

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
Small Group Ministry Program
Grief and Loss Milestones
Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene, OR

CHALICE OR CANDLE LIGHTING OR SOUND A CHIME (2 to 3 minutes for this and silence and opening words)

MOMENT OF SILENCE

OPENING WORDS

We need one another when we mourn and would be comforted. We need one another when we are in despair, in temptation, and need to be called back to our best selves again. We need one another when we come to die, and would have gentle hands prepare us for the journey. All our lives we are in need, and others are in need of us.

-George E. Odell

CHECK-IN (up to 20 to 30 minutes total with up to 2 to 3 minutes per person)

TOPIC AND SHARING (up to 70 minutes for readings, questions, a few minutes for reflection and making notes if desired, individual sharing, optional open discussion at the end if the group agrees, with an optional 5 minute break about midway in the session)

READINGS

There is a sacredness in tears. They are not the mark of weakness, but of power. They speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues. They are the messengers of overwhelming grief, of deep contrition, and of unspeakable love.

-Washington Irving

We all want to do something to mitigate the pain of loss or to turn grief into something positive, to find a silver lining in the clouds. But I believe there is real value in just standing there, being still, being sad.

-John Green

To spare oneself from grief at all cost can be achieved only at the price of total detachment, which excludes the ability to experience happiness.

-Erich Fromm

I have journeyed to a place of great sorrow and there did I cry from the very depths of my soul. For days you thought I might never return, but I have come back to you: stronger, richer, with greater knowledge of myself. The crack in my heart will remain forever—its purpose no longer to let grief out, but to let greater love in.

-Myrriah Osbourne

Grief can awaken us to new values and new and deeper appreciations. Grief can cause us to reprioritize things in our lives, to recognize what's really important and put it first. Grief can heighten our gratitude as we cease taking the gifts life bestows on us for granted. Grief can give us the wisdom of being with death. Grief can make death the companion on our left who guides us and gives us advice. None of this growth makes the loss good and worthwhile, but it is the good that comes out of the bad.

-Roger Bertschausen

DABDA. Acronym for the stages of grieving a loss described by Elizabeth Kübler-Ross: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance. These are some of the many emotions people may feel, and which may occur in any order and last any duration, and which may recur.

-Adapted from Wikipedia

A few statements of belief about grief selected from a longer list.

We never recover from a loss or “get over it”, but we reconcile to it. We are forever changed.

Grief is personal (style and gender differences).

Guilt and regrets are common, and seldom warranted.

Commemoration and ritual help with personal healing.

-Adapted from a handout from the Bereavement Support Group of Hospice of Sacred Heart

QUESTIONS (Please respond to whichever question or questions you feel moved to answer. It is not necessary to respond to all of the questions. You may also respond to any of the readings that you find to be particularly meaningful.)

1. Share about grief and loss milestones in your life.

2. What have you learned from those experiences?

3. Who or what was helpful to you at those times? Was there any influence by a religious or spiritual perspective or community?

4. Tell about a time you helped someone who was experiencing grief and loss.

SHARING (up to 6 to 8 minutes each without interruption, depending on the time available, with optional open discussion at the end after all have shared)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS (up to 5-10 minutes). Alternatively, this agenda item can be done after the check-in, if the group decides to do that.

-Confirm next meeting date, time, location, and topic.

-Consider discussing the service project.

-Other

LIKES (celebrations, gratitudes, appreciations for needs met) and WISHES (mournings, requests, acknowledgements of needs not met)/CHECK-OUT (a few words or phrases from each who wants to share, up to 5 minutes total)

CLOSING WORDS (2 minutes for words, and closing)

As we leave this gathering, may we carry one another in our hearts. May the fellowship we have shared expand our compassion, increase our understanding, and strengthen our resolve to face what life brings of joys and sorrows. May we be able to ask for help, accept help, and offer help when needed with grace.

EXTINGUISH THE CHALICE OR CANDLE OR SOUND A CHIME (and additional optional closing ritual if agreed to)

(Preparation for the facilitator. Please bring the SGM Facilitator Training Manual, paper and writing implements, the session plan, and your calendar/date book.)

Session plan prepared by the Small Group Ministry steering committee (Lyn Fischrup; Bonnie Koenig; Al Landy; Dick Loescher, chair) 2/8/14