

**Since I participated in this program, my feelings and thoughts about grief are:**

**I have used what I've learned in this program to make these changes:**

**An idea I have for improving this program is:**

Thanks for taking the time to provide us with your valuable opinions about *Expressions of Grief*. We appreciated your hard work and involvement with this group!

Sincerely,  
Your group facilitators

**Form #2:**  
**Sample Informed Consent Form**  
***Expressions of Grief: An Arts-Based Group Program for Teens***

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Group facilitators: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Group session: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_

We are meeting to discuss your potential inclusion in a bereavement group program for teenagers. Before you decide whether you wish to join the group, the group facilitators will explain several important ideas to you that are also reviewed in writing below. You can read these ideas and talk about each of them with the group facilitators before you decide whether you want to participate in this group. You can decide not to be involved in this group without any negative consequences. If you agree to be in the group, you can also decide that you no longer want to be in the group at any time after you agree to participate.

**What is a support group?**

A support group is designed to help a group of people cope with stressful problems. The group members usually have a common problem and join a support group so that they can talk about this problem with other people who understand it. The leaders of the support group provide support group members with helpful information relevant to their common problem. The leaders also help support group members identify their strengths that might help them solve this problem. In a support group, the leaders work with all the group members to ensure that everyone is feeling supported and respected.

**What are the goals for the *Expressions of Grief* group program?**

This support group is for teenagers, aged 15 to 18 years who have recently experienced the death of someone they loved. The goals for this group program include:

- ✓ To create a supportive community of teenagers who have experienced the recent death of a loved one
- ✓ To learn accurate information about death and grief
- ✓ To learn about, and to share with others, helpful ways to cope with your grief
- ✓ To explore your grief-related thoughts, feelings, and behaviours
- ✓ To explore your past and present relationship with your deceased loved one
- ✓ To make sense of your loss and explore how your loss has changed who you are as a person

**When does the group meet?**

The group meets once a week for 8 sessions, from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_, 201\_. Member attendance at every session is expected. These sessions will occur on \_\_\_\_\_ evenings, from \_\_\_\_\_ p.m. until \_\_\_\_\_ p.m. The members are also required to attend a 2-hour pre-group session on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ p.m.

**What happens at the group sessions?**

During our group sessions, members will be invited to share their thoughts and feelings about a variety of topics related to death, dying, and grief. During many of our sessions, the group leaders will introduce expressive-arts activities, to help group members find different ways to express their thoughts and feelings. You will not be required to do any of the activities unless you want to participate. You do not need to be an artist to participate in this group. The activities we will be using are ones that everyone can do.

**What are the risks of becoming a member in this group?**

The group activities provide numerous opportunities to explore members' emotions and thoughts about death, dying, and grief. Sometimes members feel sadness and depression more frequently than they did before they joined the group. If this happens, group members will be encouraged to talk about this experience with the group.

Group members often change their behaviour as a result of information that they have learned while participating in the group. Sometimes, these behaviour changes have a disruptive impact on other people in the members' support networks. Group members will be encouraged to talk about any relationship conflicts they are experiencing as a result of participating in this group.

Group leaders will encourage respectful interaction between group members. Sometimes, group members treat other group members in unfair or disrespectful ways. If this happens, group members will be encouraged to tell the group how they are feeling about this treatment. In all cases, group members who continue to treat other members in disrespectful ways will be removed from the grief group.

**Will my personal information be kept private?**

All of the group members are told that they are responsible for keeping other members' information private. As a group member, you agree to treat the names of the other members of this group as confidential, along with any information that these members share during our group sessions.

In addition, you agree not to discuss specific group members with other members of the group unless the entire group is present. When you talk about this group experience to others, you agree that you will only talk about things that you said and did.

**IMPORTANT:** Although members are asked to keep others' information private, the group leaders cannot guarantee that other members will comply with this expectation. Please keep this in mind when deciding what information you wish to share with the other group members.

If you share others' private information, you will be removed from the group program immediately.

The group leaders will keep your information private as much as we legally can, unless you agree in writing that your private information can be disclosed to others.

**IMPORTANT:** Sometimes, the group leaders are legally required to disclose some private information about group members. Here are the situations where the leaders might have to share your private information.

