GLOBAL GRIEF NETWORK | LEARNER TOOLS

Learner Tools

Journals, conversation guides, checklists, and worksheets for people who are grieving



These tools are for you, the person who is grieving. Use them on your own, with someone you trust, or alongside a GGN course. Pick one that fits what you are facing right now. You do not need to use them all, in order, or perfectly.

Print PDF

Print at actual size on US Letter paper and write by hand.

Fillable PDF

Type into the boxes with a free PDF reader, then save a copy for yourself.

DOCX

Open in Word or Google Docs to edit, add space, or translate.

Your privacy

What you write is yours. Keep completed pages somewhere private and share only if you choose.

The tools

Tool	Type	Length	Formats
01 Reflection Journal: Eight Weeks of Prompts	Journal	10 pages	PDF, Fillable PDF, DOCX
02 Conversation Guide: Talking With Family	Conversation guides	2 pages	PDF, Fillable PDF, DOCX

Tool	Type	Length	Formats
03 Conversation Guide: Talking With Your Employer	Conversation guides	2 pages	PDF, Fillable PDF, DOCX
04 Conversation Guide: Talking With Friends	Conversation guides	2 pages	PDF, Fillable PDF, DOCX
05 Conversation Guide: Talking With Children	Conversation guides	2 pages	PDF, Fillable PDF, DOCX
06 Checklist: The First Weeks After a Death	Checklists	2 pages	PDF, Fillable PDF, DOCX
07 Checklist: Preparing for Holidays and Anniversaries	Checklists	2 pages	PDF, Fillable PDF, DOCX
08 Checklist: Returning to Work	Checklists	2 pages	PDF, Fillable PDF, DOCX
09 My Support Plan	Support planning	2 pages	PDF, Fillable PDF, DOCX
10 Worksheet: Riding the Waves	Worksheets and exercises	2 pages	PDF, Fillable PDF, DOCX
11 Worksheet: Both Sides of My Week	Worksheets and exercises	2 pages	PDF, Fillable PDF, DOCX
12 Worksheet: Carrying Them With Me	Worksheets and exercises	2 pages	PDF, Fillable PDF, DOCX
13 Exercise: What I Want People to Know	Worksheets and exercises	2 pages	PDF, Fillable PDF, DOCX
14 Worksheet: Questions I Am Carrying	Worksheets and exercises	2 pages	PDF, Fillable PDF, DOCX

About these tools

GGN Learner Tools are education and self-reflection resources. They are not mental health treatment, counseling, or medical care, and they do not assess or diagnose. If grief feels unbearable, is not easing, or you are worried about your safety, please reach out to a licensed professional.

Help is available, any time

If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call 911 (or your local emergency number).

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: call or text **988**, or chat at 988lifeline.org (United States). Free, confidential, 24 hours a day.

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Reflection Journal: Eight Weeks of Prompts

Weekly prompts for noticing, remembering, and caring for yourself



About this page: Use it at your own pace, one week at a time. Start at Week 1 or anywhere that speaks to you.

Grief does not move in a straight line, and there is no right way to journal. There is one page for each of eight weeks, with three prompts each. Write as much or as little as you like, skip anything that does not fit, and come back to any week whenever you want. Some people write a little every day; others write once a week.

Go gently

If writing brings up more than you can hold, stop, take a break, and do something steadying. You can return later or not at all. This journal is for reflection and learning. It is not a substitute for licensed mental health care.

Before you begin

Date I am starting

Who or what I am grieving

Why I am keeping this journal, and what I hope it gives me

Where and when I will write (a time and place that feels comfortable)

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Week 1: Where I am today

Dates of this week

This week, my grief has felt (circle or click one)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

0 = very light 10 = very heavy

What has this week been like, in a few honest words?

What do I most want others to understand about my loss right now?

One thing that helped, even a little:

Week 2: The person or thing I lost

Dates of this week

This week, my grief has felt (circle or click one)

○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 ○ 6 ○ 7 ○ 8 ○ 9 ○ 10

0 = very light 10 = very heavy

What would I want a stranger to know about who or what I lost?

