

COMPASSION IN ACTION

Activities for Finding Hope in Grief

D-F





“DEAR GRIEF” LETTERS

T—A

Suggested Group(s): Teen, Adult

Purpose: To provide group members the opportunity to address their thoughts and feelings about death and/or grief through concrete words or drawings.

Task/Need:

- Identifying and expressing feelings
- Making meaning of the loss

Materials:

- Paper
- Pens, pencils, or fine-point markers

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Explain that the idea behind the activity is to put some of the big, complex feelings about death or grief into words or pictures.
 - *“As we continue on our grief journeys, we often find ourselves wrestling with huge, complex feelings—feelings that can be hard to put into words, or sometimes, even to fully understand. Feelings like anger, sadness, confusion, longing, or even a sense of injustice.”*
- Ask the group to imagine talking to “DEATH” or “GRIEF” as if it were a person or a presence. This activity is not about literal belief but about creating a direct outlet for emotional expression.
 - *“This might sound a little strange or abstract at first, and that’s OK. The purpose here isn’t to believe “DEATH” or “GRIEF” are actual beings we can converse with, but rather to create a safe and direct channel for all those thoughts and emotions that might be swirling inside us. It’s about externalizing what often feels so internal and overwhelming.”*
- Pose this question to the group: *“If you could say anything to “DEATH” (or “GRIEF”), what would it be? Think about what you might want to express directly to that experience or entity.”*
 - *“What questions would you ask? What frustrations would you express? Is there anger you need to release? Or perhaps sadness you wish to articulate? Maybe even some understanding, or a plea for a moment of peace? This is your space to say what you’ve wanted to say but maybe you haven’t known how or who to say it to.”*

Activity Description:

- Encourage the group to start the LETTER or poem with “DEAR DEATH” (or “DEAR GRIEF”). If writing isn’t comfortable, group members can use drawings or symbols to express their thoughts and feelings instead.

- *“You don’t have to force anything. If starting with “DEAR DEATH” or “DEAR GRIEF” helps, that’s a good place. If it feels better to address a specific emotion, like “DEAR ANGER” or “DEAR LONELINESS”—please do that. Choose whatever feels right and accessible to you in this moment. And if words don’t come easily, that’s completely fine. Sometimes, drawing or using symbols can express far more than words. Feel free to draw, doodle, or create images that capture your feelings instead.”*
- Observe the group members while they engage in the activity, and provide support as needed. Allow them space and privacy as they write and draw, unless they invite you to look at what they are writing or drawing.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Offer the group the opportunity to share their LETTERS or a portion of their LETTER if they like.
- Note the tone of the room to the group:
 - For example, *“I observed that as you were all writing or drawing, there was a quiet intensity in the room”—or “Many of you seemed very focused”—or “It seemed like some difficult emotions were being processed”.*
- Ask about their experiences. Below are some questions to use. Choose a few that work for your group. Remember to use open-ended questions.
 - *“What was the experience like to write to ‘DEATH’ or ‘GRIEF’?”*
 - *“Who found the activity challenging? Or did it flow easily?”*
 - *“What emotions came up for you as you were writing or drawing?”*
 - *“Was there anything surprising about what you found yourself wanting to say?”*
 - *“Did this activity feel challenging, cathartic, or something else?”*
 - *“How did it feel to give a voice to your thoughts about ‘DEATH’ or ‘GRIEF’?”*
 - *“Did anyone find it difficult to start, or to choose what to write?”*
 - *“What, if anything, did you learn or notice about your grief through this process?”*
- Listen actively, validate feelings (*“That sounds really difficult”—“It’s understandable to feel that way”*) and ensure everyone who wants to speak has a chance. Remember—avoid offering solutions or interpretations; simply acknowledge and reflect.

- Provide options for group members to decide what they wish to do with the letter. Below is a way you can pose the question.
 - *“For those who wrote or drew something, you have a few options: you can keep your LETTER/drawing and take it home with you, or if you prefer, you can leave it here. There’s a [box/bin] available if you’d like to dispose of it here confidentially.”* (Ensure a discreet way to collect if offered).
- Acknowledge the effort that the group members put into the activity and highlight any themes if they emerged.
 - *“Thank you for sharing such a personal and often difficult experience. Your willingness to explore these feelings so deeply is a testament to your courage. It sounds like [reflect on a key feeling shared].”*
 - If multiple people are sharing intense emotions, guide the pace gently. *“I notice that several of us are touching on feelings of [perhaps helplessness, or anger, for example]. It’s powerful to hear these shared experiences.”*

Notes:

- LETTERS can be written to feelings also. Example, *“DEAR ANGER, I wish you would go away. I don’t like the way you make me feel.”* Allow them to choose the feeling they want to write a LETTER to.

For Ongoing Groups:

Below are modifications you can use for an Ongoing Group:

- If they have done this activity in an Introductory Group, ask if they remember what they wrote last time. Has what they wrote today changed versus what they wrote previously?
- Provide suggestions for having the group members write a LETTER to the Caring Place or to the group and talk about their experience of coming back.
 - *“What would you want to say to ‘THIS GROUP’ about your experience here? What has been helpful? What changes might you like to see? Or what messages do you want to convey about how being part of this space has impacted your grief journey?”*
 - *“How does the idea of sharing feedback directly to ‘THE GROUP’ or ‘THIS PLACE’ feel, compared to writing to ‘DEATH’ or ‘GRIEF’? Does it feel less daunting, or different in some way?”*

DECORATING NAME TAGS

P—Y—M—T—A

Suggested Group(s): Preschool, Young, Middle, Teen, Adult

Purpose: To learn each other's names, interests, and favorite things. To express themselves verbally and through art (*Who am I? What do I like?*). To give group members the opportunity to express their uniqueness.

Task/Need:

- Group building

Materials:

- NAME TAGS
- Markers
- Stickers—anything that fits on a NAME TAG

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Ask the children, “*What makes you a unique person?*”—“*What are your favorite colors, shapes, etc.?*” You may need to use a more concrete statement depending on the ages of the kids in your group. (For example, “*What is your favorite food, toy, color, etc.*”)
- Indicate that since each of the group members is unique, they should have the opportunity to make their NAME TAGS unique.
- Explain that the group will use the art materials to decorate their NAME TAGS.

Activity Description:

- Don't underestimate how powerful the opportunity to decorate a NAME TAG can be.
- Children can be encouraged to use their favorite colors, draw things they like to do on the NAME TAG, draw their family, or draw their favorite (*whatever*).
- Be curious about what the group members add to their NAME TAG. For example, “*Tell me more about the sticker you put on your NAME TAG*”—or—“*Tell me more about the color you picked for your NAME TAG.*”

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- When the group is finished, offer the option to share their NAME TAG with the group and describe what they drew, which stickers and colors they chose, etc.
- Ask them to share who it was in their family who died.
- Process the activity with questions like:
 - “*I wonder if anyone else in the group likes _____?*”

- *“You all worked very hard on your NAME TAGS.”*
- *“It sounds like someone else in the group likes _____. ”*
- *“I heard many of you share that it was _____ who died.”*
- Prompt the group to discuss if they are more comfortable after learning more about the other group members.

Notes:

- Let children choose how they will decorate their NAME TAGS.
- Encourage group building by saying the children’s names often and highlight commonalities they have with others. *“Oh, so your favorite color is blue too”*—or—*“You enjoy watching sports just like _____.”*
- Focus your comments and feedback on their efforts to express themselves rather than about how “pretty” or “good” their drawing is.
- Have the group decorate your volunteer NAME TAG.
- Another option is to ask group members to write the name of their person on the back of their NAME TAG.

For Ongoing Groups:

- No modifications needed as they will have a new NAME TAG to decorate.

DISCUSSION POSTERS

M—T—A

Suggested Group(s): Middle, Teen, Adult

Purpose: To begin to explore feelings about different subjects while allowing the group to relate to one another

Task/Need:

- Identifying and expressing feelings
- Sharing memories and continuing bonds with the person who died
- Helping them understand who they are after their loss
- Developing coping skills and supports
- Living on the grief spiral

Materials:

- Markers and Posterboard
- Or Dry-Erase Markers and Dry-Erase Board

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Begin by initiating a conversation about how after some in our family dies, there can be some big changes. Some of these changes can be harder than others. Bring up relevant topics. For example: changes in their home since their loved one died, new worries they are now having, feelings they have a hard time coping with, etc.
 - *“What’s different at home since your loved one died?”*
 - *“Are there new worries you have now?”*
 - *“What feelings are sometimes really hard to deal with?”*
- Explain that participants will be answering questions around the room on Posterboards or a Dry-Erase Board.

Activity Description:

- Instruct the group to go around the room and answer questions at each station/ Posterboard area.
- Example questions:
 - *“Changes in my home that I don’t like are _____.”*
 - *“Changes in my home that are OK are _____.”*
 - *“What worries me most right now is _____.”*
 - *“Ways I show my grief are _____.”*
 - *“Signs that I’m starting to heal are _____.”*
 - *(This last prompt may be difficult for new groups where members are new to their grief.)*
- Once group members are done answering questions, discuss their responses.

- Point out any similarities.
- Allow members to discuss each Posterboard.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Ask the group about their experience:
 - *“Was answering the questions easier or harder than you thought?”*
 - *“Was there a question that you really struggled with answering?”*
 - *“Since you’re all here because you’re grieving, I wonder if anyone would feel comfortable sharing how you show your grief. Does it look different when you’re with your family compared to when you’re with friends?”*
- Invite the group to continue to think of new responses and add them throughout the remaining meetings.

Notes:

- Consider the specific needs and comfort levels of the group when choosing questions.
- Ensure enough space for participants to move around comfortably.
- Encourage respectful and supportive interactions during the discussion.

For Ongoing Groups:

- If group members have done this activity before in an Introductory Group, ask them if they remember the answers to their questions from the last time.
- Do they have the same or different answers this time around? Has anything changed? What has remained the same?

DISSOLVING PAPER MESSAGES

M—T—A

Suggested Group(s): Middle, Teen, Adult

Purpose: To provide a tangible, emotionally safe way to begin to express and let go of difficult thoughts and feelings—if they choose to do so

Task/Need:

- Identifying and expressing feelings
- Living on the grief spiral

Materials:

- Clear vase, bowl, or other container
- Water
- DISSOLVING PAPER
- Pens or pencils (*markers will make the water cloudy or turn the color of the markers*)
- Stirring utensil (*a chopstick or other long stick-like item*)

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Begin by gently talking about fears or regrets that people sometimes carry. Acknowledge that it's normal to have these feelings, and that they can sometimes feel heavy or difficult to manage.
 - *“What are some things you might want to do with a fear or regret?”*
 - *“If you had a chance, would you choose to let go of some of those feelings?”*
- Talk about what they may wish to do with them.
 - *“After we’re all done, where do you think we should ‘dump’ these feelings?”*
- Ask whether they would choose to get rid of them if they could.
 - *“Is this something you wish you could do in real life? Why or why not?”*
 - Let them know they will have the opportunity to write down feelings of fear and regret and make them ‘disappear’ symbolically by placing them into the water and having them dissolve.

Activity Description:

- Give each member a rectangle of the DISSOLVING PAPER and a pen or pencil to write with.
- Have the individuals think of a fear or regret that they may have and write it down on the PAPER.

- Let the group members know that they can choose to hold that fear/regret or let it go in the water.
- If the person is willing to let go of what is on the PAPER, have them place it in the water one by one and stir the water.
- The PAPER will quickly disintegrate, giving the impression of disappearing.
- Continue to each group member until everyone who chooses to has a chance to take part.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Discuss how it felt to do the activity.
 - *“What was it like to watch your fears and regrets dissolve?”*
 - *“Did you feel like this activity helped you let go of some of the things you have been holding on to? If so, do you want to share what you let go?”*
- If a group member did not take part
 - *“For those that chose not to do the activity, which is OK, do you want to share how you’re feeling in this moment?”*
- What should be done with the water that holds all the fear and regret?
 - *“We talked earlier about dumping these feelings and regrets outside. Is this what you still want to do, or do you want to choose a different place?”*

For Ongoing Groups:

- Ask group members if they remember doing this during their Intro Group and if so, do they remember what they wrote down the first time?
 - *“Were your fears and regrets the same or different than they are today?”*
 - *“Was the activity easier or more difficult to do the second time?”*
 - *“Do you remember dumping your fears and regrets the first time? Do you remember what that felt like for you? Are those feelings the same or different than they are today?”*

DRAWINGS ON IPAD

Y—M—T

Suggested Group(s): Young, Middle, Teen

Purpose: To explore themes relevant to group and group discussions through non-verbal expression using the IPAD

Task/Need:

- Telling their story
- Identifying and expressing feelings
- Sharing memories and continuing bonds with the person who died
- Developing coping skills and supports
- Living on the grief spiral

Materials:

- IPAD
- Flipink app (*or other drawing app readily available on IPAD*)

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Introduce the topic or topics to be addressed by the drawing *before* describing the activity. Topics might be related to previous group discussions or not.
 - For example, *“Today, we’re going to think about special gifts we received from our loved ones.”*
- Facilitate a discussion around the topic of the drawing and how drawing might be used to show things in a different way than words can.
 - Ask, *“Have you ever found it easier to draw something than to talk about it?”*—or—*“What kinds of things can pictures show that words can’t always capture?”*
- Invite everyone to share ideas about what they *could* include in a DRAWING about today’s topic. This helps spark creativity and shows them there’s no “right” way to draw.

Activity Description:

- After having the discussion and setting the stage for the topic, provide the group members with the materials to create the DRAWING as they choose.
- Give plenty of support and inquire about the work as it is being completed.

Suggested Topics:

- **Regrets:** *“Draw or write something about a regret you might have concerning your loved one.”*
- **Favorite Day:** *“Draw a picture of your favorite day you spent with the person who died.”*

- **Wish-For Day:** *“Imagine if you could spend one more day with your loved one. What would that day look like? Draw it.”*
- **Special Gifts:** *“Draw the special, non-physical gifts your loved one gave you—like kindness, laughter, or a special memory.”*
- **My Memories:** *“Draw some memories of the person who died.”*
- **The Service:** *“Draw what you remember about the funeral or memorial service, or what you imagined it to be like.”*
- **My Family Picture:** *“Draw your family, including or excluding the person who died, however feels right to you.”*
- **My Support System:** *“Draw the people, places, or activities that help you feel supported and comforted when you’re sad.”*

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Allow the group to share their work and discuss what went into the DRAWING.
- Also ask about the feelings they had while making the DRAWING.
 - You can ask, *“How did you feel while you were making your DRAWING?”*—*“Did any feelings come up as you were drawing?”*
- Use the DRAWINGS to guide the conversation about the topic chosen for the DRAWINGS.
 - For instance, if the topic was “Special Gifts,” you could say, *“It’s wonderful to see all these different gifts people received.”*
- Highlight any similarities—*“I see that you both have similar memories. Would either of you like to share about what you drew?”*
- Allow the children to decide what they wish to do with their DRAWINGS—print them out, have them e-mailed home, leave at the Caring Place, or delete them.

Notes:

- Ensure the iPad is fully charged, and the app is functioning correctly.
- Be mindful of individuals who may have limited experience with digital drawing tools.
- Respect the individual choices regarding the sharing and disposal of their artwork.

For Ongoing Groups:

- No modification is needed to use this in an Ongoing Group, as the DRAWING they do will be unique from the Introductory Group.
- However, you can ask them if they remember what they drew before—how is it different or the same from what they drew this time.

DREAM CATCHERS

Y—M—T—A

Suggested Group(s): Young, Middle, Teen, Adults

Purpose: To allow group members to share their fears and/or dreams and to help manage frightening dreams. To acknowledge that nighttime can be harder when we're grieving.

