



CREATING THROUGH GRIEF

11 creative activities
for helping your grieving
clients to explore and
transform grief

www.creativegriefstudio.com

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Welcome

We would like to thank our contributors who have offered wonderfully creative activities for you all to use in your work.

The activities offered in this book include information about the author who contributed to this collection. If you have questions or want to know more about their work, please get in touch with them. All contributors are alumni of the Creative Grief Studio Certification program, and they are continuing to share their creativity through their own heART-work. We're very excited to share their work with you here.

We want to remind you that these activities are not recipes or prescriptions. Every person interacting with these activities may have a different experience, so keep in mind that part of

using these activities with clients is keeping flexibility front and center and staying responsive to your client's needs. These activities are a starting point. Just as grief is different person to person, allow the expressions of these activities to be different from person to person, too. Also, remember that what is most important in all our heART-work is the relationships we are forming with each other, not tasks or to-do lists or even "creative activities." Let these activities be ways into sharing creative time together, having creative conversations, and exploring in new ways, as relationships between caregivers and clients grow.

Big Love,

Cath, Kara, and Tamara

The Creative Grief Studio

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Baby announcement

The purpose of this creative grief activity is to create a beautiful announcement to send out to friends and family, for them to acknowledge and remember the baby who died.



The activity has four parts to it:

1.) A card with the baby's name and picture or footprint;
2.) A poem; 3.) A stone with the baby's name on it and;
4.) A letter describing the needs and desires of the grieving person/people. This creative grief activity can be worked on over several sessions with a client.

Supplies

- ♥ Card stock, cut into postcard sizes and as many cards as you'd like to send.
- ♥ Plain paper to write the poem and letter, or write final draft on the computer.
- ♥ Decorative paper.
- ♥ Glue stick.
- ♥ Paint and brush.
- ♥ Envelopes.
- ♥ A picture or footprint of your baby, photocopied and cut out for as many cards as you'd like to make.
- ♥ Your baby's name and/or birth and death date written or typed on paper and photocopied and cut out.
- ♥ Permanent marker.
- ♥ A flat stone.

Instructions

There are 4 parts to this tool, and you can do all or some of the pieces with your client:

1. Creating a card

Show your client how to glue decorative paper onto one side of the blank card. Your client can then decorate on top of this by gluing down the baby's name, birth and death date information, the footprint or the baby's photo on the same side.

2. Adding a poem

Help your client to write a short poem about their baby, or to find a poem they like. Ask them to type and print the poem out and glue it down on the other side of the card. Your client can then decorate the poem by adding painted flourishes.

3. Writing a letter

Help your client to reflect on what they need from their friends and family now, and how they would like to be supported in their grieving and re-membling. Help them to write a letter to their friends and family, sharing about their support wishes.

4. Decorating a stone

Give your client a flat stone that will fit into an envelope along with the card and letter. Ask your client to write their baby's name on the stone in permanent marker, and to add any other painted decorations they wish to the stone.



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Postcards from camp

Many grief support retreat participants report a bit of a “crash,” a feeling of not quite belonging as they return to their day-to-day life.



They may struggle to keep the positive messages and learnings in the front of their minds. This session is designed to be offered at the end of a retreat or workshop to help participants hold onto the confidence and understanding they gained while there.

It acknowledges the internal chatter of fear and frustration that can emerge when they return to their new normal back home and seeks to transform it into a powerful, lasting, and hopeful message.

Supplies

- ♥ Tombow or other watercolor pens.
- ♥ Fine point Sharpies.
- ♥ Watercolor paint (pans).
- ♥ Strathmore Blank Watercolor Postcards, 4x6, 15 card pad.
- ♥ White glue.
- ♥ Cups for water and glue.
- ♥ Firm bristle paint brushes for pouncing.
- ♥ Fine bristle paint brushes for watercolor and glue.
- ♥ Punched paper or pre-cut collage materials.
- ♥ Postcard stamps.
- ♥ A hair dryer is handy if you have access to one.
- ♥ Scrap paper.

Instructions

Using vivid watercolors and collage materials participants create at least one postcard which will be mailed to them at home after camp. No artistic experience is necessary.

You will need 1.5 to 2 hours to complete this activity. Having a few sample postcards that you have created yourself is helpful when giving instructions.

This activity was inspired by Quinn McDonald's, Raw Art Journaling, <http://www.quinncreative.com/books/>. The meditation was adapted from The Creative Grief Studio LLC. (Copyright, The Creative Grief Studio LLC. www.griefcoachingcertification.com.)

Postcard process

- 1.) Ask your group participants, "What is one critical self-talk voice that you hear in your head about your loss? Write that on the front of the postcard with the Tombow watercolor pen."
- 2.) Shortly after, so the color doesn't have much time to set, have them use pouncing brush with water to "erase" the message blending the color to form the background.
- 3.) Set the postcard to the side to dry while you do the guided visualization with them. (Note: this script was written for an audience of widowed people but can be easily tailored to your audience.)



