

ADJUSTMENT PHASE FOR YOUNG ADULTS - PHASE III
PROJECT TALC (TEENS AND PARENTS LEARNING TO COMMUNICATE)

Prepared by Sutherland Miller, Ph.D.

SESSION 5: DEALING WITH LOSS AND GRIEF - PART II

OBJECTIVES:

1. Youth will be able to talk about the deceased parent.
2. Youth will feel more comfortable grieving.
3. Youth will express feelings about the death of their parent - Part II, anger & guilt.

RATIONALE:

The sessions in the Adjustment Phase of the intervention are based on the assumptions that the best way to help these young adults who do not have caregivers after the death of their parent is to help them increase their skills in coping with feelings constructively. There are three sessions that focus specifically on understanding, processing, and coping with loss and grief (S3, S5, S6).

This is the second session on loss and grief. Building on Session 3 (Dealing with loss and grief - part I), steps are taken to foster the grieving process. Such steps include talking about the deceased person, remembering him/her and exploring current feelings of guilt and anger, which are presented as normal reactions to the death of a parent. The rationale is that actually grieving in the sessions desensitizes fears, creates a significant learning experience, presents models, and normalizes grief.

Throughout these sessions concepts and materials are used which often originated in Sandler's Family Bereavement Program - Family Workshop and Family Adviser Program. Other sources include Earl Grollman (1990) Talking about death, Boston: Beacon; Grollman, E. (1993) Straight talk about death for teenagers, Boston: Beacon; Linn, E. (1986) I know how you feel, Incline Village, Nevada: The Publisher's Mark.

SUMMARY OF EXERCISES:

1. Introduce participants and mementos. Do a lottery. Check on how the week went. Review goals. Use memento. (30 minutes)
2. Have youth explore feelings about the death of their parent (anger, guilt). (35 minutes)
3. Have youth enter into a dialogue with the deceased parent through the empty chair technique. (20 minutes)
4. Have youth respond to memory cards which stimulate recall of the deceased parent. (20 minutes)

5. Set goals for the next session and show appreciation. (15 minutes)

MATERIALS:

"Thanks"
Lottery tickets
Lottery prize
Feeling Thermometer Chart
Newsprint and marking pens
Goal Setting Chart
Goal summary sheet
Goal cards (blank or decorated index cards)
Pencils
Looking at Anger
Looking at Guilt
Memory Cards

NOTES TO THE FACILITATORS: Text in **bold** letters tells you what the purpose of each exercise is. Text in CAPITAL letters tells you what to do. Text in small letters tells you what to say. Once you become familiar with what to say, please put it in your own words. Do not read aloud the text in small letters - make it natural.

The times listed under the headings of each exercise are to help you keep on target and move the session along. Exercises may be lengthened or shortened at your discretion, as long as all the material is covered.

FACILITATOR'S NOTES - REMINDERS AND POINTS TO MAKE

Exercise 1: What Happened Between Sessions?
(30 minutes)

[The purposes of this session are to increase group cohesion, to encourage sharing of memories of the deceased, and to reinforce using what was learned in the session in the real-life environment. Introductions, mementos, a lottery, reviewing the week, and checking on goals are the approaches used.]

THE FACILITATOR BEGINS.

Welcome back to our sessions on dealing with grief and loss when a parent dies of AIDS.

I am glad to see you here, on time, and ready to go.

Today we will explore feelings that arise over the death of your parent.

Everyone will explore the loss both emotionally and intellectually.

We will focus on dealing with feelings.

To show my appreciation for being on time and for being ready to work on this tough situation, I want to start with a lottery prize.

Put your name on the ticket.

PASS OUT THE LOTTERY TICKETS. HAVE PARTICIPANTS WRITE
THEIR NAME ON THE TICKETS. COLLECT THEM, MIX THEM UP,
DRAW A WINNER, AND GIVE OUT THE PRIZE.

Before we go any further I want to pass out your "Thanks" for today.

Remember to give them when you like what someone said or did, their style, or their presence.

PASS OUT 20 "THANKS" TO EACH PERSON.

At the end of the last session I asked you to bring a memento related to the person that died.