A small, ordinary memory I want to keep:

Something I miss that might surprise people:

Week 3: Grief in my body and days

Dates of this week

This week, my grief has felt (circle or click one)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

0 = very light 10 = very heavy

Where do I notice grief in my body (sleep, appetite, energy, tension)?

What time of day is hardest, and why might that be?

One gentle thing I could do for my body this week:

Week 4: The people around me

Dates of this week

This week, my grief has felt (circle or click one)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

0 = very light 10 = very heavy

Who has shown up for me, and how?

Where have I felt alone or misunderstood?

One person I could let a little closer, and what I might ask of them:

Week 5: What has changed

Dates of this week

This week, my grief has felt (circle or click one)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

0 = very light 10 = very heavy

Besides the loss itself, what else has changed in my life (roles, routines, plans)?

Which change feels heaviest right now?

Which change, if any, holds something I want to protect?

Week 6: Carrying them with me

Dates of this week

This week, my grief has felt (circle or click one)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

0 = very light 10 = very heavy

What values, sayings, or habits of theirs do I want to carry forward?

Where or when do I feel most connected to them?

A small ritual I might try this week:

Week 7: Hard feelings

Dates of this week

This week, my grief has felt (circle or click one)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

0 = very light 10 = very heavy

Are there feelings I have not said out loud, such as anger, guilt, relief, or regret?

If a friend felt this way, what would I say to them?

What would it be like to offer myself the same words?

Week 8: Looking back, looking ahead

Dates of this week

This week, my grief has felt (circle or click one)

○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 ○ 6 ○ 7 ○ 8 ○ 9 ○ 10

0 = very light 10 = very heavy

Reading back over these weeks, what do I notice?

What has helped most, and what do I want more of?

One hope, however small, for the coming month:

After eight weeks

Three things I have learned about my grief

What I want to keep doing

Help is available, any time

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Conversation Guide: Talking With Family

Conversation Guide | Sharing needs, differences, and decisions



About this page: Families often grieve the same loss in very different ways. This guide helps you plan a conversation about what you need, how you are doing, or a decision you face together.

Before the conversation

- Choose a time when no one is rushed, and a place where people can sit comfortably.
- Decide on one main thing you want to say or ask. One clear topic usually goes further than many.
- Expect differences. One person may want to talk; another may want to stay busy. Neither is grieving wrong.

Words you might use

"I have been missing Mom a lot this week. Could we talk for a few minutes about how we are all doing?"

"I notice we grieve differently. I am not asking you to grieve my way. I would like us to understand each other."

"Something that would help me right now is _____. Is that something you could do?"

"I am not ready to decide about the house yet. Can we set a time to talk about it next month?"

If it gets hard

- Take a pause: "I need a few minutes. Can we come back to this?"
- Speak for yourself using "I" statements rather than "you always" or "you never."
- It is okay to end a conversation and try again another day.

My plan

Who I want to talk with

When and where

The main thing I want to say or ask

What I am worried might happen, and how I could respond

After the conversation: what went well, and what I want to try next time

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Conversation Guide: Talking With Your Employer

Conversation Guide | Leave, flexibility, and returning to work



About this page: Telling a manager or human resources (HR) about a loss, and asking for what you need, can feel daunting. Preparing ahead can make it easier.

Find out first

- Check your employee handbook or intranet for bereavement leave, paid time off, and any employee assistance program (EAP).
- Bereavement leave rules differ by employer and by place. If you are unsure, ask HR what applies to you.
- Decide what you are comfortable sharing. You can keep details private and still ask for support.

Words you might use

"I wanted to let you know that my father died on Tuesday. I will need some time off, and I would like to understand my options."

"I would prefer to keep the details private. What I can tell you is that I am grieving and may need some flexibility for a while."

"When I come back, it would help to have _____ (for example, a lighter workload for two weeks, or flexibility for appointments)."

"Could you let the team know, so I do not have to explain to everyone? Please share only _____."