Do not collage or paint in the areas marked in red that are used by the post office.

Visualization script

Sit comfortably and just relax. Let your eyes rest gently closed. Take a deep breath that goes all the way down to your toes, hold it a second, and then release. Just let any tension or tightness fall away.

Take another deep breath all the way down to your toes, hold it a second, and release letting all the muscles in your face just drop and relax. Breathe normally and just let the chair, the very Earth under you, hold you.

Take a moment to think about that quality that your partner admired most in you. It was one of the many reasons he/she loved you. What did he/she find so endearing? For a moment just imagine that you become your partner, seeing you through their eyes.

Look out from behind his/her eyes. Watch yourself with those eyes of love. What is that unique gift he/she saw in you? How did he/she see you move in the world? Hold onto that quality for a moment. Feel it rise in you. It's always been there. Really embody it here today.

Take another deep breath all the way down to your toes, hold it a second, and release. Relax deeper into the chair.

Stay in the persona of your partner. Look out from behind his/her eyes. Consider that quality that you admired about

him/her. What was it? Feel what it feels like to sit like they sat. Speak like they did. How did he/she move in the world? Really feel what it feels like to be that thing you admired about your significant other. Possess that trait you admired. Feel it rise in you. Take note of how it feels in your body.

Take another deep breath all the way down to your toes, hold it and release. Feel yourself supported. Now take a moment to think about someone you have admired here at Camp. Maybe there is another widow here on the path ahead of you that you appreciate...someone you just met... someone you've met before...maybe one of the bloggers.

Maybe there is a fellow widow who has inspired you possibly without even knowing it, someone who you know would understand when you laugh and when you cry, someone whose perseverance you admired. Just think about how they speak. What do they sound like? What do they say? How do they move in the world? What do you find so inspiring about them?

For a moment just imagine that you become that person yourself. Feel what it feels like to sit where they sit...in that space that you admire.

Take another deep breath all the way down to your toes, hold it a second, and release. Relax. Be here now.

Consider for a moment the workshops you've attended at this retreat. What piece of the message really resonated with you? What will you take home with you? When you return to the real world of your hometown, what piece of the message will echo in your head...in your heart? Take a moment to feel that.

Breathe in that feeling, that deeper understanding of love... loss... grief... and growth. Take one more deep, relaxing breath and now just let that go and come back to being here in this room. Wiggle your toes a little. Wiggle your fingers. Bring your awareness back to the present moment. Come back fully now with full awareness of all that you felt and saw and heard as you moved through this meditation.

Reflection & discussion

Give the participants a couple of minutes of silent reflection before you move on. Tell them to use their scrap paper to write words or draw doodles that describe what they just experienced doing the exercise. Describe the person they saw through their partner's eyes. Describe the admired traits that they felt. Have them write down any key phrases they want to remember.

1.) Have them paint/collage on the front of the postcard to cover the message the self-critical voice says to them. Cover it thoroughly. (Note: They may have to use the hair dryer to speed the drying process if the cards are still wet.)

- 2.) On the back of the postcard, have them write a message to themselves on the left using positive affirmations, something they have learned during the retreat, something that inspired them, etc.
- 3.) Have them self-address the postcard. Collect them from the participants and mail the cards a couple of weeks after the retreat so they receive them when they aren't expected.



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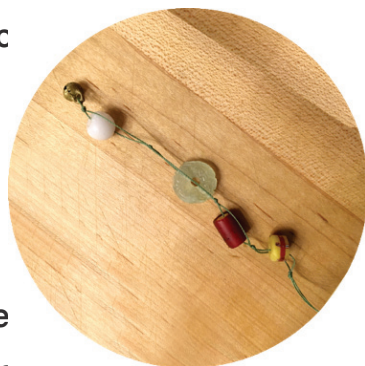
Meditation strand

The individual creation of a meditation strand is rooted in many ancient traditions.

The Greeks have worry beads; the Catholics use rosary beads and the Buddhists have malas, to name a few.

The repetitive action of stroking beads and feeling the kinesthetic quality of them has long offered practitioners comfort, and in some instances has been shown to activate the parasympathetic nervous system, creating a sense of relaxation.

There is a soothing quality to handling meditation beads. In the context of grief, I have often asked clients and group members to consider what qualities they need to



cultivate or strengthen in order to navigate their particular grief journey. Each individual then chooses beads that represent those qualities. Using the beads, they each create a meditation strand that might fit in their pocket for moments when they need to find a tangible source of comfort. For reasons I will explain below, this creative activity seems to work most successfully in a group setting

Supplies

- ♡ String: make sure that the string fits through holes in the beads you use.
- ♡ Scissors.
- ♡ Clear nail polish.
- ♡ A selection of beads.