It could be a photo, tickets to some event you attended, a card or letter, a pressed flower, a ribbon - anything that brought back the memories and was special.

As we go around the room, please tell us your name, show us the memento that you brought, and tell us what it means to you.

If you forgot to bring a memento, tell us what reminds you of your dead mother or father or loved one. You can talk about a memento you might have. You can say what thoughts and feelings come up when you see, touch, hear, smell or taste the memento.

GO AROUND THE ROOM. HAVE EACH PERSON GIVE HER OR HIS NAME, SHOW THE MEMENTO AND TALK ABOUT IT. GIVE OUT "THANKS" WHEN APPROPRIATE, SUCH AS DEEP FEELINGS PRESENTED OR TENDERNESS. MEMENTOS HAVE LOTS OF MEANING FOR PEOPLE, SO TAKE YOUR TIME.

Thanks. That was very good.

How did the week go for you?

What was better for you?

What was worse for you?

ENCOURAGE SHARING. DO NOT GO AROUND THE ROOM AND ASK EVERYONE. LET THOSE PARTICIPANTS SPEAK WHO WANT TO. AFTER PEOPLE SPEAK, HOLD UP THE FEELING THERMOMETER AND ASK THEM HOW THEY FELT. COMMUNICATE VALUING THE EXPRESSION OF FEELINGS WHETHER THEY ARE POSITIVE FEELINGS OR NEGATIVE FEELINGS.

Each of you made a commitment last week to try to achieve a goal that you set.

Now I would like to check in with you about your goal, which may have been related to either achieving your long-term goal, or about getting support and help.

Remember, what were the characteristics of a good goal?

HOLD UP THE GOAL SETTING CHART. [USE THE PRE-PRINTED GRAPHIC.]

The goal was to be realistic, clear, not too much or too little, and easy to see if completed.

I want to go around the room and have everyone talk about how it went meeting the goal.

Look at your goal card or goal summary sheet.

That's where it tells you what the goal was.

GO AROUND THE ROOM AND HAVE EVERYONE REPORT ON
GOAL PROGRESS. REFER TO THE GOAL SUMMARY SHEET OR
GOAL CARDS. CHECK OUT IF THE GOAL MET THE CRITERIA.
SEE WHAT BARRIERS AROSE. HAVE THE GROUP HELP
BRAINSTORM SOLUTIONS TO OVERCOMING THE BARRIERS.

Thank you for sharing your work on the goals you chose.

Each week we will end the session setting a goal to achieve between sessions.

We pay attention to goals for two reasons.

First, it makes sure that what we learn in the session gets applied in real life.

Trying it out in real life increases the possibility that you will use it and that it will be helpful.

Second, taking active steps in the real world to identify and express your grief feelings and to remember the real person who died - both the pluses and minuses - moves the healing process along.

Are there any questions?

ANSWER QUESTIONS.

Now we are going to talk about feelings people usually have when they have lost someone.

Exercise 2: What Am I Feeling (guilt, anger)?
(35 minutes)

[The purposes of this exercise are for youth to identify how they are feeling and to express those feelings. Assessment forms and small group sharing are used.]

When a parent dies, lots of strong feelings are stirred up, and they may be hard to deal with.

We already have heard that the feelings you have when you are grieving are OK.

Two weeks ago we talked about sadness.

Sadness is only one of the many feelings that young people have after losing a parent.

Today we are going to talk about two other feelings that most young people experience after a loss: guilt and anger.

We are going to spend some time letting you find out what your feelings are.

To start with I want you to explore by yourself.

The first feeling is guilt.

Read "Looking at Guilt" and indicate how you feel.

HAND OUT "LOOKING AT GUILT" AND PENCILS. ALLOW THREE
MINUTES TO COMPLETE THE QUESTIONNAIRE.

LOOKING AT GUILT

Guilt is one of the most uncomfortable feelings we can have. When we think that we did something bad or something that caused a bad thing to happen, we feel terrible. There are also times we feel bad because we didn't do something we wished we had done. When someone special dies, we think about things we wish we had done or said.

Sometimes we even wonder if we did something that led to the person's death. These thoughts lead to feelings of guilt and regret. We need people who are willing to listen to us talk about these things so that we can feel better about ourselves.