Task/Need:

- Identifying and expressing feelings
- Developing coping skills and supports
- Living on the grief spiral

Materials:

- Metal hoops or Paper plates/scissors/hole punch
- String/yarn
- Feathers
- Beads
- Alternatively, pre-made DREAM CATCHERS can be used and decorated

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- **Opening the Discussion—Acknowledging Shared Experiences:**
 - Start by saying something like, *“Sometimes when we’re going through a really tough time, especially after someone we love has died, our minds can be very busy, even when we’re trying to sleep. This can sometimes lead to vivid dreams or even dreams that feel a bit scary or confusing, often called nightmares.”*
 - *“Has anyone here ever experienced bad dreams or found it hard to sleep since the death of their loved one? You don’t have to share details if you don’t want to but just letting us know if it’s something you’ve dealt with can help us feel less alone.”*
 - *“It can be really unsettling when that happens. When you do have bad dreams or trouble sleeping, what are some things you’ve tried that help you feel a little bit better or more settled?”*
- **Introducing the DREAM CATCHER Concept—A Symbol of Comfort:**
 - *“Today, we’re going to create something that, for many cultures, is believed to help with dreams and sleep. We’re going to make DREAM CATCHERS.”*
 - *“Has anyone heard of a DREAM CATCHER? Does anyone have one at home? The idea is that a DREAM CATCHER, usually a hoop with a woven web, is hung above where someone sleeps.”*

- *“The belief is that the DREAM CATCHER allows good dreams to filter through the web and slide down the feathers to the person sleeping below. The bad dreams, or nightmares, get caught in the web.”*
- *“While we might not literally believe a dream will get ‘caught,’ creating a DREAM CATCHER can be a powerful way to think about how we want to protect our sleep, honor our good memories, and find ways to feel safer and more peaceful at night.”*
- *“As we make our DREAM CATCHERS today, you can think about what you want to ‘catch’—maybe peaceful sleep, happy memories, or feelings of comfort. And what you hope would get caught in the web—perhaps worries, sad thoughts, or those difficult dreams.”*

Activity Description:

- Give each child a metal hoop (or the rim cut from a paper plate can be substituted with holes punched in for looping).
- Tie a loop at the top of the circle and then loosely loop the string over the circle and bring the end through to the front of the circle (*fig. 1*).
- Continue this all the way around the circle about an inch or two apart. Do not pull the stitches tight against the circle (*fig. 2*).
- Take a second string and loop it through the string connecting the two stitches together. Do this all the way around the circle. This should start to pull the string slightly towards the middle (*fig. 3*).
- Repeat this with additional rounds of string ...
- ... until just a small opening is left in the center (*fig. 4*).
- Group members can add a bead or two at any time on the string to represent a spider or just a decoration.
- With each subsequent string, the stitches should become smaller.
- At the center hole in the DREAM CATCHER, tie a string to the loop and dangle 6–8 inches of string from the loop. Tie a feather on the end.
- Group members can also add beads just prior to the feathers if they would like. They can add 2–4 feathers on their DREAM CATCHERS.

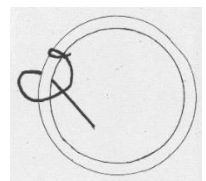


Fig 1

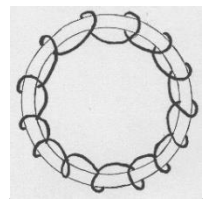


Fig 2

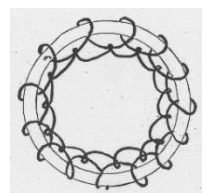


Fig 3

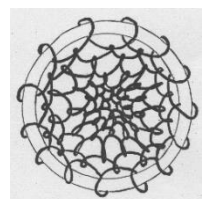


Fig 4

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Ask the group to share their DREAM CATCHERS. Highlight that each is unique—ask them to share any special colors, feathers or decorations; as well as any feelings or thoughts they had while they were making it.
- Guide the sharing towards the meaning behind their choices. For example: *“I see you used a lot of blue; does that color mean anything special to you?”*—or—*“What kind of dreams do you hope your DREAM CATCHER will welcome?”*
- Lead discussion on what things help them feel safe, calm or comfortable at bedtime.
 - Some ideas of what can help people feel safe—talking to a trusted caregiver, special blanket, stuffed animal, listening to calming music, etc.

Notes:

- This is a good activity to use if the group members have mentioned having nightmares or difficulty sleeping following the death. A good way to start this activity is to ask if any of the group members have experienced bad dreams. They can share these with the group, and the group can also discuss what they do when they have bad dreams.

For Ongoing Groups:

- Since other feelings activities are often done in Introductory Groups, this is a good choice for Ongoing Groups.
- If they have previously made a DREAM CATCHER, ask them to bring theirs in if they still have it or talk about the one they made before and how their new DREAM CATCHER is different.
- If they made one previously, ask them to share if they have used it, and if so, have they noticed a difference in their dreams or sleep.

EMOTIONS BINGO

Y—M—T

Suggested Group(s): Young, Middle, Teen

Purpose: To help participants identify and explore a range of feelings, encouraging safe discussion about how these feelings relate to their grief experiences

Task/Need:

- Group building
- Identifying and expressing feelings

Materials:

- Blank BINGO CARD (*see last page of this activity*)—OR
- Premade Emotions/Feelings BINGO CARDS (*check with staff as site may have premade BINGO; if volunteers would like to make the BINGO CARDS in advance, they can use the FEELINGS WHEEL below for ideas*)
- Plastic chips or markers
- If using blank BINGO CARDS:
 - Set of feelings pictures for each child (*see end of this activity; staff can also provide a list/sheet appropriate for each age group*)
 - A complete set of corresponding feelings on small cards (for the caller)

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Begin with a discussion of feelings, starting with a quick check in to see how they are feeling right now. Highlight that they can be feeling different things.
 - Allow time for sharing and help make connections; point out similarities or differences.
- Introduce the idea that they will be playing BINGO today, but with a focus on emotions and feelings.
 - *“Today, we’re going to play a game called EMOTIONS BINGO. It’s a fun way for us to explore different feelings and learn from each other. Sometimes when we’re going through a tough time, especially with grief, our feelings can feel confusing or overwhelming. This game is a chance to put a name to some of those feelings, and importantly, to see that we’re not alone in experiencing them.”*
- Set the rules of the BINGO GAME (players win with a row or column; cover all; four corners; etc.).
 - *“When someone calls ‘BINGO!’, they’ll read out the feelings they covered. As they read each feeling, we’ll all get a chance to think about it. If you’ve ever felt that way, or even feel that way right now, you can share about a time you felt that way. Remember, only share what you’re comfortable with.”*

Activity Description:

- If using blank BINGO CARDS:
 - Give the children the blank BINGO CARDS and a sheet of feelings expressions (*see end of activity, or ask staff to provide*).
 - Allow them to fill center space of the BINGO CARD with heart or butterfly; this will be their free space.
 - Next, have them cut apart the sheet of Feelings Pictures and mix them up.
 - Have them randomly tape a Feelings Picture on each open space, except for the pre-marked free space.
- A volunteer will be the caller. The caller draws the Feelings Cards one at a time and shares them with the group.
- As each word is called, the children put plastic chips on them as they appear on their BINGO CARDS.
- The first person to get BINGO calls that out—they read out the feelings they’ve covered. As they share the feeling, the group gets a chance to discuss the feeling and when they’ve experienced that feeling. Remind them that they can use the **I PASS RULE** if they don’t want to share about that feeling.
 - Validate and normalize feelings when shared. For example, *“It sounds like you felt really sad then”—“It’s OK to feel that”—“Many people feel that way, especially when missing someone.”*

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Prizes are not necessary, but you can check with staff to see if there are small prizes for the winners (*stickers, for instance*).
- Alternatively, let the kids know that the ‘prize’ can be something available to all, such as time for the entire group in the Activities Room.
- Thank the group for participating and sharing their feelings.
 - Highlight their discussion of feelings.
 - *“Were any of the feelings on the BINGO BOARD a feeling you have often?”*
 - *“Were any feelings new to you, or feelings you don’t normally think about?”*
 - *“On the BINGO BOARD, which feelings did you think only **you** felt, but then found out other people felt them too?”*
 - Pause for sharing. Affirm any contributions: *“Yes, ‘frustration’ is a common one”—“It’s true, sometimes it can feel like you are the only one*

who feels angry, but it sounds like a lot of people felt that way when their person died.”

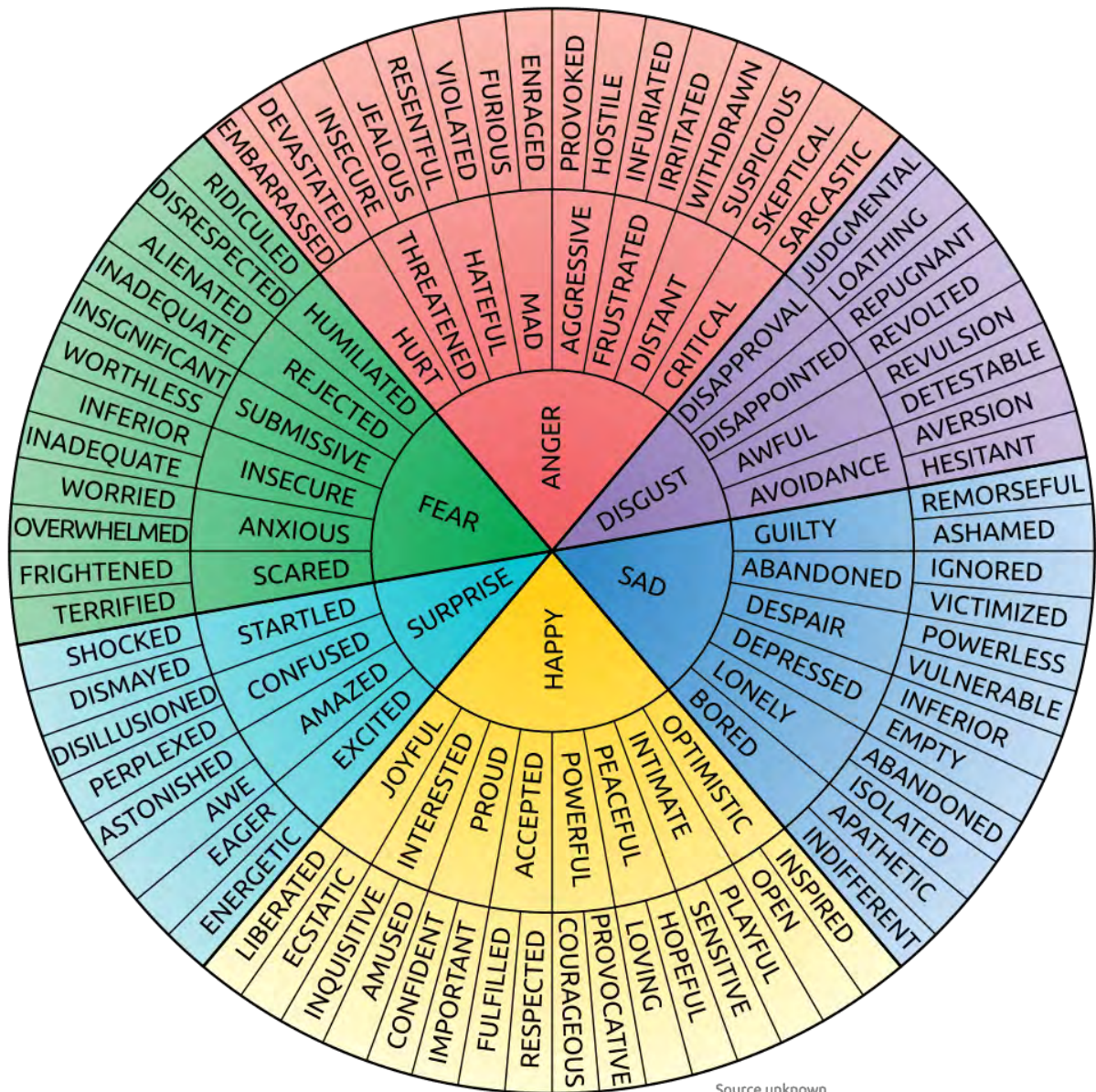
- Let them know that the group can continue to talk about feelings and emotions as the group continues.

Notes:

- Pay attention to non-verbal cues. If a child seems withdrawn, overwhelmed, or overly agitated, it's OK to check in with them quietly. Be ready with an alternative if FEELINGS BINGO is uncomfortable for them or remind them that they can play without sharing their own personal feelings if that makes it easier.
- Reminder that simple, empathetic phrases can be helpful and affirming and you don't need to fix things. These phrases can be helpful to validate and continue discussion:
 - *“That sounds really tough.”*
 - *“I can see why that feeling is important to you.”*
 - *“Thank you for sharing that with us.”*
 - *“It's brave to share those feelings.”*
 - *“Many people feel that way.”*
 - *“It's OK to feel that way.”*

For Ongoing Groups:

- This activity can be done in an Ongoing Group without variation because the make-up of the group will be different. They will bring up different feelings and experiences for discussion. However, you can consider the variations noted below.
- **Variation 1:** You can allow the group members to create their own BINGO BOARD.
 - You will want to ensure that they all have the same feelings on their BOARDS, just in a different order. Additionally, you will have to ensure that the caller has the complete list of feelings to draw from.
 - Ensure that the emotions/feelings are age appropriate. See the FEELINGS WHEEL on the next page, or ask staff for list. Alternatively, you can lead a discussion with the group to see what feelings they come up with together. Decide as a group and then ensure the BINGO caller has the same list.
- **Variation 2:** In addition to discussing the feeling and when that arises, ask the group to discuss a coping skill that they use when they experience that feeling.



Source unknown

B	I	N	G	O

EMOTIONS DICE

Y—M—T

Suggested Group(s): Young, Middle, Teen

Purpose: To acknowledge the range of feelings grief may bring; to give names to the various physical expressions that accompany feelings; to encourage expression through sharing; to explore ways to cope with feelings

Task/Need:

- Identifying and expressing feelings
- Living on the grief spiral

Materials:

- A set of DICE with a different feeling written on each side—OR
- A set of DICE where each number has a corresponding “feeling code” written on a piece of paper as a key.

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Introduce the concept of emotions and how they can be experienced during grief.
 - *“Today, we’re going to play a game called EMOTION DICE. It’s a way for us to explore some of these feelings we might have, give them a name, and talk about how we handle them. It’s a chance to learn from each other and discover new ways to cope when things feel tough.”*
- Explain the purpose of the activity: to explore different feelings and ways to cope with them.
- Clearly explain the rules of the chosen variation.
- Create a safe and supportive environment for sharing.

Activity Description:

- **Variation 1:**
 - One group member at a time takes a turn rolling the EMOTION DICE.
 - They can choose which of the two feelings to talk about (if applicable based on DICE design).
 - The DICE may have one side that gives the option of a free choice of emotion.
 - Group members share a time they experienced that feeling.
- **Variation 2:**
 - Group members take turns rolling the DICE.
 - They choose one of the feelings to act out.

- They share the last time they had that feeling and a situation that activates that feeling for them.
- Group members share what they did to cope with the feelings in that situation.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Ask the participants what it was like to share their feelings.
 - *“Thank you all for participating and sharing today. That took a lot of bravery. Let’s take a moment to reflect on what that was like.”*
 - *“What was it like for you to share your feelings today?”* (This open-ended question allows for varied responses.)
 - *“What was it like to hear others share their feelings?”*
 - *“Did anyone learn a new way to cope with a hard feeling?”*
- Point out any common feelings shared by the group members.
 - *“What was it like to hear that others in the group have the same feelings?”*
- Thank them for sharing.
 - *“One thing I hope we all noticed today is that all feelings are OK, and everyone experiences them. You might have felt lonely, but someone else also felt lonely. You might have felt mad, and someone else felt mad too. It’s a normal part of being human, especially when we’re grieving.”*
- Summarize key insights about emotions and coping strategies.
- Reinforce that all feelings are valid.

Notes:

- Adapt the activity to the specific age group and developmental level of the participants.
- Avoid analyzing or interpreting what a child shares. Your role is to create a space for them to express themselves and to validate their feelings, not to diagnose or provide solutions.

For Ongoing Groups:

- No modification needed for an Ongoing Group, as emotions can change, and coping strategies can change over time.