Instructions

- 1.) Ask your group members to brainstorm on a piece of paper a list of qualities that they feel they need in order to navigate their grief journey.
- 2.) In antiphonal form, ask each member to read one quality to the group. Ask the members to read only the word, without explaining their reasons for choosing the word. The group sharing often reminds members of other qualities they might not have thought of.
- 3.) Pour out the beads in the center of the circle. You can use a folded sheet to contain the beads. Ask your group members choose the beads and then assign those beads a quality from their list of qualities.
- 4.) Ask your group members to string their beads. This can be done in many ways. Tell your members that how they space them is an individual choice, being aware of whether they would like a longer strand with spaces between them or a shorter, tighter strand.
- 5.) At the end, if people have used satin thread, I put a brush of clear nail polish on the ends so that it won't fray. If you use nylon or silk thread this will not be necessary.
- 6.) When everyone is done, ask each group member to show the rest of the group their strand and share with the group the meanings of each bead that they selected.



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www.lastingwordsbook.com

www.grievingheart.com

Grief my way circular journal

Grief and creativity are both mysterious, non-linear processes.

When these two processes are married, an alchemy of possibilities can open up. The circular format of this journal is a metaphor and a container for the non-linearity of both grief and creativity. As the archetypal symbol of wholeness, the circle can hold the fragmented pieces of the self, as losses are integrated within the changed landscape of an individual's life.

The format of this journal invites a gentle exploration of grief through numerous creative prompts that incorporate the circle as a space for experimenting. The shape-changing capability of the book further extends the metaphor, allowing for the expression of multiple perspectives on living with grief.



Supplies

- ♡ 10° (approximate) dinner plate for tracing.
- ♡ Drawing paper or scrapbook paper, enough to accomodate four 10° circles. If using scrapbook paper, background pages will have color/texture, but plain paper can be used.
- ♡ Piece of mat board, or cardstock approx. 8° X 10°, for cover.
- ♡ 2 ribbon pieces or other material for ties, each approx. 12° long.
- ♡ Glue stick.
- ♡ Heavy gel medium or extra thick tacky glue or E600. paper can be used.
- ♡ Images for collage/personal ephemera.
- ♡ Markers, pastels or other medium of choice.
- ♡ Scissors or Xacto knife.

Instructions for assembling the book

This activity was inspired by the Circlebook scrapbooking activity at www.making-miniscrapbooks.com/circlebook.html. Please follow their instructions for making your circle book.

Blank books can be made in advance and given to your client for journaling exercises, or your client can assemble book, depending on their ability to follow directions. Pages can be created before assembling their own book, or the book can be assembled first and the pages worked on subsequently. Because the book is flexible, it can be difficult to visualize how it will look when finished if the pages are completed before assembling the book. This could also be a metaphor for the un-knowability of navigating grief, but some clients might find this too frustrating.

The book has 4 circular pages to work on, plus a top circle and a bottom circle, which can be represented in different ways. When the book is opened with covers back-to-back, a center star is revealed. When opened with covers on the bottom, a semi-circle divides the book in half.



The book can be suspended from its ties, creating a spherical shape that can be looked at from many different angles. The book can be displayed opened, or kept closed.

Suggested reflections

- Do I choose to keep my book open or closed? Which parts of my grief do I choose to keep hidden? Which do I choose to reveal?
- What are the many sides of my grief? How does grief look from above? How does grief look from below? Do I feel suspended in mid-air in my grief?
- Do I feel whole and fragmented at the same time? How so?
- Do I feel confused in my grief, not knowing what shape it will take?

Journaling suggestions

Have your client choose from the suggestions below, or suggest creating the journal using only one prompt

category as the theme, and observe how this theme evolves over time.

Spectrum of grief

Ask your client to divide a circle into segments, and journal about the spectrum of their grief emotions by placing conflicting emotions directly across from one another. For example, I experience both sorrow at the death of my friend, and also relief that her suffering has ended. I may feel gratitude for our friendship, and angry that she is no longer present to me in her physical body, etc.

Wheel of loss

Ask your client to divide a circle into segments labeled with different areas of their life. e.g., Career, Family, Leisure, Spirituality, etc. Ask them to journal about how the different areas of their life have been affected by grief.

Ripples of loss

Ask your client to journal about how their particular loss has had a ripple effect on different aspects of their life, e.g., if their spouse who was the major breadwinner has died, they may be experiencing the loss of financial security.

Mandala of grief

Ask your client to create a mandala or series of mandalas expressing their relationship with grief. Encourage them to use their medium of choice, or create a mosaic using torn pieces of paper glued to the page.

Color wheel of grief

Ask your client to divide a circle into segments, and create a color wheel with colors that they associate with different emotions experienced with their grief.