Instructions: Circle the statements that best fit you.

1. I feel guilty since the death of my mother (or father).....
 1. most of the time
 2. some of the time
 3. almost never

2. When I do feel guilty, it is.....
 1. terrible
 2. not so bad
 3. a little bit bad

3. When I say that I feel guilty, people.....
 1. listen to me
 2. ignore me
 3. tell me not to feel that way

4. When I feel guilty,....
 1. I know it is normal
 2. I think it is wrong

5. When I feel guilty,...
 1. I let myself talk about it
 2. I try not to think about it

6. There are things I did a long time ago that I feel guilty about again.
 1. yes
 2. no

. I feel guilty because _____

THE END

We are going to meet in small groups and, to the extent you are comfortable, share what has been making you feel guilty recently.

HAVE YOUTH MEET IN TRIADS AND SHARE THEIR FEELINGS OF GUILT. **NOTE:** IF MEMBERS ARE UNABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SMALLER GROUP FORMAT, GROUP LEADERS CAN RETAIN

THE LARGER GROUP FORMAT IN SHARING FEELINGS OF GUILT.

There is one more feeling I would like you to check out.

That is the feeling of anger.

I will give you another questionnaire called "Looking At Anger."

Please read it and indicate where you are in terms of feeling anger.

HAND OUT "LOOKING AT ANGER" AND PENCILS. ALLOW THREE MINUTES TO COMPLETE THE QUESTIONNAIRE.

LOOKING AT ANGER

Anger is a normal feeling that all people have at times. It helps us know that something is wrong, and it helps people know what problems they need to work out together. It is important to let people know when we are angry. We are not bad when we are angry. We are just trying to let people who matter to us know that something does not seem right.

When someone who is special to us dies, we may feel very, very angry. Something very important is definitely not right, and we want people to know how we feel about that. Sometimes the anger feels really bad because even though it shows what is wrong (like someone special has died) it doesn't help solve the problem. (It can't bring the person back to life.) Still it is normal to be angry and often helps us feel a little better to let people know we are angry.

Instructions: Check the statements that best fit you.

1. I feel angry after the death of my mother (father).....

1. most of the time
2. some of the time
3. almost never

2. When I do feel anger, it is.....

1. very strong
2. a medium amount
3. not very much

3. When I feel angry, people.....

1. listen to me
 2. ignore me
 3. tell me not to be angry
4. When I feel angry,.....
1. I know it is normal
 2. I think it is wrong
5. I feel angry at my mother (or father) for dying.....
1. most of the time
 2. sometimes
 3. not at all
6. I feel angry at God and the world for letting my mother (or father) die.
1. very true
 2. somewhat true
 3. not true at all
7. I feel angry when I think of the things my mother or father did when she or he was alive.
1. very true
 2. somewhat true
 3. not true at all
8. I feel angry at my friends because they don't understand how I feel.
1. very true
 2. somewhat true
 3. not true at all
9. Other reasons I have for feeling angry are_____
-

THE END

Go back to your small group and talk about feeling angry since your mother or father died.

HAVE THE YOUTH SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH ANGER SINCE THE DEATH OF THEIR PARENT. ALLOW FIVE MINUTES FOR SHARING.

BRING EVERYONE BACK TOGETHER.

Using the Feeling Thermometer - 100 = very uncomfortable and 0 = completely comfortable - how do you feel after exploring guilt and anger?

HOLD UP A CHART OF THE FEELING THERMOMETER.

ENCOURAGE SHARING OF FEELING THERMOMETER READINGS.
GIVE OUT "THANKS."

Did it feel good to talk about your feelings today?

Did it bother you to talk about your feelings?

And what do you think are the barriers to talking about how you feel?

ENCOURAGE A DISCUSSION OF EXPRESSING FEELINGS. LIST
BARRIERS ON NEWSPRINT.

As the sessions move on we will be dealing with some of these barriers.

Exercise 3: Can I Tell Mom or Dad Something?

(20 minutes)

[The purposes of this exercise are to decrease fears and anxiety related to what a survivor would have wanted to express to a deceased parent and to experience those thoughts. A two chair dialogue is the vehicle employed.]

There are times when we would really like to express ourselves to someone.