EMOTIONS PHOTOS

P—Y

Suggested Group(s): Preschool, Young

Purpose: To explore and express feelings in order to be able to approach the pain of a death

Task/Need:

- Identifying and expressing feelings

Materials:

- Digital camera & printer
- Permanent marker
- Poster board or construction paper
- Tape

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Begin by talking about the wide range of feelings people can experience, like anger, happiness, sadness, excitement, etc. Emphasize that all feelings are valid and OK.
- As a group, brainstorm a list of different feelings words. Write these words on a whiteboard or large sheet of paper.

Activity Description:

- Once you have a list of feelings words, invite the children to show what different feelings might look like on a person's face. Encourage them to use their facial expressions and body language to demonstrate the emotions.
- If the children are comfortable, take pictures of them expressing different feelings. Explain that they do not have to participate if they don't want to, and it's perfectly OK to say no.
- If pictures are taken, label each PHOTO with the corresponding feeling word.
- Mount the PHOTOS (if any were taken) on a poster board or large sheet of construction paper.
- Hang the EMOTIONS FACES POSTER in the room so it can be a visual reminder of the diverse range of emotions people experience.
- Consider adding new feelings to the POSTER throughout the session as different emotions are discussed.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Review the EMOTIONS FACES POSTER together. Engage in a discussion about times when the group members may have felt the different emotions displayed on the poster.
- Show all the PHOTOS to group members.
- Allow the members to comment on their PHOTOS and other members' PHOTOS.
- Talk about how similar feelings can look different on different people. For example, *"Your 'surprised' looks different than Ella's surprise."*
- Ask them what they thought about the PHOTOS that were taken of different feelings.
- Ask what it felt like to take a picture of the emotion they were expressing.

Notes:

- EMOTIONS PHOTOS are a good way of helping younger children to recognize how they can express feelings.
- Allow an array of EMOTIONS to be expressed when taking PHOTOS.
- It may be helpful to start with a feelings book to introduce different feelings and feeling words.
- It may be helpful to have the children look in the mirror as they're expressing their feelings, so they have a clearer idea of how they look when they're feeling a certain way.

For Ongoing Groups:

- Ask group members to share feelings that they have experienced since their last Session ended. Capture those EMOTIONS in PHOTOS.
- Acknowledge that coming back to participate in a Session can create many feelings. Let them know it's OK to have those feelings.

EVOLVING EMOTIONS OF GRIEF: AN ART JOURNAL

Y—M—T

Suggested Group(s): Young, Middle, Teen

Purpose: To reinforce to the group that grief is not a single emotion, but a reaction to loss that is comprised of dozens of different emotions

Task/Need:

- Identifying and expressing feelings

Materials:

- Colored tissue paper
- A JOURNAL or some paper
- Mod Podge or other decoupage glue
- Paint brush

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Discuss with the group that grief is not a single emotion, but a reaction to loss that is comprised of dozens of different emotions that can arise in the months and years after a death.
 - *“We talk a lot about grief here, and one really important thing to remember is that grief isn’t just one feeling like sadness. It’s like a big, swirling mix of lots of different emotions. You might feel sad one moment, then angry, then confused, maybe even a little bit hopeful or peaceful at other times. All of those feelings are a normal part of grief, and they can change and evolve over time, like different colors blending together.”*
- Ask the group about some of the emotions they had coming to the Caring Place initially and how they feel now.
 - *“Let’s think about our own experiences for a moment. When you first found out about the death of your loved one, what were some of the feelings you had?”* (Pause for a moment, encourage one or two shares if comfortable, but don’t force it.) *“And how do some of those feelings feel now, perhaps a little different, or maybe new feelings have come up?”*

Activity Description:

- Explain the activity: *“Today, we’re going to create something called an ART JOURNAL PAGE. It’s a way to visually show what our feelings look like right now—like a snapshot of our emotional landscape. We’ll use different colors to represent different emotions, and put them together on a page, just like our feelings blend and change.”*
- Have the group members create a list of emotions/feelings. This can be done individually or as a group.

- *“First, let’s take a moment to think about different feelings. Everyone can make a list of emotions or feelings that come to mind. There are no right or wrong answers here—just what feels true for you.” (Offer examples if needed: sad, angry, confused, lonely, calm, hopeful, grateful, tired, worried, happy, frustrated, etc.)*
- Assign a color of tissue paper to each emotion on the list.
 - *“Now, for each feeling on your list, let’s choose a color of tissue paper that you feel represents that emotion. For example, you might choose blue for sadness, red for anger, or yellow for a happy memory. This is your personal choice, so pick colors that feel right to you.”*
- Create a Color Key page in their ART JOURNAL showing each emotion and the color they have assigned.
 - *“On one corner of your ART JOURNAL page, or on a separate small piece of paper, you can write down your emotions and the color you chose for each. This is your Color Key so you can remember what each color represents.”*
- A second page, or the back of the page, can be kept where they can add new emotions that come up in the future.
 - *“If you like, you can keep a space on your page, maybe on the back or a fresh section, for any new feelings that might come up later. This JOURNAL is a journey, not just a one-time project.”*
- The emotions that are felt on that particular day can be picked, with the related color then chosen.
 - *“Think about how you’re feeling right now, today. Pick out the emotions from your list that are present for you in this moment. Find the tissue paper colors you assigned to those feelings.”*
- They can tear pieces of tissue paper associated with their emotion. If they’re feeling more of a particular emotion, they can tear up more of that color tissue.
 - *“Now, tear off pieces of the tissue paper for the emotions you’re feeling. If you’re feeling a lot of one emotion, you might tear more of that color. If it’s a smaller feeling, just a little piece. There’s no wrong way to do this.”*
- Following the instructions on the decoupage, paint it onto their page.
- Place the different colored tissues on the page, in differing amounts to represent how much of a certain emotion they’re feeling that day.
 - *“Continue adding your colored tissue pieces until you feel your page represents the mix of emotions you’re experiencing today. Let your page tell your story through color.”*

- Paint more decoupage on top of the tissue paper once it has been placed.
- Complete the entire page to represent the current combinations of emotions they're experiencing.
- As they're working, you can say things like—*"That's a really interesting combination of colors"*—or—*"How does that feel as you put it down?"* Focus on the process, not the outcome.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- *"Now that we've all created our ART JOURNAL pages for today, if you'd like to, you're invited to share your page with the group. You don't have to explain everything, just share what you feel comfortable with. You could tell us what emotions you chose to put on your page today, or what it felt like to create it."*
- *"You can keep working on this JOURNAL at home whenever you feel like it. It can be a special place for you to explore your feelings over time. When you look back at your pages later, you might see how much your feelings have shifted, and that can be really helpful."*

For Ongoing Groups:

- This activity can be duplicated in an Ongoing Group, as they may want to make a second JOURNAL. If they have their original JOURNAL, invite them to bring it in and share it with the group.
- Some questions you can ask:
 - *"Is your JOURNAL today the same or different from the one you made in a previous group?"*
 - *"What feelings are the same?"*
 - *"What feelings are different?"*
 - *"Was making the ART JOURNAL easier or harder than when you completed it the first time?"*
 - *"Since making it the first time, did you ever look back on the pages you created? If so, did you find that helpful?"*

FAMILY MEMORY “RECIPE” BOX

Y—M—T—A

Suggested Group(s): Young, Middle, Teen, Adult

Purpose: To create a tangible collection of positive memories of a loved one

Task/Need:

- Sharing memories and continuing bonds with the person who died

Materials:

- Small box (like a RECIPE BOX)
- Recipe cards
- Markers, crayons, colored pencils
- Other decorative materials (stickers, glitter, etc.)

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Explain that the purpose of the activity is to create a BOX full of cherished memories of their loved one.
 - *“Today, we’re going to create something called a FAMILY MEMORY RECIPE BOX. Think about a RECIPE BOX where you keep all your favorite recipes—all the ingredients and steps to make something delicious. Our MEMORY BOXES will be like that, but instead of food recipes, they’ll hold ‘Recipes’ for special moments, stories, and feelings connected to our loved one.”*
- Emphasize that this is an activity to preserve memories and stories.
 - *“This activity is all about holding onto and celebrating the wonderful memories and stories you have. Even though our loved ones are no longer with us in the same way, their memories, the things they taught us, and the good times we shared are still very much a part of us. This BOX will be a place to keep those treasures safe.”*

Activity Description:

- Each participant will decorate a Recipe Card in any way they would like.
 - *“First, everyone can take a Recipe Card. This is your canvas. Feel free to decorate it however you like using the markers, crayons, stickers, or glitter. Make it your own, make it special.”*
- Participants will complete the prompts on the Recipe Cards with specific memories.
 - *“Once your Card is decorated, you’ll see some ideas or prompts on the board [or they can be read out loud]. These are just ideas to help you start thinking about specific memories. Choose a prompt that speaks to you and write down a memory on your Card. For example, if it says, ‘My favorite thing to do in the summer with my loved one was...’ you might*

write about a trip to the beach or a picnic in the park. Feel free to use the prompts or just write any memory that comes to mind.”

- Fill out as many Recipe Cards as desired.
 - *“You can fill out as many Recipe Cards as you wish. There’s no limit to how many memories you can capture. Once you’ve written a memory or two on a Card, you can place it into your special MEMORY BOX. It’s like adding another valuable ingredient to your collection of comfort.”*
- Place the completed Cards into the MEMORY BOX.

Possible Prompts for Recipe Cards:

- *My favorite thing to do in the summer with my loved one was...*
- *One vacation I remember with my loved one was...*
- *My favorite place to go with them was...*
- *I remember when they taught me...*
- *Something funny they used to say was...*
- *A special tradition we had was...*
- *I wish...* (This can be a hope or a wish about a memory)
- *I hope...* (This can be a hope related to their memory or what was learned from them)

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Invite participants to share a memory from their MEMORY BOX if they feel comfortable (*optional*).
 - *“We’ve all created something truly special today. These BOXES are full of your unique, cherished memories. If anyone feels comfortable, you’re invited to share a memory from your BOX. You don’t have to read it word-for-word if you don’t want to, you could just tell us about one of your favorite memories. It’s totally OK if you prefer to keep your memories private, too.”*
- Emphasize that they can always add to their BOX in the future.
 - *“This MEMORY BOX isn’t just for today. You can take it home and keep it somewhere special. Whenever you think of a new memory, or want to add a different thought or feeling about your loved one, you can get out your MEMORY BOX, decorate a new Card, and add it in.”*

For Ongoing Groups:

- This activity is appropriate for both Introductory and Ongoing Groups.
- If a similar activity was done before, you might ask, *“For those of you who’ve made a MEMORY RECIPE BOX before, what kind of memories did you add last time? How do the memories or feelings that come up feel today compared to then? If you still have your first BOX, you’re welcome to bring it next time if you’d like to share how it’s grown.”*

FAMILY PORTRAIT

P—Y—M

Suggested Group(s): Preschool, Young, Middle

Purpose: To share about their family and the changes that may have taken place in the family now that one member has died

Task/Need:

- Telling their story
- Making meaning of the loss

Materials:

- White paper
- Markers/crayons
- Scissors
- Construction paper

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Invite the children to visualize their family (*eyes open or closed—as the individual members are comfortable*).
- Ask:
 - “Who is in your family?”
 - “What do they look like?”
 - “What are their roles in the family or in the home?”

Activity Description:

- Have the children draw their family on paper.
- Give the children wide latitude to draw their family as they wish.
- Do not instruct them about whether or not to include their family member who died, but you can use their questions to guide discussion if that topic arises.
- Get input from the group as to their thoughts and feelings about including the person(s) who died.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Invite group members to share their work.
- Encourage sharing about:
 - Whether their family member(s) who died were included.
 - If so, where were they placed on the page?
 - How it felt to include or exclude them.

- Other changes in the family since the person died (*for example*):
 - Have chores changed?
 - Have your routines changed?
 - Who watches you before or after school?
 - Who comes to your school events, sporting events, community activities?
 - Who takes you to school/preschool/daycare?
 - Who helps you get ready for bed?
- Allow the group to share what other changes they may have noticed after their person died.

Notes:

- For Preschool: appropriate for those 3 and up, depending on the individual group members. May require more prompting for the children to identify who is in their picture.
- This could be a good first night activity as a way for the kids to introduce themselves, important family members, and their people who died.

For Ongoing Groups:

- No need to adapt this, as they will be with new group members in the Ongoing Group.
- However, if they made a FAMILY PORTRAIT before, you can ask them how their previous picture was different from the one that they made today.

FEELINGS AND MEMORY TILES

M—T—A

Suggested Group(s): Middle, Teen, Adult

Purpose: To offer a creative way for individuals to remember and honor special memories while providing an outlet for identifying and expressing feelings

Task/Need:

- Identifying and expressing feelings
- Sharing memories and continuing bonds with the person who died

Materials:

- **TILES:** 4 x 4-inch white bathroom TILES (*optional: felt cut to size and hot-glued to the back for a finished look*)
- **Pens:** Metallic Sharpies (gold, silver, bronze)
- **Colors:** Alcohol ink (a variety of colors, including metallic options)
- **Tools for applying ink:**
 - Small foam paint brushes
 - Straws cut in half for blowing ink (*optional*)
- **Small Metal Stands** (easels) for displaying finished TILES
- **Plastic Tablecloths** to cover tables
- **Smocks** or old shirts for participants to wear
- **Gloves** for participants to protect their hands from ink

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Start by talking with the group about the importance of memories.
- You might say something like: *“When someone we love dies, they continue to live on in our hearts and minds through our memories and the feelings they inspire. Sometimes, these memories and feelings are clear, and sometimes they might feel more hidden, but they are always there.”*
- Ask group members if there are any particular memories of their loved one that they think of often, or if there’s a message they wish they could tell their loved one. Allow them to share with the group if they wish.
- Show examples of several TILES to help the group visualize what they’ll be making.
- Explain to the group that they are each going to create a special TILE. They can write or draw, directly onto the TILE, a memory, a message to their loved one, or even feelings they’re experiencing. Then, they’ll blend colors over it using alcohol

inks. The ink will mostly or completely hide what they've written, but *they* will always know the special meaning behind their TILE.

- They may choose to write feeling words on the TILE and then use the colors to represent those different emotions.

Activity Description:

1. Initial writing/drawing:

- Give each person a TILE and a metallic Sharpie.
- Allow plenty of time for everyone to write or draw their special memory, message, or feelings.
- Offer the opportunity for anyone who wants to share what they've written or drawn before adding color. Of course, the **I PASS RULE** always applies.

2. Preparing for color:

- As participants finish their writing/drawing, help them put on gloves and smocks.
- You can start a conversation about colors: *"What colors are you thinking of using? Do any colors remind you of your loved one, a particular memory, or a feeling?"*

3. Using alcohol inks (*Safety first!*):

- Ensure everyone is wearing gloves and smocks and the table is covered before bringing out the alcohol inks!
- Provide the ink bottles, small foam brushes, and cut straws.
- Give these important tips before starting:
 - **Less is more:** *"A little ink goes a long way. Too much ink can make your TILE very dark, almost black or brown. Try starting with small dots of just 2 or 3 colors."*
 - **Hiding your message:** *"If you want to hide your writing or drawing completely, drop the ink close to the TILE (1–2 inches above the surface)."*
 - **Revealing your message** (optional): *"If you want part of your writing or drawing to still show through, hold the ink bottle a little higher when adding color, use very little ink, and use a brush or straw to gently move the color around."*
 - **Blending with tools:** *"You can use the foam brush or a straw to spread the ink and fill in white spaces without adding more ink, which*

helps prevent the colors from getting too dark. These tools are also great for blending and swirling colors.”