Council of allies

Ask your client to create a Council of Allies by acknowledging the helpers/allies who sit at their round table. Ask them to name them, and also specify exactly what they do to help them in their grief, e.g., they may have someone who does physical chores for them around their home, or a friend who listens to them ad infinitum.



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Grief wall

When facing the whammy of grief, looking at “walling in” and/or “walling out” when your soul needs attention can be a healthy, refreshing look at the opportunity to “just be.”



Blocks offer an opportunity to build, tear down, restore, and create a place for an individual to invite in grief and become more comfortable companions with grief.

Instructions

Cover the milk cartons with the brick-printed contact paper. Explain to your client(s) that you're going to be playing with metaphors of grief and walls.

Supplies

- ♥ Empty cardboard milk cartons.
- ♥ Contact paper printed with images of bricks.
- ♥ Scissors.
- ♥ Post-it notes (two colors).
- ♥ Markers.

Build a wall

- 1.) Ask your client to build a wall and then reflect on the following:
 - What kind of wall have you constructed?
 - What is your wall made of? Are you satisfied with it?
 - What would be a name for your wall? How does it represent your grief world right now?

- Is the wall a hindrance or a source of help or protection during your grief?
- What kind of relationship could you have with this wall?

Post notes

2.) Ask your client to use post-it notes to write feelings that are coming to mind as they look at their wall. Ask them to put the notes on a portion of the wall, and reflect on the following:

- How can the wall contribute to your life?
- Do post-it notes need to come off or be added? Make any changes you wish.
- Looking at your post-it notes on your wall, when might you see a need to tear the wall down, rebuild it, or create a new wall?

Reflect

3.) Ask your client to take another color post-it note, and pair it with the feeling post-it note. Ask them to write on the second post-it note about something they do that

parallels with the feeling post-it note. For example, maybe they wrote sadness on the first post-it note, and then they could add cry on the second post-it note.

Offer the following kinds of questions to your client:

- Are there even more ways of expressing your feelings or responding to grief emotions that you could add to the wall?
- How might the ways of expressing feelings or responding to grief help you?
- How has this experience spoken to you about your grief today?
- Do you see your future walls having more windows, doors, built out of different material, higher, lower, or made of different material?



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www.facebook.com/everydaygrief

Carrying on!

This tool is designed to help look at the loss of a loved one and to bring a multi-sensory element to looking at the impact of the loss.



The use of the stones can be very soothing and gives clients an opportunity to look at grief in a multi-sensory way: holding the elements of grief, putting a name to the elements included in the story of grief/loss and giving important aspects physical properties and a use in life today. It can be used in lots of kinds of loss, but there may be different approaches if the loss is ambiguous or tricky.

This creative exercise is not meant to be used for trauma that is recent.

Supplies

- ♡ A shallow box bowl or container
- ♡ Rice, sand, barley or something to put in the box, bowl or container.
- ♡ Rocks.
- ♡ Sharpie pens that write on rocks.

Note: I bought the rocks and the pens all at the dollar store, but if you do not have rocks or that seems too much, you can do this exercise with pieces of 2X2 inch paper folded in half to make tents. You can also use water instead of sand if you prefer.

Instructions

- 1.) Introduce the materials of this exercise and talk about the purpose of the exercise.
- 2.) Ask your client to pick out a few rocks, to hold them, to look at them, to turn them over and to choose 6 to 12 rocks that they might want to use for this exercise.
- 3.) Have your client recall a story that they have previously told you about their loved one, but this time, to focus on the characteristics of the story that bring them strength or to which they feel particularly connected. Let them know that, as they describe a strength or characteristic, they can write that characteristic on a stone and put it aside as they continue to walk through the story.
- 4.) As your client describes emotions, characteristics, elements of what they want for their future based on their relationship with the person who is no longer physically with them, and these words are written on a stone, put each stone to the side. Do not place them until you have enough stones. I recommend 6 to 12 stones, but it will depend on the size of your container.
- 5.) When you have what you feel is enough stones, which you will know by a natural break or slowing down of naming characteristics, then ask the client to imagine that all of these elements of their loved one are here to help them and to give them strength. Ask them to imagine that the stones can be used as stepping-stones to assist them in getting from where they are to where they are going in the future. Be sure that the “future” is not some prescribed time frame. It can be later that day, tomorrow, a month, a year, or indefinite, but it should be the client’s definition of the future. It also can change as necessary. Be sure that your client knows that the stones can be moved around, set in an order, in no order, dropped randomly, etc.

Suggested reflections

- What are the first three words that you think of when you think of your loved one?
- Tell me a little something to help me to understand why you chose these three words.
- Have you incorporated these elements into your life? Can you describe how you have incorporated them or why you have not incorporated them into your life?
- If your loved one were here now, what do you think that person would have wanted you to take from them in terms of strengths to help you through your life?
- What future didn't get fulfilled now that the person is not here physically and how can the elements of that future help shape your life right now? Would they like to take a particular stone with them in their pocket as a keepsake?