Things you might ask for

- ☐ Bereavement or other leave
- ☐ Flexible start or finish times
- ☐ A temporary change in duties
- ☐ Information about the EAP
- ☐ A phased return or reduced hours
- ☐ Working from home for a period
- ☐ A quiet space for breaks
- ☐ A regular check-in with my manager

My plan

Who I will speak with

Date and how (in person, call, email)

Leave or policy I want to ask about

What I am comfortable sharing

What I will ask for

Notes from the conversation and any agreed dates

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Conversation Guide: Talking With Friends

Conversation Guide | Letting people know what helps



About this page: Friends often want to help but do not know how. Telling them clearly what helps, and what does not, can make support easier for everyone.

Why this can be hard

Some friends say the wrong thing, some go quiet, and some disappear for a while. Often this comes from worry about getting it wrong. A simple, specific request gives them a way back in.

Words you might use

"You do not have to say anything perfect. It helps just to know you are thinking of me."

"Please say her name. It means a lot when people remember her out loud."

"Could you come with me to the grocery store on Saturday? Small errands feel big right now."

"I might cancel plans sometimes. Please keep inviting me anyway."

"I do not want advice right now. I just need someone to listen."

If someone says something hurtful

You can let it pass, or gently say: "I know you mean well. What helps me more is _____." You do not owe anyone an explanation of your grief.

My list

Things that help me

Things that do not help right now

Friend	Something specific I could ask them for

Friend	Something specific I could ask them for

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Conversation Guide: Talking With Children

Conversation Guide | Planning one conversation at a time



About this page: Use this to prepare for a specific conversation with a child, such as telling them about a death, answering a hard question, or checking in later. You do not need perfect words. Honest, simple, and kind is enough.

Three things to keep in mind

- **Use real words.** Say "died" rather than phrases that could confuse a child.
- **Keep it short.** Share a little, then pause and let their questions lead.
- **Come back to it.** Children often return to the same questions over days, months, and years.

Openings you might adapt

"I have some very sad news. Grandpa died this morning. His heart stopped working, and he cannot come back."

"You can ask me anything, any time. If I do not know the answer, I will tell you that."

"I am crying because I miss him. It is okay to feel sad, and it is okay to feel other things too."

"Nothing you did, said, or thought made this happen."

Plan your conversation

Child's name and age

When and where we will talk

Another adult who could be with us

What helps this child feel calm

What I want to tell them, in simple words

A question they might ask	How I could answer, honestly and simply

A question they might ask	How I could answer, honestly and simply

After the conversation

What they asked, said, or did, and anything to follow up on

Adults I will let know (teacher, coach, caregiver)

When I will check in with them again

When to look for more help

If you are worried about a child's safety, sleep, eating, school, or behavior over time, contact their doctor or a licensed child mental health professional. If a child is in danger, call 911.

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Checklist: The First Weeks After a Death

Checklist | Practical steps and caring for yourself



About this page: The first weeks after a death can bring many tasks at a time when it is hard to think. This list can help you see what needs doing, what can wait, and who might help. Not every item will apply. Rules and steps vary by place, so check with local offices or a funeral provider.

In the first days

- [ ] Tell close family and friends, or ask someone to help
- [ ] Ask for a written, itemized price list before choosing services
- [ ] Arrange care for children, pets, or dependents
- [ ] Ask a friend to keep a list of who has helped
- [ ] Contact a funeral home or other provider
- [ ] Look for any written wishes (funeral, burial, cremation)
- [ ] Secure the home and vehicle if needed
- [ ] Eat, drink water, and rest when you can

In the first weeks

- [ ] Order several certified copies of the death certificate
- [ ] Notify banks and insurance companies
- [ ] Look for a will and contact the named executor
- [ ] Keep important papers together in one folder
- [ ] Tell the employer of the person who died
- [ ] Notify government agencies that apply (for example, Social Security in the US)
- [ ] Cancel or redirect regular bills, subscriptions, and mail
- [ ] Return borrowed items and collect belongings

Caring for yourself

- [ ] Let one or two people help with meals or errands
- [ ] Tell my employer or school what I need
- [ ] Write down questions to ask later
- [ ] Keep one small daily routine
- [ ] Put off big decisions (such as moving) if I can
- [ ] Save crisis numbers in my phone

Who is helping with what

Task	Who will help	By when	Done
			☐
			☐
			☐
			☐
			☐
			☐
			☐
			☐
			☐
			☐
			☐
			☐

Questions to ask later (funeral provider, bank, employer, others)

For help finding local services in the US, you can dial 211. The GGN Resource Library lists more organizations.