- **Using straws:** *“If you use a straw to blow the ink, please blow very lightly to avoid splashing ink onto yourself or others.”*
- **Practice patience:** *“Let the colors blend and settle a bit before adding more. It’s an unfolding process!”*
- As group members work with the inks, you can continue asking open-ended questions about whether certain colors represent something special to them, or how they feel about the way the colors are blending together. This can help encourage reflection without being intrusive.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Once everyone has finished their TILE, offer another opportunity for anyone who wishes to share their TILE.
- *“What was it like to create the TILE?”*
- Be curious about the colors shared. *“What was the significance of the colors?”*
- *“What was it like when you painted over your message?”*
- Remember to respect those who prefer not to share.
- Conclude by saying something like: *“Each of these TILES is a powerful reminder that even though our memories and feelings about our loved one might sometimes feel hidden, or blend with other emotions, their meaning and presence are always there, deep inside you. You’ve created something truly special and meaningful that only you fully understand.”*

Notes:

- **Safety first:** Alcohol ink stains! Always use plastic tablecloths, smocks, and gloves.
- **Ventilation:** Ensure the room is well-ventilated when using alcohol inks.
- **Straws:** Supervise the use of straws to prevent ink from splashing.
- **Drying time:** TILES need to stay at the activity site until the next group session to fully dry before being sent home.
- **Purpose:** These TILES are for decorative purposes only (to be displayed on the easels). They are not safe to use as coasters.
- **Age appropriateness:** This activity is not recommended for Preschool or Young children because alcohol ink is permanent and stains hands and clothing.

For Ongoing Groups:

- No specific modification is needed for use in an Ongoing Group, as they may have different memories or feelings when done this time. However, you can ask them to share what they made on their first TILE and how it was similar to or different from what they made today.

FEELINGS BACKPACK

M—T—A

Suggested Group(s): Middle, Teen, Adult

Purpose: To provide a tangible experience that carrying strong emotions can feel like a heavy burden, and to highlight the relief and benefit of sharing those feelings with others who can offer support

Task/Need:

- Identifying and expressing feelings
- Developing coping skills and supports

Materials:

- **Rocks with feelings words:** A collection of small to medium-sized rocks (2–4 inches in diameter) with various feeling words painted on them (*sad, angry, confused, lonely, guilty, hopeful, frustrated, missing, anxious, disoriented, overwhelmed, relieved, regretful, etc.*)
- **BACKPACK or bag:** A sturdy BACKPACK or bag

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Begin by reminding the group that the Caring Place is a safe place where all feelings are welcome and can be discussed openly.
- Reinforce that everyone in the group is there to support each other and that everyone is here because someone important to them has died.
- Introduce the metaphor of carrying feelings by saying something along the lines of, *“You know how sometimes when you’re feeling really sad, or angry, or confused, it can feel almost like a physical weight? Like you’re carrying something really heavy inside you, or on your shoulders? That’s a very common experience when we’re grieving. It’s like we’re carrying around a BACKPACK full of all these big, heavy feelings.”*

Activity Description:

- Have the BACKPACK filled with the feelings rocks before the group begins.
- Pass the BACKPACK around the group, allowing each member to briefly hold it and feel its weight.
- Ask: *“What does it feel like to carry this BACKPACK by yourself?”*
- Next, invite the group to work together to hold the BACKPACK, perhaps by having a few people hold it at once.
- Ask whether it makes a difference when we share the weight? Does the BACKPACK feel lighter?

- Open the BACKPACK. Take out the feelings rocks and spread them where everyone can see them.
- Initiate a discussion using questions like:
 - *“Looking at these rocks, what feelings do you think you have been carrying around?”* (Encourage group members to identify specific feeling words).
 - *“Are there any feelings here that surprise you or that you didn’t realize you were carrying?”*
 - *“Are there any feelings you are carrying that you don’t see here?”*
 - *“What feelings do you think are particularly heavy?”*
 - *“Are there any feelings that feel lighter or easier to carry?”*
- Brainstorm support strategies by leading a group discussion on ways they can feel supported in carrying their feelings. Consider writing these ideas on a whiteboard or a large piece of paper. Prompts could include:
 - *“Who are the people in your life you can talk to when things feel too heavy to carry alone?”*
 - *“What activities help you feel a little lighter when you’re carrying big feelings?”*
 - *“What makes you feel understood?”*
 - *“How can we support each other here in this group?”*

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Invite the group members to share what they learned from the FEELINGS BACKPACK Activity.
 - *“What’s one takeaway you have about your own feelings or about the power of sharing within this group?”*
- Ask the group what happened to the weight of the BACKPACK as group members shared, and the rocks were removed from it. (If needed, you might note that we saw that carrying big feelings by ourselves can be really heavy, but when we share that weight, even just a little, it can feel much lighter. It doesn’t make the feelings disappear, but it makes them easier to manage.)
- *“What was it like to do the activity?”*
- *“I wonder if anyone heard common experiences among the group.”*
- Draw the group’s attention to the list that they created while brainstorming ways to get support.

- Close by reminding them that everyone here is going through something similar, and that this group is a place where you can feel understood and supported. *“It’s OK to talk about your feelings—here, or with a trusted adult or friend. You don’t have to carry your feelings alone.”*

Notes:

- Ensure the BACKPACK is not too heavy, especially for younger participants.
- Be sensitive to individuals who may be hesitant to share their feelings. The physical activity of holding the BACKPACK and seeing the feelings rocks can still be impactful even without verbal sharing.
- Remember that the goal is not to “fix” any of the feelings that are shared, just to acknowledge them and make space for them to be shared with the group.

For Ongoing Groups:

- Use prompts that compare the present with their past experience at the Caring Place:
 - *“What changed about your feelings about grief since your last group?”*
 - *“What feelings are lighter or heavier now compared to your last group?”*
 - *“What feelings are more challenging to share now?”*

FEELINGS BALL

Y—M—T

Suggested Group(s): Young, Middle, Teen

Purpose: To identify and express feelings

Task/Need:

- Group building
- Identifying and expressing feelings

Materials:

- Large BALL with feelings written on it.

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Make sure group members are seated comfortably and spaced enough to safely toss the BALL to each other.
- Gently toss the BALL to a group member seated in a circle, then explain the concept of the game.
- The FEELINGS BALL can be used to begin discussions about feelings, experiences related to specific feelings, and ways that the children respond to certain feelings.
- Tell them that the BALL will have different feelings written all over it.
- Let them know that they are going to be asked about the different feelings that are written on the BALL.

Activity Description:

- Toss the BALL—the catcher describes the feeling closest to their thumb (or other designated area).
- Facilitating Discussion for Each Feeling:
 - Remind group members that they can always use the I PASS RULE.
 - *“Has anyone felt [feeling] recently?”*
 - *“What does [feeling] feel like in your body?”* (for example, *“Do you feel angry in your hands, or your stomach?”*)
 - *“When you feel [feeling], what usually helps you to deal with it or feel a little better?”* (Focus on coping skills here.)
 - *“What makes you feel [feeling]?”* (This can relate to their grief experience, but don’t force it.)
 - If it’s a positive feeling like ‘Joyful’ or ‘Calm’: *“What helps you feel [feeling]? How can we make sure to have more moments like that?”*
 - *“Do you think other people around you sometimes feel this way?”*
 - *“What was the last time you felt this feeling?”*

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Thank participants for their contributions and process what it was like for them to do the activity.
 - *“Let’s pause and think about our game. What was it like to play FEELINGS BALL today? Was it easy, or sometimes challenging? Did you hear about any feelings you hadn’t thought about before?”*
 - *“What was it like to hold a BALL with so many feelings written on it?”*
 - *“Was it hard to think about some of the feelings written on the BALL?”*
 - *“Are there some feelings that you would like to add to the BALL?”*
 - *“What was it like to hear some of your group members talk about their feelings?”*
 - *“What was it like for you to talk about your feelings in the group?”*
 - *“Did playing the FEELINGS BALL game make it easy to share your feelings?”*

Notes:

- The FEELINGS BALL activity can be adapted to fit the needs of the group regarding feelings exploration. It is adaptable to explore coping mechanisms and responses to various feelings.

For Ongoing Groups

- Have group members make their own FEELINGS BALL. Have each member write a feeling on the BALL that they have experienced.
- Use the FEELINGS BALL that they have created for the activity.
- Ask group what it was like to create their own FEELINGS BALL compared to using one that was already created.

FEELINGS BAROMETER

Y—M—T

Suggested Group(s): Young, Middle, Teen

Purpose: To begin to explore different feelings, both ‘positive’ and ‘negative,’ and make a BAROMETER to express some of their own feelings

Task/Need:

- Identifying and expressing feelings

Materials:

- Markers/Pens
- Rulers or other straight edge
- Poster board or foam board or Styrofoam plate
- Poster board or foam material to make an arrow
- Metal paper fasteners

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Talk to the kids about coming to the Caring Place.
- Ask them to consider how they were feeling when they found out that they were coming and how they feel now.
- Brainstorm about feelings either on the whiteboard or by creating a feelings wall.
- Talk about what a BAROMETER is and does. Talk about how it may help to show how one is feeling when you don’t want to talk.

Activity Description:

- Talk a little bit about all the different feelings and then have the group members figure out which feelings they want to use.
- Begin constructing the BAROMETER that will hold their feelings:
 - Create the main circle/face if not already cut.
 - Divide the circle/draw “wedges” based upon the number of feelings that the person wants to include.
 - Make an arrow to use to point to the different wedges of the BAROMETER.
 - Poke a hole in the middle of the circle and in the arrow.
 - Feed a fastener through the holes and attach to the back—be sure not to make it so tight that the arrow can’t be turned.
- Once the BAROMETER has been constructed, have the group members add the feelings and decorate each wedge if they wish.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

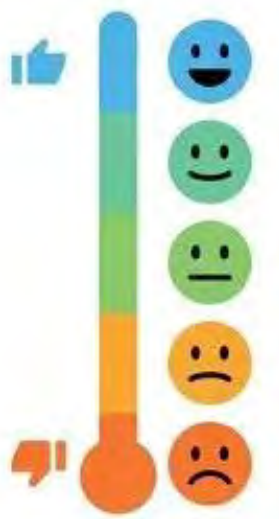
- Allow the group members to share their BAROMETERS and discuss any similarities or differences between what feelings individuals included on their wheels.
- Ask how they might want to use their FEELINGS BAROMETER.

Notes:

- If metal fasteners are not available, buttons and pipe cleaners can be used to hold the arrow in place.
- Some sites may have pre-made laminated images to use as a check-in activity.
- It can be interesting to make the wedges different sizes as the child/teen chooses. Ask what meaning they give to the different sizes for different feelings.

For Ongoing Groups:

- If they have made a FEELINGS BAROMETER in an Introductory Group, ask them how the one they are making now compares to the previous one made. What is the same or different?



FEELINGS BEAN BAG TOSS

Y—M—T—A

Suggested Group(s): Young, Middle, Teen, Adult

Purpose: To allow group members to express thoughts, feelings, and experiences about their grief journey

Task/Need:

- Identifying and expressing feelings
- Living on the grief spiral

Materials:

- Construction paper squares or rectangles
- Markers
- BEAN BAGS

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Talk to group members about how grief can sometimes feel like a swirl of emotions.
 - *“We know that grief isn’t just one feeling; it’s often a big, swirling mix of so many different emotions. One day you might feel really sad, another day angry, sometimes even confused, or maybe even a little bit calm. And all of those feelings, no matter what they are, are completely normal and OK when you’re grieving.”*
- Explain that they may feel different feelings at different times, and that all feelings are normal.
- Explain that this game gives them an opportunity to talk about times or experiences when they have felt different ways during their grief journey.
 - *“Today, we’re going to play a game called FEELINGS BEAN BAG TOSS. It’s a fun and gentle way to give us an opportunity to talk about these different feelings you’ve had during your grief journey. It’s a chance to share, listen, and realize that many of us experience similar emotions.”*

Activity Description:

- Write feelings on construction paper squares *OR*—
 - Have group members identify feelings they had during their grief journey and write them on the construction paper squares with a marker.
- Place the different colored construction paper on the floor, face down.
- Have group members take turns tossing the bean bag on different squares, flipping the paper squares over, and talking about a time when they may have experienced this feeling.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Point out common feelings experienced by the group members.
 - *“As we talked about our feelings, did anyone notice that some feelings came up again and again? Or that maybe someone else shared a feeling or an experience that you also had?”*
- Ask the group members what it was like to share their feelings.
- *“What was it like for you to share your feelings today? Was it easy, or maybe a little bit hard? And what was it like to hear others share their feelings?”*
- Normalize and validate all feelings.
 - *“This game reminded us that grief brings all kinds of feelings, and every single one of them is normal and valid. There’s no right or wrong way to feel. It’s important to remember that feelings come and go, and it’s OK to feel whatever you’re feeling in the moment.”*
- Thank them for sharing so much about their feelings with the group.

Notes:

- Consider the specific needs and developmental level of the group when selecting feelings to include.
- Be prepared to offer support and validation to group members who may become emotional during the activity.

For Ongoing Groups:

- This activity is appropriate for Introductory and Ongoing Groups. If using in an Ongoing Group, you could use a variation as noted below.
 - In addition to the Feelings Squares, introduce some “Action/Coping Strategy” Squares. For example:
 - *“What did you do when you felt this way?”*
 - *“What helped you through this feeling?”*
 - *“How has this feeling changed for you?”*
 - You could also introduce blank squares for participants to write down new feelings that have emerged.

FEELINGS BUILDING

P—Y—M

Suggested Group(s): Preschool, Young, Middle

Purpose: To help children move towards the pain of loss in a safe environment

Task/Need:

- Telling their story
- Identifying and expressing feelings
- Living on the grief spiral

Materials:

- Wooden blocks
- Paper
- Crayons or Markers

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Start a conversation about feelings:
 - Begin with *“When someone is grieving, they may have many different feelings. Some feelings are easy to have, like happiness when we remember something good. But other feelings, like sadness, anger, or confusion, can be very tough to carry inside. I wonder who has feelings that are hard to hold, or that they wish they didn’t have?”*
 - Remember to validate all feelings and point out similar feelings that are identified by group members.
- Instruct the group that they are going to work together to build a FEELINGS BUILDING out of blocks. *“This BUILDING will be a place where we can put all our feelings and thoughts—the tough ones, the easy ones, everything we have inside us that we might not want to keep there all the time.”*
- Encourage them to think about how their BUILDING container might look.
 - *“What do you think a BUILDING that holds sad feelings might look like? Would it be tall, or small? What color would it be?”*
 - *“What about an angry FEELINGS BUILDING? Would it have sharp edges? What kind of windows?”* (This may help begin to externalize feelings).

Activity Description:

- Ask them to draw or write down the thoughts and feelings that feel difficult or heavy.
- Have the group work together to build their FEELINGS BUILDING using the blocks.

- *“Now that our BUILDING is ready, take the paper where you drew or wrote your feelings. We’re going to prepare them to go into our BUILDING. You can crinkle up your paper if you like.”*
- *“As you do, you can quietly think about the feeling, or if you feel comfortable, you can quietly say the feeling or thought out loud before it goes into the BUILDING.”*
- Let the group know they can toss or place their crinkled-up Feelings-Papers into the FEELINGS BUILDING.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Thank them for helping to create the FEELINGS BUILDING and putting their papers inside the BUILDING.
- Lead discussion on how it felt to write those feelings, crinkle them up, and put them inside the BUILDING.
 - *“Which feelings were easy to crinkle or hard to crinkle?”*
- Encourage group members to identify other safe places where they can share those feelings, especially outside the Caring Place.
- *“What are some ways you deal with those feelings?”*

For Ongoing Groups:

- This is a good option for Ongoing Groups, as other feelings activities are often done in Introductory Groups.
- Feelings often change as grief changes, so in an Ongoing Group, additional feelings may be identified. In addition, they may have new ideas about what the BUILDING should look like:
 - *“What feelings are you having now?”*
 - *“How are your feelings now different from your first time at the Caring Place?”*

FEELINGS CHARADES

Y—M—T

Suggested Groups: Young, Middle, Teen

Purpose: To help participants identify and understand their own feelings, as well as recognize those feelings in others

Task/Need:

- Group building
- Identifying and expressing feelings

Materials:

- Cards with various feelings on them (either prepared in advance, or containing feelings identified by the group in a feelings brainstorming activity)
 - Ensure a good mix of common grief emotions (*sad, angry, confused, lonely, tired, worried*) as well as more positive or neutral emotions (*calm, happy, surprised, proud, peaceful*)
 - Tailor feelings to the age group
- Camera (*optional*)

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Ask, “*How many of you have ever played CHARADES before?*” If one or more has, ask them to explain how the game works. Then let them know that today you will be playing CHARADES. (*One person acts out something without talking, and everyone else tries to guess.*)
 - “*When we’re going through tough times like grief, our feelings can be really big. Sometimes it’s hard to find the right words to describe how we feel, and sometimes our bodies show our feelings even before we can say them out loud.*”
- Point out that grief brings a range of feelings; some feelings are painful and difficult while others are a bit easier.
- Explain to the group, “*We’re going to take turns acting out a feeling and seeing if the group can guess that feeling we’re expressing.*”

Activity Description:

- Depending on the age of the group members and their ability to read, group members take turns choosing a Feeling Card and then acting out that feeling for the group to guess. If members of the group cannot read, have a volunteer be a buddy and whisper the word to them.
- Sometimes children will want to pair up with another group member to help with the CHARADES and that’s fine.