- Would they like to keep the stones with you and take them out each week as you work together?
- Would they like to carry all the stones around with them as a physical reminder of the actual weight of their loss and as a way to have that loss be more concrete and real in their life?



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Ode to starlight dining

Maintaining ongoing relationships with our tribe - be it living or deceased - is now known to be enormously helpful in our grieving process.



In our everyday lives, we often gather with family and friends around a meal. It is a way of maintaining and nurturing connections with those we care about. Whether we get together to share good news or bad, to get advice or to give it, to resolve conflicts, or merely to just catch up with one another, gathering around a meal is a way of supporting each other and strengthening our relationships.

Why not envision such a gathering including those in our tribe who are no longer here? Help your client to choose and create the gathering they wish to experience, exactly how they wish it to be.

Supplies

- ♥ Find a quiet, comfortable space for you to read a guided visualization to your participant.
- ♥ Pen and paper or journal. Your participant can also bring any other art supplies.
- ♥ You may want to assist by taking notes when your participant describes his/her vision, so bring a pen and notepad.

Instructions

This exercise starts with a guided visualization, followed by some discussion and then, if desired, some journalling or art-making. While the idea of this tool stems from my conversation with my grandson, I credit some of the language and concepts to the work of Dr. Lorraine Hedtke of www.rememberingpractices.com.

Visualization script

Please get comfortable, shake out any tension, and just relax. Take in a deep breath, hold and breathe out. Again, a deep breath through your nostrils; and breathe out through your mouth.

Now, imagine a gathering of people and pets that you have lost, joining one another around a dining table to have a starlit dinner. You may want to make an invitation for those you wish to attend. You may want to develop a seating chart, or just have people come and sit wherever they like. Choose anyone you want to be at this table this evening. Decide who is dining. What is their connection with you

and with each other, if any? Will you be joining them at this dinner or observing from a distance? If you decide to join, is there anyone you would like to bring along and introduce to the others? If so, who would that be? (Signal me or nod when you are ready to move on).

Where do you imagine this dinner? On the beach? In a garden? Indoors? In the sky? How brightly lit do you imagine the scene? Notice what shape the table is. What is it made of? As you look around, what colors are present? What foods are your guests eating? Which pets, if any, are around or under the table? Notice where the pets are in proximity to the people. Do the pets have any particular toys with them or are they wearing any collars that you remember?

Take note about whether your guests have met before, and if not, how do you imagine their meeting will go? How does their meeting and /or conversing make you feel? What do you imagine they are talking about? Are you feeling surprised by any of the conversations and connections? Had you ever wondered what it would be like for certain people to one day meet each another? Listen to hear if you

are coming up in any of your guests' conversations? What do you imagine each might be saying about you? What concerns, if any, do your guests have for you?

If you could fill them in, what might you tell them about your recent life or your life since they have been gone? With whom would you wish to share? What do you want to share with your guests? Where would you sit if you could be with them? What would you like to hear about your guests who are there? What foods are being served or are on the table? What are they drinking? What is the tone, the mood of this dinner? Notice any facial expressions that stand out. Take note of what people are wearing. What memories of dinners or gatherings are evoked by this evening? What desserts are being served?

As the dinner is coming to a close, how are you feeling about this gathering? How has this imagery affected you? How are you feeling that the evening is coming to a close? Is there anyone that is not present that you would like to invite to a future gathering? Maybe you would like to follow up by sending a quick note or writing a letter to someone

who was there? Maybe you want to plan on doing this again with all or particular people that were present.

Now, when you are ready, do what you need to do to say "goodbye for now", then wiggle your toes and if your eyes are closed, gradually open them and slowly come back into the room.

Share and create

Invite your client(s) to journal about their imaginary gathering, or to create a drawing or painting about it, or to just share with each other verbally about the meaning that the experience had for them.



Gail Darlington (MA) has practiced as a psychotherapist for 30 years, and she is a Certified Creative Grief Support Practitioner. She works with individuals and families, and has focused on problems related to eating disorders. Gail combines art and grief into her practices at work and at home.

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Stretching out the good

Finding deeper meaning in song lyrics is a common technique in Music Therapy. With this exercise, I've chosen a song that can prompt clients to pay attention to or even manufacture lighter, easier moments that truly are possible, even amidst intense grief.



Once we can identify a moment in time that is healing or peaceful, we can then stretch out the positive feelings. That “stretch” allows clients to access and build up their innate resilience.

Naming the struggle and the relief, this song opens up good discussion of finding this balance. “Good to Be Alive” by Andy Grammer helps illustrate the work we do while grieving to find our sources of resilience...