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Checklist: Preparing for Holidays and Anniversaries

Checklist | Weeks before, the day itself, and after



About this page: Holidays, birthdays, and the anniversary of a death can stir grief, and the days before are often hard too. Use this checklist as a timeline. Pick the items that fit you and leave the rest.

The day I am preparing for

Date

A few weeks before

- ☐ Notice how I am feeling as the date gets closer
- ☐ Tell family or friends what I am planning
- ☐ Plan something small that honors them
- ☐ Decide which traditions to keep, change, or skip this year
- ☐ Think about whether I want company or quiet
- ☐ Check work or school schedules and ask for time off if needed

Traditions

Keep as it was	Change or adapt	Skip this year	Try something new

The week before

- ☐ Lower my expectations of myself
- ☐ Plan an exit if I attend a gathering
- ☐ Limit extra commitments
- ☐ Line up one person I can call
- ☐ Prepare simple meals ahead
- ☐ Keep crisis numbers handy

On the day

- [ ] Start the day with something steadying
- [ ] Take breaks when I need them
- [ ] Eat something and drink water
- [ ] Make room to remember them, in my own way
- [ ] Let people know if I need to leave early
- [ ] Be kind to myself about how the day goes

After the day

- [ ] Rest, since the days after can feel heavy too
- [ ] Thank someone who helped
- [ ] Note what helped for next time

What I want to remember for next year

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Checklist: Returning to Work

Checklist | Before, during, and after your first weeks back



About this page: Going back to work after a loss can bring relief, dread, or both. This checklist helps you prepare, protect your energy, and ask for what you need.

Before I go back

- ☐ Confirm my return date and any leave I have used
- ☐ Decide what I want coworkers to know
- ☐ Find out about the employee assistance program (EAP), if there is one
- ☐ Prepare a short answer for "How are you?"
- ☐ Talk with my manager about a phased return or flexibility
- ☐ Ask someone to share the news so I do not have to repeat it
- ☐ Plan how I will get to work and what I will bring
- ☐ Plan something gentle for the evening of my first day

My short answers

"Thank you for asking. It is a hard time, and I am taking it day by day."

"I appreciate it. I would rather focus on work right now, but it means a lot that you asked."

In the first weeks

- ☐ Write tasks down; grief can affect memory and focus
- ☐ Know where I can go for a quiet moment
- ☐ Say no to extra projects for now
- ☐ Take short breaks, including outside if I can
- ☐ Check in with my manager after a week or two
- ☐ Notice how I am sleeping and eating

Plan for a hard moment at work

A quiet place I can go

A coworker I can tell

Something that steadies me

Someone I can text

What I want to ask my employer for (and when I will ask)

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My Support Plan

Support Planning | Who and what helps, and where to turn



About this page: Grief is easier to carry with others. This plan helps you name the people, places, and practices that support you, so they are easy to find on a hard day. Share it with someone you trust if you like.

My circle of support

Kind of support	Who can help	How to reach them
Someone to listen		
Practical help (meals, errands, children, pets)		
Company or getting out		
Information or paperwork		
Faith, spiritual, or cultural support		
Someone who has had a similar loss		

Groups and organizations

Group or organization	When it meets or how to contact	Notes

What helps me

On ordinary days

On hard days

At night

Around special dates

Early signs that I need more support (for example, not sleeping, pulling away, drinking more)

When I notice those signs, I will

Professional support

My doctor or clinic

Phone

A licensed counselor or grief professional (if I have one)

Phone

If I am in crisis

If I am thinking about suicide or feel unsafe, I will call or text **988** (988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, US). If anyone is in immediate danger, I will call **911** or go to the nearest emergency room. Outside the US, I will use my local emergency number.