Guiding Questions for Discussion (after each feeling is guessed):

- *“What did you notice about how [Participant’s Name] showed that feeling?”* (Focus on body language, facial expressions.)
- *“Has anyone else here felt [feeling] recently?”*
- *“What does [feeling] feel like in your body?”*
- *“When do you usually feel [feeling]?”* (Connect to grief experiences if they volunteer it, but don’t force it.)
- *“What do you do when you feel [feeling]? Is there anything that helps?”* (Focus on coping skills.)

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Reflect on the activity and share any of your own observations with the group:
 - *“It looked like many of you were laughing while we played the game.”*
 - *“What was it like to act out a feeling without using words?”*
 - *“What did you learn about how different feelings can look on people?”*
 - *“Did you notice any feelings that were easier or harder to act out or to guess?”*
 - Ask the group if they liked the game.
 - *“What was it like to hear if others had the same feelings as you?”*
 - How did the group members feel after sharing with others in the group?
- *“This game helps us understand that feelings aren’t just words; they show up in our faces and our bodies too. Sometimes, even if someone isn’t saying they’re sad or angry, we can still see it in how they’re acting. This can help us understand ourselves and others better.”*

Notes:

- If you want to build on this activity, take a picture of younger children acting out their Feeling using body language and facial expression. Place the pictures on a poster board and hang it in the room.

For Ongoing Groups:

- This is a popular activity, and children often enjoy repeating it.
- As they get older, they may be better able to understand and express more sophisticated feelings so this activity can “grow with them.”
- Ask the group if they played FEELINGS CHARADES before.
 - If so, encourage the group to share what feelings they feel more often now.
 - Which ones are hard to feel now?
 - What feelings have changed since their last time in group?

FEELINGS DANCE

Y—M—T

Suggested Groups: Young, Middle, Teen

Purpose: To allow the group to express their feelings about their loss using a physical form of expression

Task/Need:

- Identifying and expressing feelings

Materials:

- No materials needed

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Have the group identify various feelings that they have experienced since the death of their loved one. *(for example: anger, sadness, confusion, longing, relief, peace, loneliness, frustration, bravery)*
 - *“Before we get moving, let’s talk about some of the different feelings you’ve experienced since the death of your loved one. What are some of those feelings that have come up for you?”*
- Talk about the ways they have expressed their feelings, both physically and verbally.
 - *“Now that we have this great list of feelings, let’s think: How do we usually express these feelings? Sometimes we talk about them, sometimes we cry, sometimes we get quiet. But what about physically? How does your body show anger? How does your body show sadness? What does joy look like in movement?”*
- Introducing the FEELINGS DANCE as a creative outlet:
 - *“Today, we’re going to try something a little different and creative called FEELINGS DANCE. It’s a way for us to use our bodies and our voices to show how different feelings look and sound. Think of it as creating moving art with our emotions.”*

Activity Description:

- Ask the group which feeling they want to make a DANCE about.
- Once a feeling word is chosen, prompt the group to create gestures for it. For example:
 - *“We’ve chosen [feeling]. Now, let’s think about this feeling. What’s one physical gesture that expresses [feeling]?”* (For example, for ANGER, maybe clenching fists, stomping—for SADNESS, perhaps drooping shoulders, slow movements.) *“And what’s one sound or short verbal expression that goes with it?”*

- **Focus on individual connection:** *“How does your body want to show [feeling]?”*
- **Compile a sequence:** As children offer gestures/sounds, combine them into a simple sequence.
- **Creating the Group DANCE:** *“Great! We have some gestures and sounds for [specific feeling]. Now, let’s put them together to create a short group DANCE for this feeling. How can we move from one gesture to the next? Can we do it slowly, or quickly? Let’s try it together! And what should we call our [SPECIFIC FEELING] DANCE?”*
- Repeat with other feelings.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Reflecting on the activity: *“Thank you all for bringing so much energy and creativity to our FEELINGS DANCE today! Let’s take a moment to cool down and reflect.”*
 - *“What was it like to participate in this activity? What did it feel like to move your body to express feelings?”*
 - *“Did anyone learn anything new from one another? Maybe you saw someone express a feeling in a way you hadn’t thought of before.”*
 - *“Was it easier or harder to express some feelings physically compared to verbally?”*
 - *“How did moving help you understand or feel your emotions differently?”*
- Validate the group’s experience:
 - *“We saw today that feelings can be expressed in so many ways—through words, through art, and through movement. There’s no one ‘right’ way to show how you feel, and it’s OK to try different things to help you understand and manage your emotions.”*
- *“Did dancing help you feel better? Could this help outside of the Caring Place?”*

Notes:

- Create a safe and supportive environment for physical expression.
- Encourage creativity and collaboration.
- Be mindful of individuals who may have physical limitations.
- Offer alternative ways to participate for those who are not comfortable dancing.
- Movement can be helpful for younger or high energy groups.
 - Implement a cool down activity (deep breaths, sitting on the floor) if needed.

For Ongoing Groups:

- No modification is needed to use in an Ongoing Group, as the feelings may change with the group members and group dynamics.

FEELINGS EXPRESS

P—Y

Suggested Group(s): Preschool, Young

Purpose: To help children identify and understand complex feelings

Task/Need:

- Identifying and expressing feelings
- Living on the grief spiral

Materials:

- FEELINGS EXPRESS pages (*worksheets with train cars labeled with different feelings, found at the end of this write-up*)
- Pencil
- Crayons
- Markers
- Colored Pencils

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Acknowledging various feelings:
 - *“When someone special to us dies, we can feel lots of different feelings. Sometimes it is a happy feeling, sometimes a sad feeling, or a worried feeling. It’s like our feelings are all riding on a train, and each car carries a different emotion.”*
- Introduce the idea of creating a FEELINGS EXPRESS train. *“This train will help us think about and understand all the different feelings we might have, especially since our loved one died. It’s a way to explore how different experiences make us feel.”*
- Ask group members to share a time when they felt mad, sad, or happy.
 - Note any commonalities with the experiences they share with one another.
- Let everyone know they will get a special FEELINGS EXPRESS page, with a train engine and different train cars, and some crayons and pencils. Each car has a different feeling word on it. Explain that they will go through each feeling, one car at a time, and they will talk about what that feeling means. Then, on that car, you can either draw a picture or write a word about something that makes *you* feel that way.

Activity Description:

- Give each group member a FEELINGS EXPRESS page, a pencil, and crayons, markers, colored pencils.
- Explain: *“This is the FEELINGS EXPRESS train. A different feeling is written on each of its cars. We will talk about each feeling and then you can write or draw some things that make you feel this way.”*

- Begin by talking about the feeling word “SAD,” which is written on the first car.
- Ask the group members what it means to be sad.
- Have them write or draw, on the first car, something that makes them sad.
- Continue in the same manner with the other three cars, discussing and identifying situations about being confused, worried, and scared. (*You may use other feelings words as appropriate for your group.*)

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

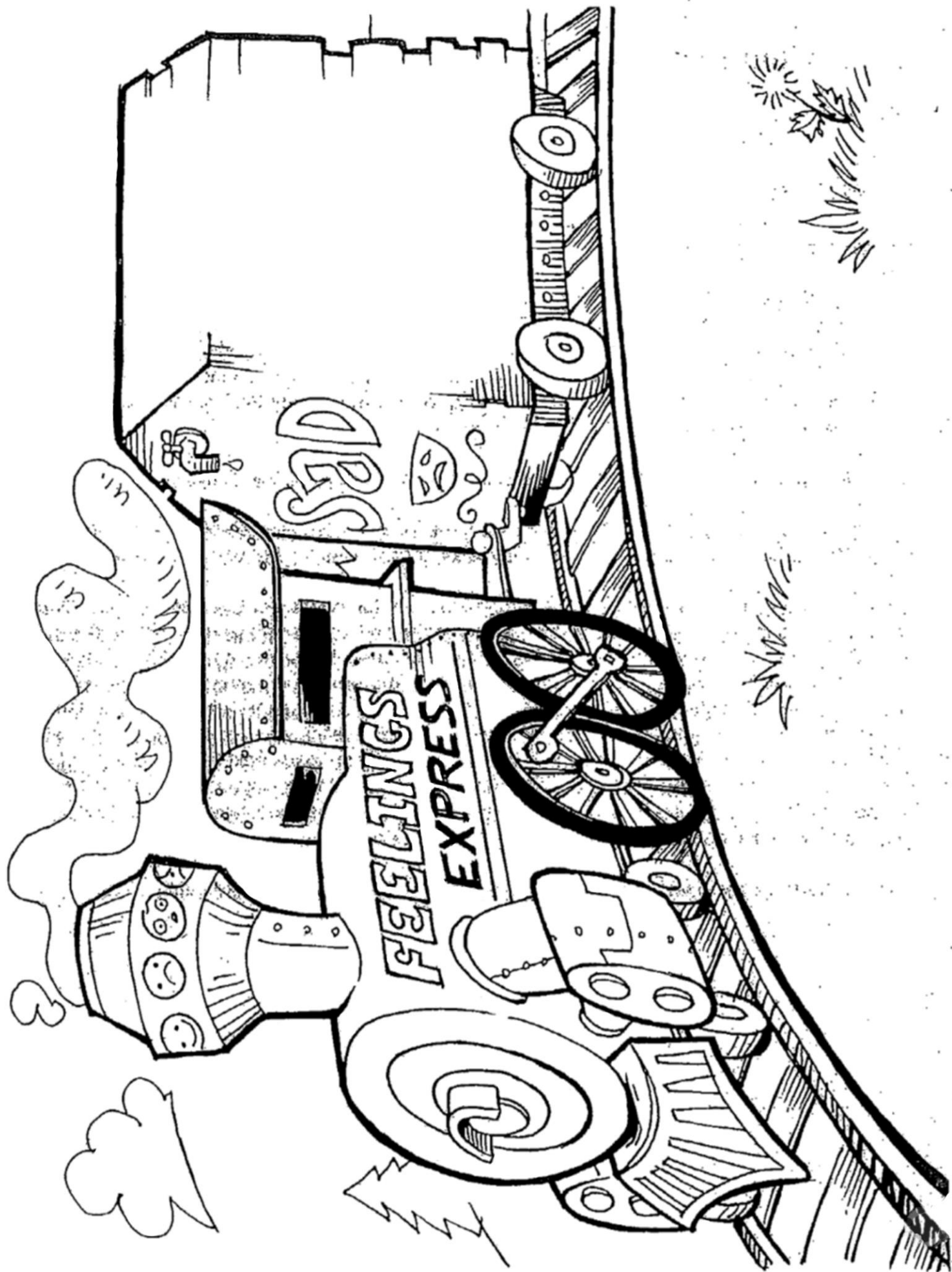
- When the group is finished with this activity, review the first feeling and ask them to share what they have written or drawn on their train.
- Validate all feelings.
 - For example: “Thank you for sharing that. It sounds like [situation] makes you very sad.”—“Has anyone else been in that situation?”—“How has that made you feel?”
- Point out common themes.
- Ask the group what they do when they feel sad, mad, or happy.
 - Who helps them with sad or mad feelings?
- If group members can read, it may be helpful to keep a running list of coping strategies for each feeling on a whiteboard or chart paper. “Does talking to an adult help? Or drawing? Or maybe listening to music?”
- Recognize the group members may have different feelings about similar experiences.
- Repeat for all cars: Go through “CONFUSED”—“WORRIED”—“SCARED” in the same manner, asking for shares and brainstorming coping strategies for each.
- Thank the group for their work on this activity.

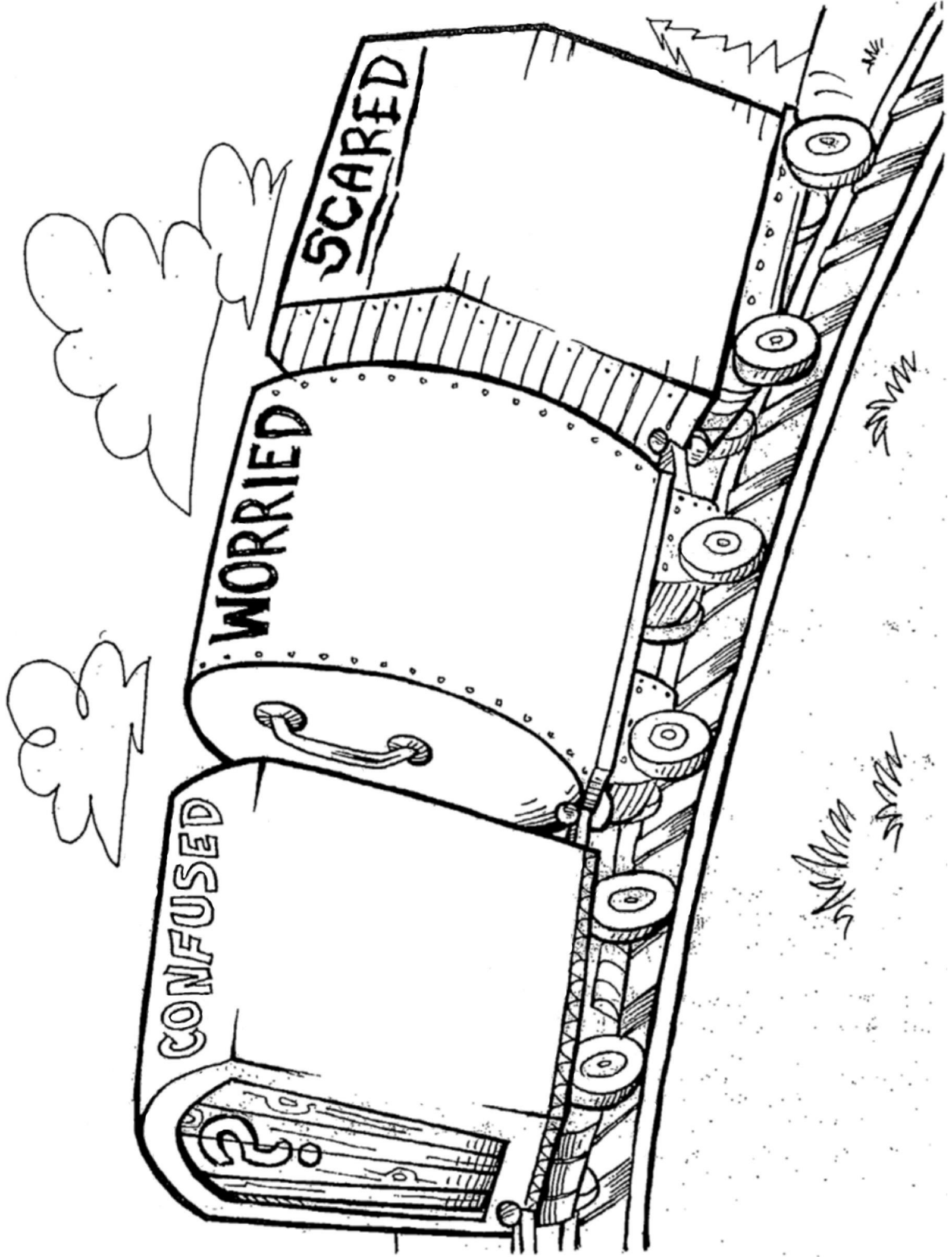
Notes:

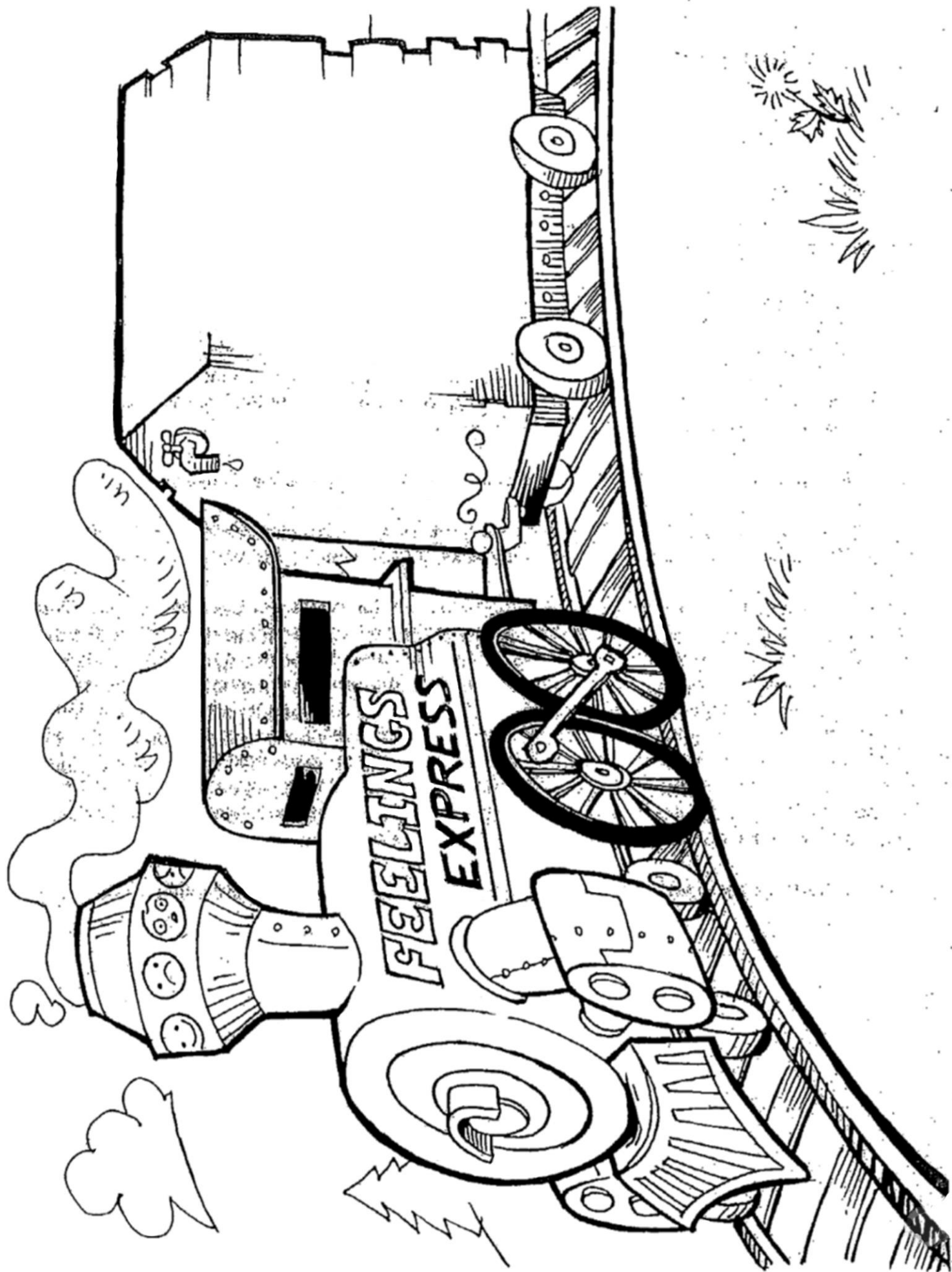
- Adapt the feeling words to the specific needs and understanding of the children.
- Provide a safe and supportive environment for sharing.
- Encourage both verbal and non-verbal expression.
- Help children who may have difficulty writing or drawing.

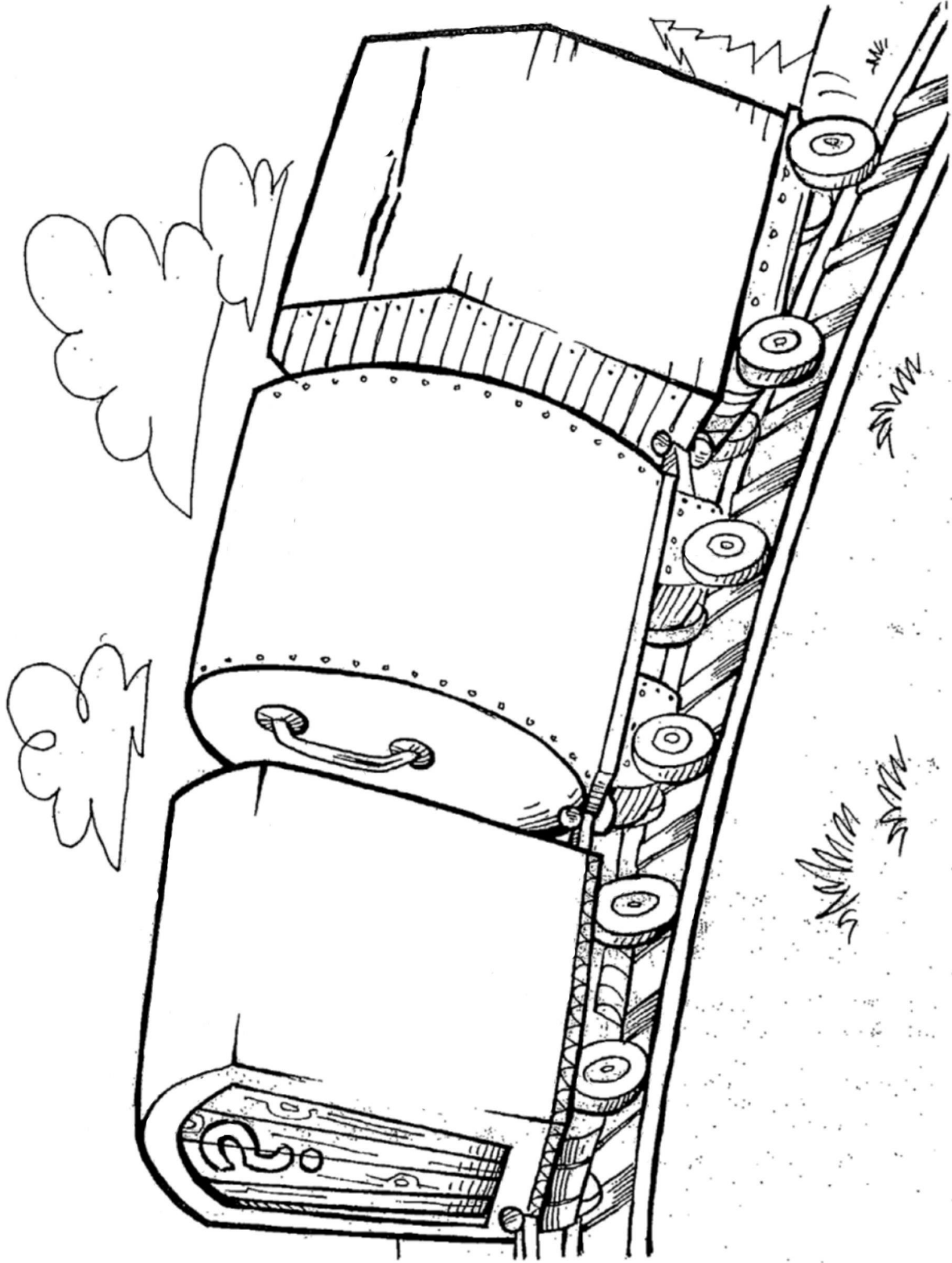
For Ongoing Groups:

- No specific modifications are necessary. Doing this activity in an Ongoing Group acknowledges that feelings and experiences may have changed since their previous Session. This activity provides an opportunity for group members to share these changes or new experiences.









FEELINGS FACE PAPER PLATE

P—Y

Suggested Groups: Preschool, Young

Purpose: To identify emotions and learn to express them

Task/Need:

- Identifying and expressing feelings

Materials:

- Paper plates
- Small poster board
- Markers/crayons
- Scissors
- Brads

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Discuss words to describe different feelings that the group members may have had recently.
 - *“We all have lots of different feelings inside us, especially when someone special has died. Sometimes our feelings are big, sometimes they’re small, and sometimes they change really fast. All those feelings are normal and OK.”*
- Explore not just the feeling words, but also the ways that the feeling is experienced in the body, as well as how the feeling is displayed (for example, how a person’s face looks when feeling the emotion).
 - *“Did you know that our faces and bodies often show how we’re feeling, even before we say a word? When you’re happy, how does your face look? (Smile)—When you’re sad, what does your mouth do? (Frown)—What about when you’re surprised? (Eyes wide open)—Let’s try making some different feelings faces together.”*
- Have the children act out a time they felt each feeling and discuss what made them feel that way.
- Explain they’re going to create a FEELINGS FACE out of a paper plate.

Activity Description:

- Trace around the paper plate onto poster board so that a circle is made the size of the paper plate, then cut out this circle (or allow the child to do it).
- Divide the circle into four different sections, each being equal in size.
- Discuss what four feeling words the child feels most often. Write each feeling in one of the quadrants.

- Along with the word, allow the child to draw a picture of how a person's mouth looks when feeling that emotion. For example, a turned-down mouth might indicate sadness.
- Cut out one quadrant of the paper plate. Try to match the size of the quadrant to what was drawn on the poster board.
- Tell the child that the cut-out part of the paper plate will be where the mouth goes, then ask them decorate the rest of the face on the paper plate. The more creative and involved the child is, the more likely they will use the FEELINGS FACE.
- After it's been decorated, place the paper plate over the poster board circle.
- Place a brad fastener at the center of the cut-out section of the paper plate, allowing for the poster board to be behind the paper plate. They will both now be connected, but the plate can be rotated to display each of the four sections.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- **Demonstrating the FEELINGS FACE:** *"Look at these amazing FEELINGS FACES you've all made! They're so unique and special, just like each of you. Now, let's talk about how you can use this special FACE at home."*
- **Connecting to Communication and Seeking Support:** *"Sometimes, when we show our FEELINGS FACE to a grown-up, they might say, 'Oh, you're feeling [some particular feeling]. What made you feel that way?' Or, 'What can we do to help you feel a little better?' It's like your FACE helps you talk about your feelings."*
- **Reinforcing Validity of All Emotions:** *"Remember, all the feelings on your FACE are important, whether it's happy, sad, angry, or worried. It's good to know what you're feeling. Your FEELINGS FACE helps you practice doing that."*
- **Reminder for Continued Use:** *"Keep your FEELINGS FACE somewhere safe, like next to your bed, so it's ready when you need it. And remember, we're always here to talk about your feelings too."*

Notes:

- Provide assistance with cutting and using brad fasteners as needed.
- Encourage creativity and individual expression in decorating the paper plate.
- Reiterate that all feelings are valid and important.
- This activity may need to be adapted for children with fine motor skill challenges.

For Ongoing Groups:

- No additional modifications are needed for use in an Ongoing Group, as feelings may change. If they remember making a FEELINGS FACE before, ask them if they did the same or different feelings this time.

FEELINGS FISHING

P—Y

Suggested Group(s): Preschool, Young

Purpose: To begin exploring feelings

Task/Need:

- Identifying and expressing feelings

Materials:

- **“Fishing Pole”:** dowel rod with yarn or string and a magnet at the end
- **Fish:** colorful paper fish with paperclips and a feeling written on each
- **Book:** *The Rainbow Fish Finds His Way* by Marcus Pfister

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Read *The Rainbow Fish Finds His Way*. This is a story about a young fish that goes through a scary situation, loses his way, and finds his way back home with the help of some great fish friends. The theme of the book helps to reinforce the idea of unity and working together to help each other through a difficult time.

Activity Description:

- Children sit in a circle (around a “pond”) with fish scattered in the center.
- Children take turns “FISHING” (magnet must touch paperclip) and share a time they felt the emotion on their fish.
- Facilitate discussion:
 - “Has anyone else felt [feeling] before?”
 - “What does [feeling] feel like in your body?”
 - “Can you remember a time when you felt [feeling]? What made you feel that way?”
 - “What do you do when you feel [feeling]? Is there anything that helps you feel a little better?”

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Reflecting on the Experience: “We caught so many different feelings today! What was it like to play FEELINGS FISHING? Did you hear about any feelings you hadn’t thought about before?”
- Reiterating the Value of Shared Experience: “We heard so many different feelings today, and it was so brave of all of you to share. It shows us that everyone has lots of feelings, and it’s really healthy to talk about them. And when we heard others share, we often found that we felt those same feelings too!”

Just like the Rainbow Fish's friends helped him, we can help each other by listening and sharing our feelings."

- Highlighting Coping Strategies: *"We also talked about some good ideas for what to do when we feel certain feelings. Remember, when you feel [a challenging emotion discussed], you can try [a coping skill mentioned]. It's good to have helpers and tools for our feelings."*
- Final Connection to the Rainbow Fish Story: *"Just like Rainbow Fish found his way home with the help of his friends, we're all on our own journey, and we have each other here at the Caring Place to help us when feelings feel big or confusing. Remember, you're not alone."*

Notes:

- This activity can help build group unity and comfort.

For Ongoing Groups:

- No modifications are needed for use in an Ongoing Group, as feelings may change over time and based on the group makeup.

FEELINGS GO FISH

Y—M

Suggested Group(s): Young, Middle

Purpose: To initiate a discussion about feelings and provide opportunities to explore them through a game and list-making, with the opportunity to add to the list each time the group meets.

Task/Need:

- Group building
- Identifying and expressing feelings

Materials:

- 52 index cards with feelings written on them—4 each of 13 different feelings (*these may not be the same as those on the list, but hopefully, there will be some overlap*)
- Poster-size paper for feelings list
- Marker

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Explain that the group is going to be playing a game about feelings, but first you are going to discuss feelings.
 - Have the group define the word “*feeling*”.
 - Ask the group to identify different types of feelings and write these on a large piece of paper. For further exploration, encourage participants to share time they feel a certain feeling. For example, if someone names “*happy*”, ask them to share what makes them happy. Ask the rest of the group to respond to that question too.
 - Normalize the group’s feelings. Praise the group for coming up with so many feelings words. For instance, “*Wow, look at all these feelings! It shows that we all have so many different feelings inside us, and that’s perfectly normal. Sometimes these feelings can be big, sometimes they can be small, and sometimes they can change really quickly.*”
- When the discussion is finished, move on to the card game instructions.

Activity Description:

- Ask, “*Has anyone ever played GO FISH before? It’s a game where you try to collect matching cards.*” (Briefly explain standard GO FISH if needed.)
- Depending on the size of your group, each group member can start with 5–7 cards.