Supplies

- ♥ Recording and printed lyrics for “Good to Be Alive” by Andy Grammer (be aware there is a clean version).
- ♥ Client's favorite art supplies: colored pencils, paper, markers, paint, magazines for collage, glue, scissors, etc..
- ♥ Printed copy of the creative prompts.

Instructions

- 1.) Access a recording of the song and print out the lyrics.
- 2.) Assemble art supplies that the client or group can choose from.
- 3.) Introduce the exercise, explaining that they will first listen and read through the lyrics.
- 4.) After listening, allow for any comments about the song. Guide them to the 4 lyrics on the creative prompts sheet and ask them to pick whichever one speaks to them the most. They can then take time to journal, create a collage, or draw or paint their thoughts and images that come to mind.

Creative prompts

“But I’ve been sending up prayers and something’s changed.”

What are your “prayers?” They might be your form of self care – yoga, exercise, time with friends, therapy sessions – anything that you are doing to help yourself. What is changing because of those actions? Has there been a shift anywhere? If not, do the lyrics offer any sense of hope that maybe, someday, things might be a bit easier?

“I think I’ve finally found my hallelujah, I’ve been waiting for this moment all my life.”

When was the last time it felt good to be alive? Who was there with you? What was happening? Is there a memento of that time? How does it feel to remember it?

“Hallelujah, let that bass line move ya.”

When was the last time you felt “moved?” Perhaps during time with a friend, being out in nature or listening to music? Part of the challenge of grief is that big feelings get stuck, so figuring out a way to get the emotion to move through you is key. Even just contemplating scenarios that inspire you may prompt some shifting of the grief.

“I’m feeling blessed with all this love.”

What are your current sources of love? Think about not just friends and family, but the sources of compassion and kindness deep inside of you. How are you growing that? What kindnesses are you giving yourself? What words or thoughts are you feeding yourself during this time of transition or crisis? Try creating a phrase that seems to nourish you, like “I am safe” or “I am enough.”



Lori-Marie Boyer is a Board Certified Music Therapist and Certified Creative Grief Support Practitioner with a specialty in helping people grieve the loss of something or someone treasured. She and her husband are co-creating “Ginny’s Circle,” a company that will provide in home support for those who are grieving. Lori is also part of the Creative Grief Studio teaching team.

www.ginnyscircle.org

Gathering the offerings

The purpose of this tool is to connect with the natural world around us and to remember the person who has died.



Through the process of gathering natural objects, clients have the opportunity to select things that would have been meaningful to their beloved and/or have meaning to them as individuals or are simply attractive to them.

While journaling, they reflect upon the values that infused their lives together. The writing and reflecting also allow them to seek the meaning in the objects, thereby connecting the physical, tangible, natural world with the memories of the deceased.

Supplies

- ♥ A bag or basket for collecting objects / offerings.
- ♥ Comfortable walking shoes and attire.
- ♥ An empty spice jar (optional).
- ♥ A camera (optional) for photos that could be printed and placed in the remembering space.
- ♥ A place to walk in nature.
- ♥ A table or shelf at home for creating the remembrance space.

Instructions

1. Guide your client to prepare their remembrance space, starting with selecting a table, shelf, or other surface that has a favourite photo of the person being remembered. Suggest that they remove any other objects from this area.

2. Ask your client to go for a walk in nature to gather offerings to place on their remembrance table/shelf at home.
3. Ask your client to gather 21 offerings. These may be leaves, flowers, acorns, rocks, pine cones, pieces of bark or sticks that have already fallen to the ground, etc. In the process of gathering, guide them to go slowly, breathe deeply, and notice each step. Encourage them to follow their intuition and gather objects that are attractive to them, without much thought or analysis. Suggest that they may even want to bring a small empty jar to gather sunlight and fresh air. Some people bring a camera and take a few photos that catch their eye as well.
4. Ask your client to bring the objects home and arrange them on their remembrance table/shelf.
5. Over the next 21 days, guide your client to journal once a day, reflecting on one of their collected objects each day.

Guide your client to consider how each object relates to their deceased loved one, and to write about how each object might represent ways to bring nature, love, and their beloved forward into their life.

6. After the 21 days, support your client to read over their journal entries and to interact with each object. Encourage them to note how the physical, tangible world is connected to their memories of their deceased loved one. Some clients choose one object to carry with them in their pocket as a remembrance object.



Janice Lodato (MA) holds a Master's Degree in Philosophy, and is a dedicated and caring Reiki Master, Certified Creative Grief Coach, and Meditation Instructor. She employs reiki, coaching tools, meditation, or a combination of all three to help her clients to reduce pain, accelerate healing, and better manage their mood. Janice also teaches meditation one-on-one and in group settings.

www.Reikihealingenergy.net

Working small with artist trading cards

When clients are grieving, or facing any kind of challenge really, it can be difficult to get creative. It is hard enough to breathe, to take one step after another.



Sometimes it is even hard to concentrate. So doing things like writing in a journal or doing a major creative project can seem like too much. At these moments, I often find that small is better for people.