- Your parents/guardians ask the group leaders to share this private information. In this case, if you are under 18, the group leaders may be required to share some of your private information with your parents. The group leaders will explain the importance of privacy to your parents or guardians before the group program begins. If the leaders decide to provide information to your parents or guardians, the leaders will tell you what information they will be disclosing to your parents and if possible, invite you to be there when this information is disclosed.
- If you tell the leaders or the group members that you intend to cause serious harm or death to yourself or to other people, this information will be provided to your parents/guardians and to the person you intend to harm.
- If you are doing activities that could cause you or others serious harm or death, this information will be provided to your parents.
- If the co-leaders have reason to believe that someone is abusing you, we are required to report this belief to your parents and to the Child Welfare office.
- If the group leaders receive subpoenas for court, we might be required to tell the court details about your private information. If we receive subpoenas that will affect you, the group leaders will inform you immediately.

#### **What are the expectations for group members?**

Each group member has rights and responsibilities. These rights and responsibilities are outlined in the attached document, *Expressions of Grief Group Rules*, which you have reviewed with the group facilitators prior to providing your consent to participate in the group.

#### **What are the expectations for the group facilitators?**

The group leaders also have specific responsibilities. These responsibilities are outlined in the attached document, *Expressions of Grief Group Rules*, which you have reviewed with the group facilitators prior to providing your consent to participate in the group.

#### **What are the qualifications of the group leaders?**

Both of the group leaders have received advanced-level training about how to facilitate therapeutic groups. In addition, both of the leaders have experience leading adolescent grief groups.

**What does it cost to join this group?**

The costs of this program are \_\_\_\_\_. If you are unable to pay these fees, please speak to the group facilitators about the possibility of joining the group at a reduced or waived fee.

**What other options are available to help me with my grief?**

Agency counsellors are also available to provide individual grief counselling. You can access individual counselling at any time.

**I have discussed the contents of this form with the group facilitators. I would like to enroll as a group member in the *Expressions of Grief* group program.**

Adolescent's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date:

Co-leader's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date:

**I have discussed the contents of this form with the group facilitators and with my child. I give my consent for my child to enroll as a group member in the *Expressions of Grief* group program.**

Parent/guardian's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date:

Co-leader's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date:

**Form #3:**  
**Sample Promotional Poster**

***Expressions of Grief:  
An Arts-Based Group Program for Teens***

**Who?**

Youth, aged 15 to 18 years, who have recently experienced the death of a loved one.

**What for?**

- ✓ To create a supportive community of teenagers who have experienced the recent death of a loved one.
- ✓ To learn accurate information about death and grief and ways to cope with your grief.
- ✓ To explore your grief-related thoughts, feelings, and behaviours.
- ✓ To explore your past and present relationship with your deceased loved one.
- ✓ To make sense of your loss and explore how your loss has changed who you are as a person.



**When?**

January \_\_\_\_ , 201\_ to April \_\_\_\_ , 201\_ from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Facility name and address, City, Province

**How?**

Contact \_\_\_\_\_ at (        ) \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ @ \_\_\_\_\_

Please note: Group membership is voluntary and parental consent is required.

**Form #4:**  
**Client File Note Template**  
***Expressions of Grief: An Arts-Based Group Program for Teens***

Client's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Group: \_\_\_\_\_

Date and Time of Session: \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) of Facilitator(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Individual treatment goals:

Significant work:

Client homework:

Issues for counsellor follow-up:

**Form #5:**  
**Increasing Counsellor Cultural Awareness**  
***Expressions of Grief: An Arts-Based Group Program for Teens***

These questions are designed to promote reflection and discussion about the facilitators' beliefs and cultural traditions surrounding issues of death, dying, and grieving. Please give careful thought to these questions and be prepared to debrief them with your co-facilitator and your supervisor, particularly if you find certain questions more difficult to answer.

- Has a significant member of your social network died? If so, what was that loss experience like for you?
- What does dying look like to you? Do you believe some people have “easier” deaths than others? If so, what does an easier death look like?
- In your culture, what do individuals do after someone dies?
- In your culture, how do people grieve? What does “healthy” grieving look like? What does “unhealthy” grieving look like?
- In your culture, is there an acceptable time period to grieve before you should be “over” your loss?
- In your culture, what emotions and thoughts are considered “normal” right after someone dies? One month later? One year later?
- What activities can individuals do while they are in mourning?
- In your culture, do you have specific beliefs about what happens to people after they die? If so, what are they? What do you think happens to people who die without these beliefs?
- Do you think it is OK to maintain a relationship with the person who has died? If so, what type of relationship would this be? What would it look like?