It would do us good to get it off our chest, but we are not comfortable facing the person and saying what is on our mind.

Talking to an empty chair can be helpful.

We can imagine that another person, or even another part of ourselves, is in that empty chair.

I want you to imagine that you are carrying on a conversation with your mom or dad after the death.

PLACE TWO CHAIRS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM. EXPLAIN
THAT ONE CHAIR IS FOR THE DECEASED PARENT. POINT TO IT.
THE OTHER CHAIR IS FOR THE YOUTH. POINT TO IT.

This is the deceased parent's chair, and this is your chair.

Start off by sitting in your chair.

If you want mom or dad to answer back, go sit in the other chair and play that part.

What would you like to say to your parent?

FACILITATORS MODEL SITTING IN THE CHAIR AND TALKING
TO THE EMPTY CHAIR.

For example, "Mom, I hope you are comfortable wherever you are. I miss you very much and wish I had told you I loved you more than I did when you were alive. I hope you will forgive me, but things were so bad that last month that I wanted you to die. I just didn't think I could take it anymore."

MOVE IN TO THE OTHER CHAIR AND PLAY THE MOTHER.

"Yes, daughter. I know it was hard on you at the end. I forgive you for wanting to have it over. Wanting peace and to ease the pain and hardship is a natural thing."

Here's another example.

MODEL SITTING IN THE CHAIR AND TALKING TO THE EMPTY CHAIR.

"Mom, I'm really angry at you. Why did you have to and get sick. It was your own fault. You knew you could get infected through shooting up, but you wouldn't stop."

MOVE IN TO THE OTHER CHAIR AND PLAY THE MOTHER.

"I know I made big mistakes in my life. I wish I hadn't. I wasn't the kind of mother I wanted to be, but I always loved you. I wish you could forgive me. I need your love."

Are there any questions?

ANSWER QUESTIONS AND CLARIFY THE TASK.

You can say whatever you want to.

This is a safe place.

Every young person here has gone through a death.

I am going to go around the room and give everyone the chance to carry on a brief conversation.

You only have to say as much as you like.

ENCOURAGE EACH YOUTH TO SPEAK TO HIS DECEASED PARENT IN THE EMPTY CHAIR. TRY TO KEEP THE CONVERSATIONS UNDER TWO MINUTES EACH. YOUTH HAVE THE OPTION NOT TO SPEAK TO THE EMPTY CHAIR.

Thank you for sharing those thoughts.

HOLD UP THE FEELING THERMOMETER CHART.

How did you feel communicating with the empty chair?

ENCOURAGE SHARING OF FEELING THERMOMETER READINGS.

Next let's remember the parent that you lost.

Exercise 4: How Do I Remember Mom or Dad?
(20 minutes)

[The purpose of this exercise is to contribute to youth remembering and accepting their deceased parent as they were. Drawing a card and then performing the memory task stated on the card is the process.]

At the time of death it can be difficult to accept a parent just as she or he was.

We may think it is wrong or bad to remember the things we didn't like.

On the other hand, if we are angry with mom or dad, we may want to forget anything good that they did.

It helps you grieve normally to accept your mother or father as a human being with good points and not-so good points.

I am going to have you draw a card.

On the card it will ask you to remember something specific about your mom or dad and, after you think of it, tell us about the memory.

Some of the cards will be about positive aspects of your parent. Other cards will be about negative aspects.

Every person has positive and negative qualities.

First tell us what the card wants you to remember and then share the memory with us.

For example, if the card said to remember when you got spanked by your mother, you might remember the time you were a little kid and came home an hour late for dinner.

It might have went like this:

She took down your pants, made you lean over the side of the bath tub, and used a hair brush on your rear end.

Have you got the idea?

CLARIFY ANY CONFUSION ABOUT THE TASK.

When the card asks you for a memory, it is always asking about the parent who just died.