The Artist Trading Card (ATC) community is very active, so working in ATC size can open up possibilities for people to do mail art trades or become part of online groups. This can lead to people finding new ways to re-connect to the world at large after grief has shrunk their social world down

Supplies

- ♥ ATCs 2.5x3.5 inches (you can buy pre-cut cards, or up-cycle standard size baseball or trading cards which are this same size).
- ♥ Glue stick.
- ♥ Tissue paper.
- ♥ Watercolor paints and/or stamper inks.
- ♥ Drawing pens.
- ♥ Small stamps.
- ♥ Gesso.
- ♥ Paint brush / foam brush.
- ♥ Collage materials (optional).

For those who have never heard of Artist Trade Cards (ATCs), it is very easy to convey how the process works. An ATC is the size of a standard baseball card, 2.5 x 3.5

inches. Within this small space, they create whatever they want. Draw, paint, collage, write, do photo transfer, anything goes. If they've never explored the possibilities for small projects like this, you can suggest they explore some of these resources:

- Galleries at the Original ATC site in Switzerland: <http://www.artist-trading-cards.ch/galleryJones.html>
- Galleries at ATCsforALL site: <http://www.atcsforall.com/forum/gallery/index.php?u=1435>
- Great How-To at WikiHow with photos and video: <http://www.wikihow.com/Make-Artist-Trading-Cards>

You can provide or ask clients to bring old baseball cards or trading cards or an old deck of playing cards. Or create a pre-made card as a template for your clients to cut out plain paper or cardboard in same size. To prepare the surface of the card and create a blank canvas, paint Gesso onto the face of the card.

Then encourage clients to work in their favorite way on that card or to try new mediums.

Often it can feel less risky to try new things since this format is small and inexpensive. There are many ways to work the cards. Encourage clients to take time to see what BIG feelings might get expressed in this Small space.

Encourage them to explore beyond the initial session, too. Remind them that the cards are so small, they can be slipped into a pocket or wallet. Wa-la! Creativity is portable! Waiting in a line? Take out a card and pen and create. Sitting in a cafe? Take out a card and a couple of crayons and create. Small goes anywhere! Encourage them to experiment and go gently with creating small.



Kara L.C. Jones is one of the co-founders of the Creative Grief Studio, and also founder of the grief & creativity practice at GriefAndCreativity.com and co-founder of KofaPress.com. She's a certified Appreciative Inquiry and Whole Systems Coach, Certified Reiki Master Teacher, and a graduate of Carnegie Mellon University, holding double degrees in Literary and Cultural Theory and Creative Writing.

www.GriefAndCreativity.com

Containers of chronic grief

Chronic illness brings with it layers of losses across different areas of life. Common losses include the loss of work, loss of income, and the loss of energy to socialise or do the things you used to love doing.



Loss of sexual vitality and losses of other important relationships are common too, as is the loss of one's freedom to live flexibly, because of the need for strict medical schedules, diets, and sleeping patterns. Many people living with chronic illnesses also grieve for the losses of aspects of one's identity, losses of hopes and dreams for the future, and much more.

The medical system also often feels scary, disempowering, confusing, or dehumanising, resulting in further ways in which people living with chronic illness may feel a loss of their preferred identities, values, and ways of living. This creative activity makes use of medical supply containers, that are often abundant artefacts in the lives of those living with chronic illness, to explore the loss, grief, and resilience contained within the experience of living with a chronic illness.

Supplies

- ♥ A large empty container, box or packet from your client's medical supplies or drugs.
- ♥ Glue.

- ♥ Scissors.
- ♥ Old magazines to cut out images and words, or access to a computer, internet connection, and printer to collect and cut out images and words.
- ♥ Decoupage glaze or acrylic matt medium.

Instructions

Ensure that the selected container is large enough to provide enough space for your client to be able to collage images and words on it.

Collaging the outside of the container

Ask your client the following kinds of questions:

- What physical, emotional, social, spiritual, practical, romantic, work, financial, family, identity, and other challenges has chronic illness brought into your life?
- What losses does chronic illness threaten your life with?
- What has chronic illness seemingly already taken from you? What losses are you most sad about?
- What do you find most difficult about the way that society

and/ or the medical system do (or don't) think and talk about, and respond to, chronic illness?

- What challenges do you find yourself facing with respect to the way that others view you and interact with you since chronic illness became a part of your life? (Others may be people in your family or friendship circles, acquaintances, strangers, and health/ medical professionals).

Provide your client with either magazines or access to a computer and printer, and ask them to select images and words that represent their answers to the above questions. Ask them to decorate the outside of their medical supplies container with their selected words and images, to represent the onslaught of challenges and losses they face since living with chronic illness.