- Caring Place Version: *“Our GO FISH game is special because instead of fish, we have cards with feelings on them! We’ll try to collect sets of the same feeling, like four ‘HAPPY’ cards or four ‘SAD’ cards.”*
- The Sharing Rule: *“Here’s the important part: Every time you get a full set of a feeling—like four ‘LONELY’ cards—you get to tell us about a time you felt that way.”*
 - Offer the rest of the group the chance to share if they ever had that feeling before proceeding with the game.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Ask the group what they thought of the game.
 - *“What was your favorite part of the game? Did you learn any new feelings?”*
 - Highlight similar responses from group room members.
- Revisit the list: *“Let’s look at our big list of feelings we made before the game. Did we talk about any feelings today that aren’t on our list yet? (Add any new ones). Wow, look at how many feelings there are! It just shows how many different things we can experience.”*
- Normalizing & Validating Feelings:
 - **All Feelings are OK:** *“Today, we talked about happy feelings, sad feelings, angry feelings, and many more. It’s really important to remember that all your feelings are OK. You’re allowed to feel happy, sad, mad, or anything else.”*
 - **Feelings Change:** *“Did anyone notice how feelings can come and go, almost like clouds in the sky? Sometimes we feel one way, and then a little later, we might feel differently. That’s perfectly normal.”*
 - **No Right or Wrong Way to Feel Grief:** *“Especially when we’re missing someone we love, our feelings can be all mixed up. That’s part of grief, and it’s unique for everyone. There’s no ‘right’ way to feel.”*
- Empowering Expression:
 - **Why Sharing Helps:** *“When we share our feelings, like we did today, it can sometimes make us feel a little lighter, or it helps us know that others might feel the same way. It also helps others understand us better.”*
 - **Ways to Express:** *“What are some ways we can share our feelings, even if we don’t always want to talk about them?” (Drawing, playing, writing, running, hugging a stuffed animal, talking to a trusted adult....)*

- **Using Supports:** *“Remember how we talked about supports in other activities? Our trusted adults, friends, or even our special activities can help us with our feelings.”*
- Connecting to Future Sessions:
 - **Continuing the FEELINGS LIST:** *“Our FEELINGS LIST is a wonderful start! Over the next week, if you think of any other feelings, or notice yourself feeling a new feeling, try to remember it. We can add to our big list next time!”*
 - **Ongoing Discussion:** *“And remember, we can always talk more about feelings whenever you want.”*

Notes:

- May need to use pictures on the cards for younger group members.
- A volunteer may need to help group members read the feelings.
- There may be a deck of cards available at your site. Please check with staff before making cards.
- Give the option of acting out the feeling words.

For Ongoing Groups:

- No modification is needed for use in Ongoing Groups, as they will get different feelings or be able to share different examples.

FEELINGS MEMORY GAME

P—Y

Suggested Group(s): Preschool, Young

Purpose: To assist young children in identifying feelings

Task/Need:

- Group building
- Identifying and expressing feelings

Materials:

- One set of 10–20 feelings cards made of 5–10 matching pairs of feelings words or drawings (for younger children, drawings are preferable)

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Ask the children if they know what a feeling is. Have a brief discussion about what feelings are and help the kids think of a few different feelings.
 - *“You know how sometimes we have different feelings inside us? Like happy feelings, or sad feelings, or even a little bit silly feelings! Today’s game is all about those feelings.”*
 - *“This is a special place where all feelings are OK. There’s no right or wrong way to feel, and it’s OK to talk about them, or just to listen to others.”*
 - *“Does anyone know what a ‘feeling’ is? It’s like what’s happening inside our hearts and our bodies.”*
 - *“Can you think of any feelings? Like, how do you feel when you get a hug? (HAPPY, LOVED!) How do you feel when you miss someone a lot? (SAD, LONELY!) What about when someone takes your toy without asking? (MAD, FRUSTRATED!)”*
- Then let the group know that they will be playing a game where you must match feelings. Describe the rules of MEMORY and begin the game.
 - **Familiarity:** *“Has anyone ever played the MEMORY GAME before? It’s where you try to find matching pictures!”* Briefly explain standard MEMORY GAME if needed.
 - **Our Special Version:** *“Today, we’re going to play FEELINGS MEMORY! Instead of matching just any pictures, we’re matching pictures of feelings!”*

Activity Description:

- Place twenty (two of each feeling) cards face down on a table and allow children to turn two cards over at a time to try to find a match. If a match is found, the

child takes the matched cards and tries two additional cards. If a match is not found, the unmatched cards are turned face down, and the next player tries to find a match.

- **Game Mechanics:** *“We’ll put all the cards face down like this. Then, when it’s your turn, you get to turn over two cards. If they match—hooray! You found a pair of feelings! If they don’t match, that’s OK, we just turn them back over, and the next person tries.”*
- When a matched pair is found, the group discusses a time when they have felt that feeling.
 - **The Sharing Rule—The Heart of the Game:** *“Here’s the really important part about our FEELINGS MEMORY GAME: Every time you find a match, you get to keep the cards! But before you keep them, we’re going to talk about that feeling. You can tell us about a time you felt that feeling. For example, if you match ‘HAPPY,’ you could say, ‘I felt happy when I played with my dog!’ Or, if you match ‘SAD,’ you might say, ‘I felt sad when I missed my grandpa.’”*
 - I PASS RULE Option: *“Remember, if you find a match and you don’t want to talk about that feeling right then, or you can’t think of a time, it’s totally OK to pass. We want everyone to feel comfortable. And when someone else is sharing, we listen quietly and carefully.”*

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Congratulate the kids on making the matches that they have made and talk a bit about different feelings that they have had.
 - *“You all did such an amazing job playing FEELINGS MEMORY today! You’re so good at finding matches and even better at talking about your feelings!”*
 - *“Did anyone notice that we talked about some feelings more than others today? Like maybe ‘SAD’ or ‘HAPPY’ came up a lot?”* (This subtly normalizes common grief feelings).
 - *“It’s so important to remember that all your feelings are OK. There’s no right or wrong feeling to have. Whether you feel happy, sad, angry, or confused, those feelings belong to you, and they’re OK.”*
 - *“Sometimes, feelings can be like the weather—they change! One moment you might feel sunny, and the next moment you might feel a little cloudy. That’s just how feelings work, and it’s perfectly normal, especially when you’re missing someone.”*

- *“When someone we love dies, it’s common to have lots of different feelings all at once. Like maybe you feel sad because you miss them, but also happy because you remember a fun time. That’s OK too.”*
- *“How do you know what feeling you’re having? Sometimes our bodies tell us! Like maybe your tummy feels fluttery when you’re excited, or your hands clench when you’re mad.”* (Brief, simple examples).
- *“Why do you think it’s important to talk about our feelings, like we did today? (Allow responses). Yes, it helps us understand ourselves better, and it helps other people understand us too. Sometimes, talking about a feeling can make it feel a little bit lighter.”*
- *“What are some other ways we can show our feelings, besides talking?”* (Drawing, playing, hugging a teddy bear, running around outside, listening to music....)
- *“Now that you are super feelings experts from playing FEELINGS MEMORY, you’ll be even better at knowing what you’re feeling and maybe even telling someone about it.”*
- *“Remember, we can always keep practicing identifying and talking about our feelings.”*
- As always, thank the group members for their participation.

Notes:

- Young children may take longer to make matches or share. Give them space and time.
- Regardless of the feeling or the experience shared, respond with non-judgmental validation. *“Thank you for sharing that”–“It sounds like that was a tough time”–“Many people feel [that way]”* are good responses.

For Ongoing Groups:

- No modifications are needed for an Ongoing Group, as they may get different feeling matches and be able to share new or different examples.

FEELINGS PAINTING: ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM OPEN ART STUDIO

Y—M—T—A

Suggested Group(s): Young, Middle, Teen, Adult

Purpose: To identify and express feelings associated with the loss using art

Task/Need:

- Identifying and expressing feelings

Materials:

- Examples of modern art
- Acrylic paints
- Canvas
- Various brushes/palette knives/sponges
- Parchment Paper
- Painters Tape
- Cups of water
- Paper towels
- Background music (*optional*)

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Discuss ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM ART with the group
 - *“Sometimes, when we have big feelings, it can be hard to put them into words, right? Or maybe we just don’t feel like talking. Today, we’re going to explore a type of art called ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM. That’s a fancy name for art that’s all about **feelings and colors and movement**, not about trying to draw something perfectly.”*
- More emphasis is placed on the act of making art and expressing oneself than on the outcome.
 - *“Think of it like this: have you ever heard a song that made you feel happy or sad, even without any words? That’s kind of what we’re going for with our PAINTING today. We’re going to let our feelings guide our hands and colors.”*
- Show examples of ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM ART (for example, Mark Rothko—Jackson Pollack—Willem de Kooning—Wassily Kandinsky)
 - *“I’ve brought some pictures of paintings by famous artists who did this kind of art. Look at these colors and shapes! [show examples]. When you look at this one, what kind of feeling does it make you think of? Does it look fast or slow? Bright or quiet? Strong or gentle?”*

- Have the group discuss what emotions the particular art pieces represent for them. (*Note: there is no right or wrong—each group member may view particular art pieces in a different way.*)
 - “Remember, there’s no right or wrong answer. What one person sees as a ‘HAPPY’ painting, someone else might see as ‘ENERGETIC’. It’s all about how you feel when you look at it.”
- Demonstrate several ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM techniques for the group (for example, Action Painting—Color Field Painting).
 - “For our *PAINTINGS* today, we’re not trying to draw a house or a dog. We’re just going to let the paint move! Here are some fun ways you can do it: You can drip paint [demonstrate], or splash it gently [demonstrate], or use a big brush to make swishy lines [demonstrate] or even use a palette knife to make thick squiggles [demonstrate]. You can use your fingers too, if you like!”
 - “The most important thing is to **just try it out and have fun with the colors and textures**. If you feel like using lots of one color, go for it! If you want to paint really fast, that’s OK! If you want to paint very slowly and gently, that’s also OK!”

Activity Description:

- Allow the group to have time to explore and experiment with the various ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM painting techniques.
- Encourage the group to be spontaneous and choose colors and styles that speak to them in the moment rather than trying to achieve a specific outcome.
- Consider playing instrumental music during this time.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Once the group has completed their *PAINTINGS*, allow time for discussion:
 - “Would anyone like to tell us a little bit about their artwork?” (Open-ended, allows them to lead.)
 - “What colors did you find yourself drawn to today? Why do you think you chose those particular colors?” (Focus on choice and simple reflection, not deep meaning.)
 - “What was it like to use the paint? Did you like dripping, or swirling, or something else?” (Focus on the physical experience of painting.)
 - “Was there a particular part of your *PAINTING* that felt important to you, or that you really enjoyed creating?”

- *“How did it feel while you were painting? Was it relaxing, exciting, energetic, peaceful?” (Focus on the feeling of the activity, not necessarily the feelings portrayed in the art.)*
- *“What did you learn or notice about yourself or the painting process today?”*

Notes:

- This activity focuses on process over product, emphasizing emotional expression rather than artistic skill.
- The use of instrumental music can help create a conducive atmosphere for introspection and creative flow.
- Encourage participants to respect each other’s interpretations and expressions during the discussion.

For Ongoing Groups:

- No modifications needed if using in an Ongoing Group, as feelings may change. However, for group members who have done this in the past, you can ask them how their PAINTING done this time compares to the previous PAINTING. How is it different or the same?

FEELINGS PIZZA

Y—M

Suggested Group(s): Young, Middle

Purpose: To provide a safe space to explore and understand the complex feelings that arise from loss

Task/Need:

- Identifying and expressing feelings
- Living on the grief spiral

Materials:

- Brown construction paper cut into PIZZA-SHAPED SLICES
- PIZZA TOPPINGS cut from construction paper or clip art from the internet; these must be small enough to fit multiple TOPPINGS on the PIZZA SLICES
- A legend of what feeling each PIZZA TOPPING represents (*these can be agreed upon as a group, or each child can make their own*)
- Shredded yellow paper for Cheese
- Empty, clean Pizza Box (*optional*)
- Glue

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Begin with an open discussion about feelings. Acknowledge that when we grieve, we experience a wide range of emotions, and these feelings can change over time.
- Emphasize that even within the same family, people can have very different feelings about the same loss. Remind them that *all* feelings are OK and valid.
- Make sure the group members understand the meaning of various feeling words. Provide examples or explanations if they are unsure.

Activity Description:

Creating Our FEELINGS PIZZA

- Give each group member a Pizza-shaped slice of brown construction paper to represent the PIZZA CRUST.
- Instruct them to write the name of the person who died on the “CRUST” of their PIZZA SLICE. This helps them connect the activity to their specific loss.
- Explain that the TOPPINGS will represent their different feelings. Provide a variety of colored construction paper scraps that can be used as “TOPPINGS.” Each color can represent a different feeling. (*For example, RED = anger—BLUE = sadness—YELLOW = happiness—GREEN = hope—etc.*)
- Instruct the children to choose the TOPPINGS (colors) that represent the feelings they have experienced since the death of their loved one. They can add as much

or as little of each TOPPING as they feel reflects their experience. There's no right or wrong way to do it.

- Once everyone has completed their PIZZA SLICE, join the SLICES together to form a whole PIZZA PIE. Place the completed FEELINGS PIZZA in an empty Pizza Box. This symbolizes the unity and support within the group.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Take a moment to observe the completed PIZZA. Point out that each SLICE looks different, reflecting the unique way each person experiences grief.
 - *“Looking at your own PIZZA SLICE, what was one feeling that surprised you that you put on there?”*
 - *“Is there a feeling on your PIZZA SLICE that felt especially important for you to show today?”*
 - *“If you could add one more ‘TOPPING’ or feeling to your SLICE right now, what would it be?”*
 - *“What did you learn about your own feelings by creating your PIZZA SLICE?”*
 - *“Was it easy or hard to choose the TOPPINGS for your feelings? Why?”*
- Emphasize that the group's PIZZA is a symbol of the larger community of people who are grieving, and a reminder that they are not alone in their experiences.
 - *“As we look at our whole PIZZA together, what do you notice about everyone's SLICES?”* (This can lead to discussing the “different ways people grieve” point.)
 - *“Did seeing everyone else's PIZZA SLICE make you think about your own feelings in a new way?”*
 - *“What's one thing you heard or saw from someone else's PIZZA SLICE that you could relate to?”*
 - *“How does it feel to see that everyone here has different feelings, but we're all part of the same PIZZA?”* (Connecting to the “not alone” theme).
 - *“Is there a TOPPING on someone else's PIZZA SLICE that you recognized as a feeling you also experience, even if you didn't put it on your SLICE today?”*
- Looking to the future without our special person can be challenging
 - *“Our feelings can change over time, just like you might add new TOPPINGS to a PIZZA. What's one feeling you think might become more or less present for you in the future?”*
 - *“Even though we're all grieving, we also have moments of happiness or peace. Where do you see those feelings represented on your PIZZA SLICE or on our whole PIZZA?”*

- *“What’s one way making this PIZZA helped you understand your grief a little better today?”*
- *“What message does our FEELINGS PIZZA give us about living with grief?”*

For Ongoing Groups:

- Ask the group if they have done this activity before.
 - *“Does your SLICE OF PIZZA look the same or different?”*
 - *“Is there something new you added this time?”*

FEELINGS QUICK DRAW

Y—M—T

Suggested Group(s): Young, Middle, Teen

Purpose: To help the group connect and get to know each other better. To help individuals identify and express their feelings in a creative way.

Task/Need:

- Group building
- Identifying and expressing feelings

Materials:

- Index cards, each with a different feeling word written on it (*Sad, Happy, Angry, Confused, Hopeful, Frustrated, Calm, etc.*)
- Pens/Pencils and Paper or a Whiteboard and Markers

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Discuss drawing games like *Pictionary* or *Win, Lose, or Draw*.
 - “*Has anyone ever played drawing games like Pictionary or Win, Lose, or Draw? Today, we’re going to play our own special version of a drawing game, but instead of drawing everyday objects, we’ll be drawing feelings.*”
 - “*This is a low-pressure way to think about and share different emotions we all experience.*”
- Let the group know that you’ll be playing your own version of a drawing game with feelings words.

Activity Description:

- Before you start, quickly decide as a group on some simple rules. For example:
 - Can someone write down part of the word if they think they know it?
 - Can the person drawing use hand gestures? (*Often, it’s more fun if they cannot, but it’s your group’s choice.*)
 - Set a time limit for drawing each card (*for example, 1–2 minutes*).
- One person picks an index card (without showing it to anyone else).
- That person then draws the feeling word which is on the card, without speaking or making sounds.
- The other group members try to guess what feeling is being drawn.
- The first person to guess the feeling correctly gets to choose the next card and draw.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Be curious about what took place as they were playing:
 - *“What was it like to try and draw a feeling? Was it easier or harder than you expected?”*
 - *“What was it like trying to guess what feeling someone was drawing?”*
 - *“Sometimes, feelings can be hard to describe with words, but drawing can give us another way to express them.”*
- Congratulate the group on taking the risk of talking about feelings.

