

Grief Re-Membering & Meaning-Making Worksheet

People who have lost someone have a certain look recognizable maybe only to those who have seen that look on their own faces. I have noticed it on my face and I notice it now on others. The look is one of extreme vulnerability, nakedness, openness.”

Didion, (2007, p.35)

This worksheet is designed to guide you through an active and reflective grieving (individually) and mourning (jointly expressing sorrow) process.

It integrates Kubler Ross-David Kessler’s stages of grief model, J. William Worden's Four Tasks of Mourning with Narrative therapy practice adaptations of Michael White and David Epston to help you honor your relationship, process your grief, and find a way to carry your loved one forward with you.

The tasks are not linear—feel free to move between sections as needed.

Section 1: Acknowledging the Reality of Loss

Task 1: To accept the reality of the loss.

This step involves moving from a world where your loved one is present to one where they are physically absent. It's about confronting the "thin story" of denial and beginning to externalize your experience.

- Describe a specific, everyday moment where their absence feels most real and tangible (e.g., a quiet morning, a shared meal time).

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- Joan Didion wrote that grief brings a look of "extreme vulnerability, nakedness, openness." what ways do you or feel this vulnerability in yourself right now?
 - Who is one person you can name part of your support system for this task? How might you reach out to them?
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Section 2: Mapping the Landscape of Your Relationship

Narrative Practice: Re-Membering Contributions

This section helps "thicken" the story of your relationship by exploring the mutual contributions you made to each other's lives. Think in terms specific scenes, qualities, and lessons*

Their Contribution to Your Life: What did your loved one bring into your world?

List 3-5 specific contributions

(e.g., "They taught me to be patient,"

"They were my anchor during hard times,"

"They shared their love of music with me").

For one contribution, describe a vivid memory or "scene" that illustrates it.*

- Your Contribution to Their Life: What did you bring into *their* life?
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- List 3-5 specific contributions

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- - (e.g., "I made them laugh every day,"
 -
 - "I was their trusted confidante,"
 - "I helped them build their garden").
 -
 - For one contribution, describe a memory where you can see the impact you had.
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 - Identity Reflection: Looking at these lists, what does this exchange of contributions tell you who you were in this relationship? What role did you play?
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**Section 3: Processing the Pain & Locating Your Grief

Task 2: To process the pain of grief.

Allow for the full range of emotions. Use the table below to assess where different feelings reside for you currently.

- When you reflect on the contributions in Section 2, what specific emotion most strongly (e., gratitude, sorrow, anger, love)? Sit with that feeling for a moment. Where do you feel it in your body?
- Grief Stage & Meaning Check-In:
- Rate your current (= Not Present, 10 = Overwhelmingly Present).
- This is a snapshot, not a progression.

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Stage	Rating (1-10)	A Brief Example or Thought From My Experience
Denial / Numbness		e.g., "I keep expecting them to call."
Anger / Protest		e.g., "This is so unfair. I'm angry at the world."
Bargaining		e.g., "If only I had noticed sooner."
Depression Disorganization		e.g., "Nothing feels meaningful right now."
Acceptance / Reorganization		e.g., "I am starting to understand this is my new reality."
Making Meaning		e.g., "I want to find a way to keep their spirit alive."

Section 4:

Re-Authoring Your Connection: What to Retain and Let Go

Task 3: To adjust to a world without the deceased. Narrative Practice: Choosing Stories.

This is about consciously deciding which parts of the relationship you wish to carry forward and which "thin" or painful stories you wish to gently let go or change your relationship to.

- What I Wish to Retain & Re-Member:
- List 3-5 qualities, values, memories, or lessons from the relationship that you want to actively keep in your

- (e.g., their sense of humor, the way they faced challenges, your shared tradition of Sunday walks). For one item: How can you enact or honor this in your life now? (e.g., "I will tell their joke," "I will face my own challenges with their same courage").

- What I Wish to Let Go or Re-Story:

-

Identify 1-2 "problem-saturated" stories, burdens, or emotions that no longer serve you

(e.g., a moment of guilt, the story of "unfinished business," the narrative that your joy is gone forever).

How can you externalize this? Give it a name or a letter, or placing it aside. What is a more compassionate or balanced story you could tell instead?

- Outsider Witness: If you were to share your "Retain" list with a trusted, compassionate listener, what is one question you would hope they would ask you to help deepen the story?

Section 5: Finding an End Connection & Making Meaning

- 4: To find an enduring connection while embarking on a new life.**

This final task is about integration—moving forward while maintaining a healthy bond, and weaving your loss into your ongoing story.

- Adjustment: What is one small, practical adjustment you can make this week to life has changed? (e.g., creating a new routine, visiting a place that reminds you of them, trying a restoration activity like a walk in nature).

- Ongoing Connection: How can the qualities you chose to retain in Section 4 become a living, ongoing connection? Describe what this looks like in action.

- Meaning-Making Narrative: Using all your reflections, draft a few sentences that begin to form a "thickened" story of meaning. You can start with: "The story I am to carry forward is one where..."

My Action & Reflection Plan

- One immediate step I will take: (e., "I will call my support person from Section 1,"

- "I will journal about one contribution Section 2").

- A note to my future self: do I want to remember when I revisit worksheet?

- I will write a letter to a loved one who has passed away

Date of this reflection: _____ I give myself permission for this process to be non-linear and to return to these pages as often as I need.

This worksheet integrates concepts from Kubler Ross-David Kessler, J. William Worden Tasks of Mourning and narrative therapy practices inspired by the work of Michael White-David Epston

References and resources

Didion, J. (2007). The Year of Magical Thinking: National Book Award Winner. Vintage.

Kessler, D. (2019). Finding meaning: The sixth stage of grief. Simon and Schuster.

Worden, J. W. (2018). Grief counseling and grief therapy: A handbook for the mental health practitioner. springer publishing Company.

<https://candlestickcounsellingandpsychotherapyservices.ca/2025/01/30/re-membering/>

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