Collaging the inside of the container

Then ask your client to look at their collaged container, and answer the following kinds of questions:

- Given these challenges and losses you've faced and continue to face, living with chronic illness, how is it that

you persevere? What personal qualities and skills, and relationships, and external resources do you draw on to do that?

- What sustains you in your daily relationships with the challenges and losses of chronic illness?
- How would you like to see yourself and be seen by others? And who in your life sees you that way?
- What else do you need in order to live with and/ or resist or overcome these challenges and losses of living with chronic illness?
- Who else can help you to gather what you need?

Ask your client to collect images and words that represent their answers to these questions, and to decorate the inside of their medical supplies container with these words and images.

To seal the collage, you can provide decoupage glaze or acrylic matt medium for your client/s to paint a layer or a few layers of sealant over the entire box, both inside and out.

Offer your client/s the opportunity to journal and/ or share with you or the rest of the group:

- About the meanings of the words and images they selected for their inside and outside collages.
- What it was like to articulate the challenges and losses that chronic illness has brought into their life.
- What it meant to them to transform one of their medical supply containers in this way.
- What it is like to hear of other people's losses and challenges as a result of living with chronic illness (for groups).
- What they realised about themselves by reflecting on the inside collage of words and images.



Cath Duncan (MSW) has a Masters in Clinical Social Work. She is co-founder with Kara Jones at The Creative Grief Studio, and founder at Remembering For Good. She is co-publisher with Dr. Joanne Cacciatore of, "A Systematic Review of Self-Blame, Guilt, and Shame in Bereaved Parents," published in Omega Journal of Death and Dying (2013).

www.RememberingForGood.com

Certification in Creative grief support

In this 4-month online Certification in Creative Grief Support, Cath Duncan (RememberingForGood.com), Kara LC Jones (GriefAndCreativity.com) and the rest of our teaching team will guide you through 16 modules of narrative-inspired approaches and creative and reflective exercises that you can use to support your clients to live wholeheartedly after loss..

Several guest faculty members who are leaders in the arena of grief psychology, including Dr Lorraine Hedtke, Dr Harriet Lerner and Dr Darcy Harris will teach their pioneering practice models.



Cath



Kara



Tamara



Yvonne



Gail



Lori

APPLY NOW

Want more creative prompt ideas?

Thank you for reading. We hope you and your clients find these creative explorations useful and interesting, and perhaps even delightful.

If you would like to receive more creative prompts then sign up below to join our email newsletter, and like us on our Facebook page.



<https://www.facebook.com/CreativeGriefStudio/>



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Testimonials



Cath and Kara have been very conscientious in offering a lot of relevant material that can work with the wide variety of backgrounds of the participants. There is experiential and theoretical learning. I really appreciated the thoroughness of the foundations of what is being taught. The manuals, readings, exercises and supplemental materials are extensive and support the teachings and my learning. I loved the safe space created and I felt supported in spite of the newness and strangeness of doing the class online.

Dale Lang - Expressive arts facilitator. Specializing in grief and bereavement, Toronto, Ontario, Canada



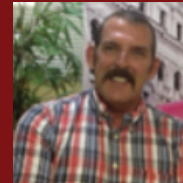
I really valued that there is space, flexibility, and people are seen as humans. Learning takes place at your pace, there's no rushing. I felt held and supported, and there was a gentleness that is so important to such work. Along with the support of Kara and Cath, the content is rich, deep, and thoughtful, and there's a wonderful bag of tools that you can use for personal growth as well as with clients in myriad ways. The way this course talks about grief and loss is how I want to see grief and loss in my life, and in my clients' lives.

Priyanka Bhatia - Creative grief coach in training, Life coach & counsellor, Dubai, United Arab Emirates



The materials are so meaty and filled with good information, tips, ideas. The module that covered transformational relationships has been very useful. Personally, I have grown through the readings and I have benefited greatly from the exercises, journaling, and class discussions. Specifically, I have begun to look at shame and its impact on grieving. Also, I've begun to examine my "Big Book of Grief Rules" and am seeing lots of connections about how my beliefs influence my behaviour and feelings. I am growing in my ability to use my intuition in sessions. I'm less intimidated about talking about grief with clients when it comes up.

Debra Hori - Creative grief coach in training (sept 2012 class), www.DebraHori.com



I have gone through a complete transformational change. I am not the same person before starting this program. I'm thinking I could have spent thousands of dollars with a professional therapist and still not achieve what I have personally and professionally gained from this course. It was well worth the money I paid. In fact, it is one of the best investments I have ever made. I have a much healthier outlook on how to live wholeheartedly while experiencing any form of loss or grief. I have never looked at myself as a creative art person, but now, my toolbox is loaded and continues to grow, with some amazing creative heART work tools which are a tremendous benefit to my professional practice

Rob Halfyard - Sept 2013 Certified creative grief coach www.resourcefulfutures.org



www.creativegriefstudio.com