ONE AT A TIME HAVE YOUTH DRAW A CARD, READ THE TASK ALOUD AND THEN TELL THE GROUP THE MEMORY. WHEN ONE YOUTH HAS FINISHED, MOVE ON TO THE NEXT ONE. IF THE GROUP IS SMALLER THAN 5 PARTICIPANTS, GO AROUND TWICE. **NOTE:** IF ONLY A SUBSET OF THE CARDS ARE USED, GROUP LEADERS SHOULD CHOOSE CARDS THAT ELICIT BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE MEMORIES. THE CARDS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. PLEASE TELL US THE FUNNIEST TIME YOU EVER HAD WITH YOUR MOM OR DAD.
2. PLEASE TELL US ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOUR MOTHER OR FATHER WAS REALLY IRRITATING.
3. PLEASE TELL US ABOUT A SITUATION WHERE YOUR MOTHER OR FATHER REALLY UNDERSTOOD WHAT YOU WERE GOING THROUGH.
4. PLEASE TELL US ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOUR MOTHER OR FATHER WAS VERY MEAN TO YOU.
5. PLEASE TELL US ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOUR MOTHER OR DAD WAS REALLY NICE TO YOU.
6. PLEASE TELL US ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOUR MOM OR DAD WAS REALLY GENEROUS TO YOU.
7. PLEASE TELL US WHAT YOUR MOM'S OR DAD'S MOST ANNOYING HABIT WAS.
8. PLEASE TELL US OF A TIME WHEN YOUR MOM OR DAD SACRIFICED SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO HER OR HIM FOR YOU.
9. PLEASE TELL US ABOUT SOMETHING YOUR MOM OR DAD DID THAT HAS BEEN VERY HARD TO FORGIVE.
10. PLEASE TELL US A TIME WHEN YOUR MOM OR DAD PROTECTED YOU FROM SOME DANGER.
11. PLEASE TELL US ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOUR MOM OR DAD DID SOMETHING WHICH REALLY EMBARRASSED YOU.
12. PLEASE TELL US ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOUR MOM OR DAD REALLY HURT YOUR

FEELINGS.

That was great!

HOLD UP A CHART OF THE FEELING THERMOMETER. [USE THE PRE-PRINTED GRAPHIC.]

How do you feel after recalling those situations?

ENCOURAGE RESPONSES.

There are many sides to people. When you talked to your parent in the empty chair, you may have been talking to just one part of who they were.

Using the memory cards lets you check out different sides of your parent.

This might be hard to understand, but your relationship with your parent continues, even though your parent is gone.

Many people find it helpful to see their parent as someone with good parts and bad parts, rather than as all good or all bad.

In some ways the relationship we have a deceased loved one continues to develop even after the death.

Give it some thought between sessions.

We're almost done for today.

Exercise 5: What Is My Goal For Between Sessions?
(15 minutes)

[The purposes of this exercise are to encourage transferring what was learned to the real-life setting, to increase self-esteem, and to build group cohesion and support. Goal setting and group appreciation are used.]

At the end of each session we set goals that we hope to reach by the next time we meet.

SHOW THE GOAL SETTING CHART.

A good goal is realistic, clear, not too much or too little, and easy to see if it was completed.

At the end of each day here we want you to agree to do one task between that day and the next time you come.

Your goal is to accomplish that task.

The task is something you choose, and it should be related to what the session was all about.

Here are some examples of tasks:

I agree to set up an appointment with a school counselor.

I agree to have my teeth checked by the dentist.

I agree to join a parent's support group.

I agree to do a nice thing for my sister during the next week.

I agree to go through my mother's earrings and see if I want any of them.

By asking you to complete a task at home we are trying to make sure that what we do in here gets transferred to the real world outside.

The task can be about what we did this evening.

Take a few minutes and think of a task for today, like talk to your deceased parent in the empty chair.

Write your goal on your Goal Card and Goal Summary sheet.

ALLOW THREE MINUTES FOR SELECTING A POSSIBLE TASK.
HAVE YOUTH WRITE IT ON THEIR GOAL CARD AND GOAL
SUMMARY SHEET. HAND OUT EXTRA GOAL CARDS IF
NECESSARY

Let's hear what you came up with.

HAVE PEOPLE REPORT ON THEIR TASK.

The last thing for today is to show appreciation to other group members for their contributions today.

Let them know you liked what they said or did, their presence, their style or anything else.

Let's have each person turn to the person on their left and say something we like about that person.