Someone I will tell if I am struggling

Their phone

Date made

Date to review

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Worksheet: Riding the Waves

Worksheet | Noticing grief bursts and what helps



About this page: Grief often arrives in waves, sometimes called grief bursts. Noticing when they come and what helps can make them feel less like ambushes. This is for your own learning, not a score.

My wave log

Over a week or two, jot down a few waves. Keep it brief.

When	What set it off (if anything)	What I felt in my body	What helped	Strength (0 to 10)

Looking back

Patterns I notice (times, places, reminders)

Reminders I can plan for, and how

My wave plan

When a wave comes, I can first

Then I can

Someone I can tell

Words I can say to myself

Example words: "This is a wave. It is strong, and it will ease." "I miss them because I love them."

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Worksheet: Both Sides of My Week

Worksheet | Breaks Belong: time with grief and time with life



About this page: GGN calls this idea Breaks Belong: grieving people often move back and forth between facing the loss and living with the changes in everyday life. Both matter, and taking breaks from grief is a healthy part of grieving. This worksheet helps you notice your own balance.

Facing the loss

For example: remembering, crying, looking at photos, visiting a grave, talking about them, writing to them.

Living with the changes

For example: handling paperwork, learning new tasks, seeing friends, resting, enjoying something, taking a break from grief.

My week

Day	Time spent facing the loss	Time spent with life and changes	A break I took
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

Reflection

Which side did I spend more time on this week? How did that feel?

Is there something I have been avoiding that I might gently turn toward?

Is there a break, rest, or pleasure I could allow myself without guilt?

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Worksheet: Carrying Them With Me

Worksheet | Love That Stays and legacy



About this page: Many people stay connected to someone who has died through values, stories, rituals, and everyday habits. GGN calls this Love That Stays. This worksheet invites you to name what you want to carry forward. If your relationship was complicated, you can also name what you choose to set down.

Their name

Who they were to me

What I carry forward

Area	What I want to carry forward
A value they lived by	
Something they taught me	
A saying or phrase of theirs	
A habit, skill, or recipe	
A place that connects us	
A cause or interest they cared about	

Something from our relationship that I choose to set down or not repeat

Ways to stay connected

- ☐ Say their name in conversation
- ☐ Mark their birthday in a new way
- ☐ Support something they cared about
- ☐ Share stories with others who knew them
- ☐ Keep an object of theirs close
- ☐ Cook or make something of theirs
- ☐ Talk or write to them
- ☐ Something else that fits me

One way I will carry them with me this month

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Exercise: What I Want People to Know

Exercise | A page you can share with the people around you



About this page: People around you may not know what to say or do. Fill in this page and share it, as it is or in your own words, with family, friends, or coworkers.

I am grieving

They died or the loss happened on

Something I would like you to know about them

Right now, grief is making it hard for me to

What helps me

- ☐ Hearing their name
- ☐ A text with no need to reply
- ☐ Invitations, even if I say no
- ☐ Remembering important dates
- ☐ Hearing your memories of them
- ☐ Help with a specific task
- ☐ Sitting together quietly
- ☐ Being asked what I need

What does not help right now

- ☐ Advice I did not ask for
- ☐ Comparisons with other losses
- ☐ Avoiding the subject altogether
- ☐ Being told how I should feel
- ☐ Being rushed to feel better
- ☐ Something else

One thing you could do for me this week

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Worksheet: Questions I Am Carrying

Worksheet | Making meaning, one question at a time



About this page: Loss can shake our sense of who we are, what we believe, and what matters. This worksheet does not ask you to find answers. It gives your questions somewhere to land.

The questions

Questions that keep coming back to me since the loss

Questions I may never get answers to, and how it feels to hold them

What has shifted

	Before the loss	Now
How I see myself		
What I believe		
What matters most to me		
How I see the future		

Small threads of meaning

Moments, people, or ideas that have given me some steadiness or meaning lately

Someone I could talk with about these questions (a friend, a faith leader, a group, a professional)

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