ENCOURAGE SHARING OF COMPLIMENTS. MODEL HOW
APPRECIATION IS GIVEN IF NECESSARY. REINFORCE GROUP
MEMBERS AS THEY COMPLIMENT OTHER PARTICIPANTS.

We'll see you next week.

END OF SESSION 5 - ADJUSTMENT PHASE

LOOKING AT GUILT

Guilt is one of the most uncomfortable feelings we can have. When we think that we did something bad or something that caused a bad thing to happen, we feel terrible. There are also times we feel bad because we didn't do something we wished we had done. When someone special dies, we think about things we wish we had done or said.

Sometimes we even wonder if we did something that led to the person's death. These thoughts lead to feelings of guilt and regret. We need people who are willing to listen to us talk about these things so that we can feel better about ourselves.

Instructions: Circle the statements that best fit you.

1. I feel guilty since the death of my mother (or father).....
 1. most of the time
 2. some of the time
 3. almost never

2. When I do feel guilty, it is.....
 1. terrible
 2. not so bad
 3. a little bit bad

3. When I say that I feel guilty, people.....
 1. listen to me
 2. ignore me
 3. tell me not to feel that way

4. When I feel guilty,....
 1. I know it is normal
 2. I think it is wrong

5. When I feel guilty,...
 1. I let myself talk about it
 2. I try not to think about it

6. There are things I did a long time ago that I feel guilty about again.
 1. yes
 2. no

7. I feel guilty because_____

LOOKING AT ANGER

Anger is a normal feeling that all people have at times. It helps us know that something is wrong, and it helps people know what problems they need to work out together. It is important to let people know when we are angry. We are not bad when we are angry. We are just trying to let people who matter to us know that something does not seem right.

When someone who is special to us dies, we may feel very, very angry. Something very important is definitely not right, and we want people to know how we feel about that. Sometimes the anger feels really bad because even though it shows what is wrong (like someone special has died) it doesn't help solve the problem. (It can't bring the person back to life.) Still it is normal to be angry and often helps us feel a little better to let people know we are angry.

Instructions: Check the statements that best fit you.

1. I feel angry after the death of my mother (father).....
 1. most of the time
 2. some of the time
 3. almost never

2. When I do feel anger, it is.....
 1. very strong
 2. a medium amount
 3. not very much

3. When I feel angry, people.....
 1. listen to me
 2. ignore me
 3. tell me not to be angry

4. When I feel angry,.....
 1. I know it is normal
 2. I think it is wrong

5. I feel angry at my mother (or father) for dying.....
 1. most of the time
 2. sometimes
 3. not at all

6. I feel angry at God and the world for letting my mother (or father) die.

1. very true
2. somewhat true
3. not true at all

7. I feel angry when I think of the things my mother or father did when she or he was alive.

1. very true
2. somewhat true
3. not true at all

8. I feel angry at my friends because they don't understand how I feel.

1. very true
2. somewhat true
3. not true at all

9. Other reasons I have for feeling angry are_____

GOAL SETTING CHART

A PERSONAL GOAL SHOULD:

#Be Realistic

#Be Clear

#Not Be Too Easy or Too Hard

**#Have A Clear End Point So You Can Recognize
When It's Been Accomplished**

6. PLEASE TELL US ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOUR MOM OR DAD WAS REALLY GENEROUS TO YOU.

7. PLEASE TELL US WHAT YOUR MOM'S OR DAD'S MOST ANNOYING HABIT WAS.

8. PLEASE TELL US OF A TIME WHEN YOUR MOM OR DAD SACRIFICED SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO HER OR HIM FOR YOU.

9. PLEASE TELL US ABOUT SOMETHING YOUR MOM OR DAD DID THAT HAS BEEN VERY HARD TO FORGIVE.

10. PLEASE TELL US A TIME WHEN YOUR MOM OR DAD PROTECTED YOU FROM SOME DANGER.

11. PLEASE TELL US ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOUR MOM OR DAD DID SOMETHING WHICH REALLY EMBARRASSED YOU.

12. PLEASE TELL US ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOUR MOM OR DAD REALLY HURT YOUR FEELINGS.

GOAL SUMMARY SHEET

DATE: _____

MY GOAL FOR THIS WEEK IS: _____