Notes:

- You can easily adapt this game by writing other relevant words on the cards, especially things connected to the Caring Place, or to their experiences. For example, you could include words like SUPPORT, MEMORY, FRIENDSHIP, or even things like PIZZA or COMMUNITY ROOM to get the group comfortable before moving to deeper feelings.

For Ongoing Groups:

- No modifications needed, as the game and cards drawn can be different, as well as group makeup and group dynamics may change.

FEELINGS RELEASE

T—A

Suggested Group(s): Teen, Adult

Purpose: To release uncomfortable feelings and share them in a supportive environment

Task/Need:

- Identifying and expressing feelings
- Developing coping skills and supports

Materials:

- One large sheet
- One large plastic tarp or shower curtain liner
- Tempera or other water-based (soluble) paint
- Paint brushes
- Water
- Paper towels
- Bucket of water balloons

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Volunteers are encouraged to let group members know ahead of time about this activity so they can dress in clothes that can get messy.
- Have the group think about feelings or uncomfortable/unpleasant thoughts they would like to let go.
 - *“Today, we’re going to try an activity called FEELINGS RELEASE. We’ll be thinking about some of those uncomfortable or heavy feelings and thoughts that come with grief—the ones we might wish we could let go of.”*
- Reinforce that the Caring Place is a safe place where all feelings can be discussed.
 - *“Remember, the Caring Place is a safe space where all your feelings are welcome and can be talked about openly. There’s no right or wrong way to feel.”*
- Reinforce that the group is here to support one another and that everyone in the group is here for a similar reason.
 - *“We’re all here to support each other, and it’s good to remember that everyone in this group is here because they’re going through something similar.”*

Activity Description:

- Ask group members to paint words or messages on the sheet that describe the pain of their grief (*for example: anger, or what worries/questions they have, etc.*).

- *“I invite each of you to come up to the sheet and paint words or messages that represent the pain, anger, worries, questions, or any other difficult feelings you’ve been carrying about your grief. You can write as much or as little as you like.”*
- Discuss with the group members what it was like to paint the words on the sheet.
 - Once everyone who wants to has painted, you can ask: *“What was it like for you to paint those words or messages on the sheet?”*
- Instruct the group that they will throw water balloons at the sheet.
 - *“Now, we’re going to have an opportunity to symbolically ‘RELEASE’ these feelings. We’re going to use these water balloons to hit the sheet.”*
- Process what it was like to throw the water balloons.
 - After the water balloons have been thrown, gather the group and ask: *“What was it like to throw the water balloons at the sheet?”*
- What happened to the paint?
 - *“What happened to the paint? Do you notice how the words or colors might have blended or become less distinct?”*
- Have the group brainstorm ways they can feel supported in carrying these types of feelings.
 - *“This activity helps us think about how we can manage strong feelings. Beyond this symbolic RELEASE, what are some practical ways you can feel supported when you’re carrying these types of difficult feelings in your daily life?”* (Encourage them to share ideas like talking to someone, journaling, exercising, listening to music, etc.)

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Summarize the ways the group members found support.
 - *“Let’s quickly recap some of the great ideas you all shared about how to find support when feelings get heavy.”* (Summarize the coping strategies the group brainstormed.)
- Thank the group for sharing their thoughts and feelings.
 - *“Thank you all so much for your openness and for sharing your thoughts and feelings today. It takes courage to do this work.”*

Notes:

- This activity needs a large space. Outdoors is ideal, if possible, but an indoor space that can get wet and is easy to clean will also work.
- When throwing water balloons, make sure everyone stands a safe distance from each other and from the sheet itself to avoid accidental hits.

- It's a good idea to offer safety glasses or goggles, especially if people are throwing with a lot of force. It may also be important to wear aprons to cover clothes.
- Be mindful that some participants might have physical limitations. Offer alternative ways for them to participate if throwing is difficult (*for example, if they can't throw, perhaps they can help prepare the balloons or describe how they would throw*).
- Thoroughly clean up the area after the activity.

For Ongoing Groups:

- No modifications needed to use in an Ongoing Group, as what they may want to release can change over time.

FEELINGS SPINNERS

Y—M

Suggested Group(s): Young, Middle

Purpose: To help explore different feelings that come with grief and think about ways to manage them. It offers a visual reminder of how our feelings can sometimes feel jumbled or overwhelming.

Task/Need:

- Identifying and expressing feelings
- Living on the grief spiral

Materials:

- String
- SPINNER templates (*see pages at the end of this activity*)
- Cardboard or heavy cardstock cut in circles the same size as the templates
- Glue Stick
- Markers

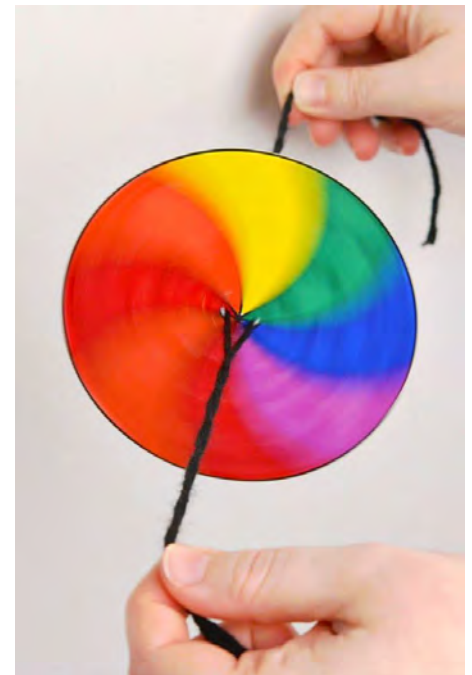
Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Brainstorm and create a list of feelings they have experienced since the loss.
 - *“Start by thinking about all the different feelings you’ve experienced since your loss. There are no right or wrong answers, and all feelings are OK. Let’s make a list together.”* (Write them on a board or on a large paper.)
- Discuss methods they have used to manage those feelings.
 - *“Thinking about those feelings, what are some things you’ve done, or heard of, that help you manage them? When you feel [various feelings], what do you do to cope?”* (Discuss different strategies like talking to someone, listening to music, exercise, deep breathing, etc.)
- Have materials laid out and ready so they can choose their SPINNER template and string color that they like.

Activity Description:

- Each group member will cut out two SPINNER templates.
 - *“Today we’re going to make something that will represent some of those feelings we talked about and also might be something you can use to help when you’re having some of the hard feelings. We’re going to make a SPINNER toy, or some people call it a WHIRLIGIG—funny name isn’t it? We’ll start by having you pick which SPINNER templates you like. Once you pick yours, go ahead and cut them out around the outside. Don’t cut along the lines on the inside—you’ll have a chance to color those in a few minutes.”* (Offer assistance, especially to younger participants, if needed.)

- Glue the two SPINNERS to a cardboard circle. Assist the group members in lining up the open dot circles on the front and back, as that is where the holes will be made for the string.
 - *“Looks like everyone has their SPINNER circles cut. We’ll give each of you a piece of cardboard that is the same size. Take a glue stick and glue one SPINNER to the front and one to the back of a circle—this will make your SPINNER sturdier. Make sure it’s glued on well around the outside, but don’t put glue around those three tiny dots in the middle—we can help if needed.”*
- Allow time for them to color their SPINNER and see if they have ideas on what colors might represent certain feelings (*red for anger, maybe, and blue for sadness, yellow for relief, orange for confused, etc.*).
 - *“Now we’re going to color the SPINNERS. You can use whatever colors you like, but maybe the colors you choose represent a feeling you’ve had since your person has died. Maybe blue is a color you think of with sadness, but for some it might be a color for calm. There’s no right or wrong color or feeling—this is your SPINNER. If you like, you can color it and then also write the feeling you had on the color; or you can just color it—it’s up to you.”*
- For the next step, volunteers should make the holes for safety reasons. Ensure the holes are large enough for yarn to pass through.
 - *“Once you’ve glued your SPINNER to the cardboard circle, let a volunteer know. We can help make the holes where those little open dots are near the middle, so we can put string through that part.”*
- Cut a piece of yarn, about 18 inches long, and use a yarn needle (or toothpick) to poke it through one of the holes near the center of the SPINNER. Pull the yarn half way through so there’s an equal amount on each side. Repeat with a second piece of yarn on the second hole.
 - *“You each have two pieces of yarn. You want to put each piece through one hole near the middle and back through the other hole. Pull it through until there are equal lengths on each side. Once both pieces of string are through, we will help you knot them together to secure it.”*



- Hold each end of the string and blow onto the SPINNER. The colors will run together, much like their feelings in times of loss.
 - *“Your SPINNER is ready. Hold the ends of the string firmly in each hand, so your SPINNER hangs freely in the middle. The trick is to twist your hands in opposite directions, winding up the string. Then, quickly pull your hands apart, making the SPINNER rotate really, really fast in the middle of the string. You can also try blowing on it while it spins.”*
 - *“Notice how the colors and the feelings seem to blend together as it spins. This can be a lot like how our feelings are when we’re grieving—sometimes they feel separate, but often, they can feel all mixed up and complex.”*

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

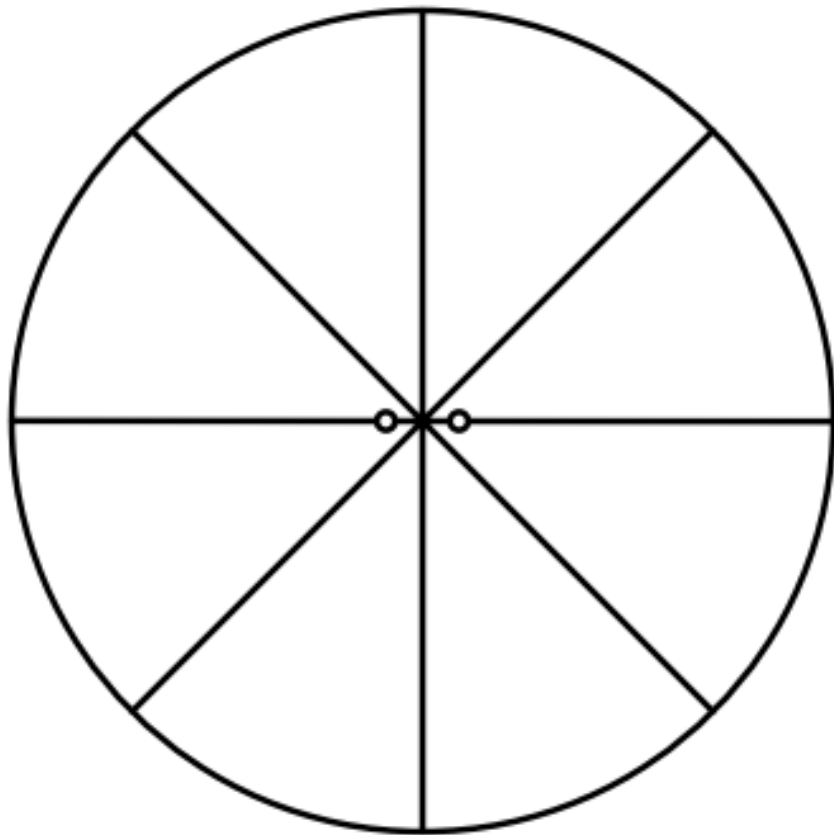
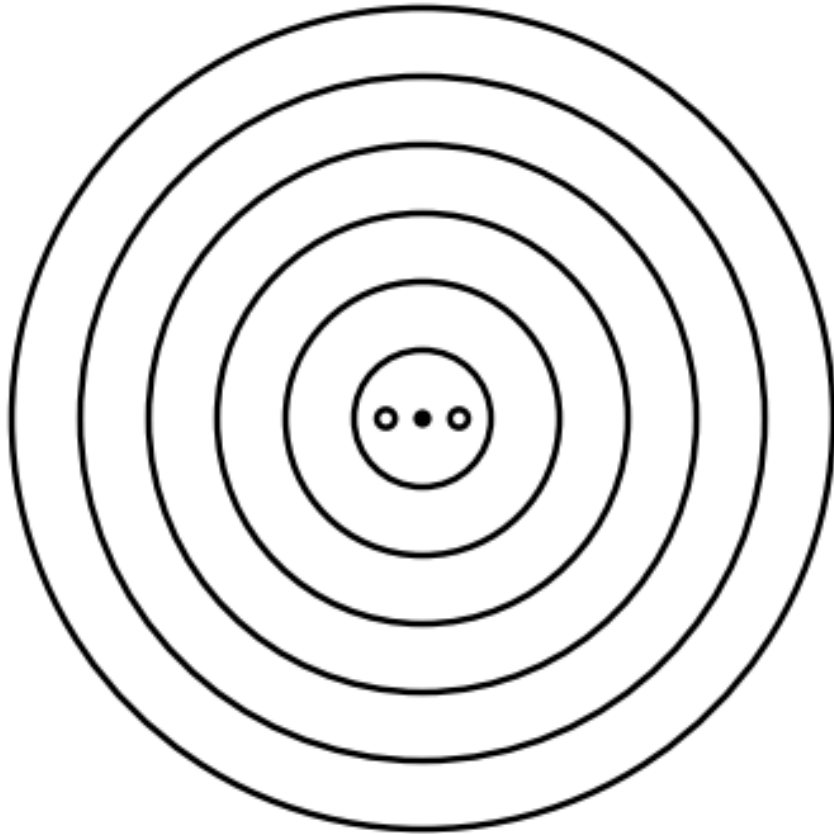
- Discuss the use of breathing as a coping skill to manage feelings.
 - *“When you watched your SPINNER, how did it feel to see all those colors and feelings blend together? Does that sometimes feel like how your feelings are inside?”* (This reinforces the idea that mixing feelings is normal.)
 - *“That act of blowing on the SPINNER can actually be a simple way to practice deep breathing. When our feelings feel overwhelming or jumbled, taking a few slow, deep breaths can be a very helpful coping skill. Let’s try it together for a moment. Take a deep breath in and hold it for a few seconds, then blow it all out, like you’re blowing out a candle—see how fast the SPINNER goes.”*

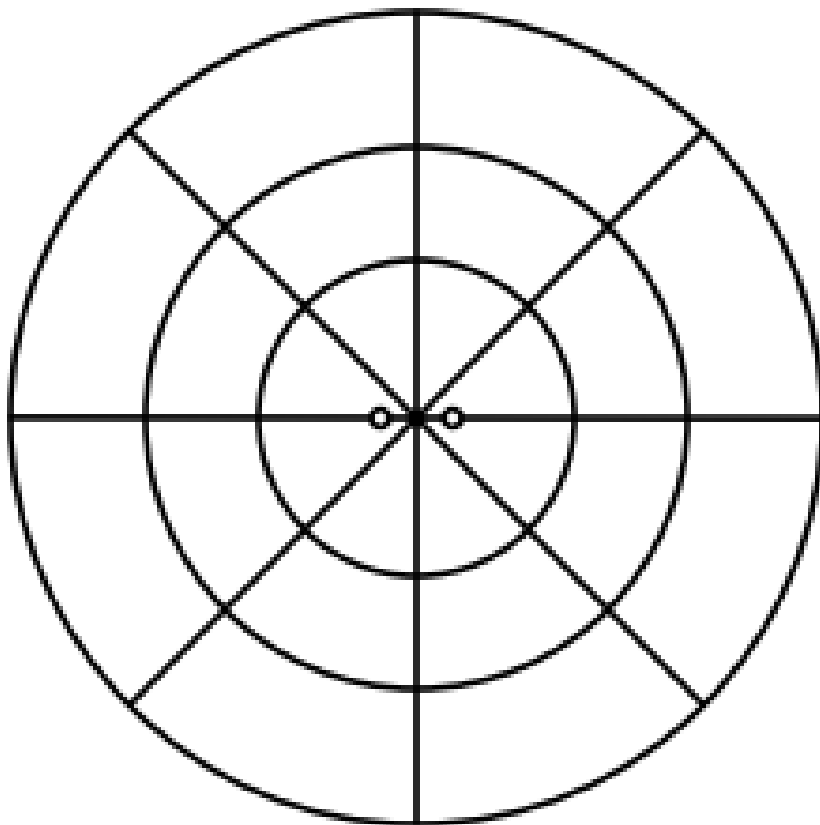
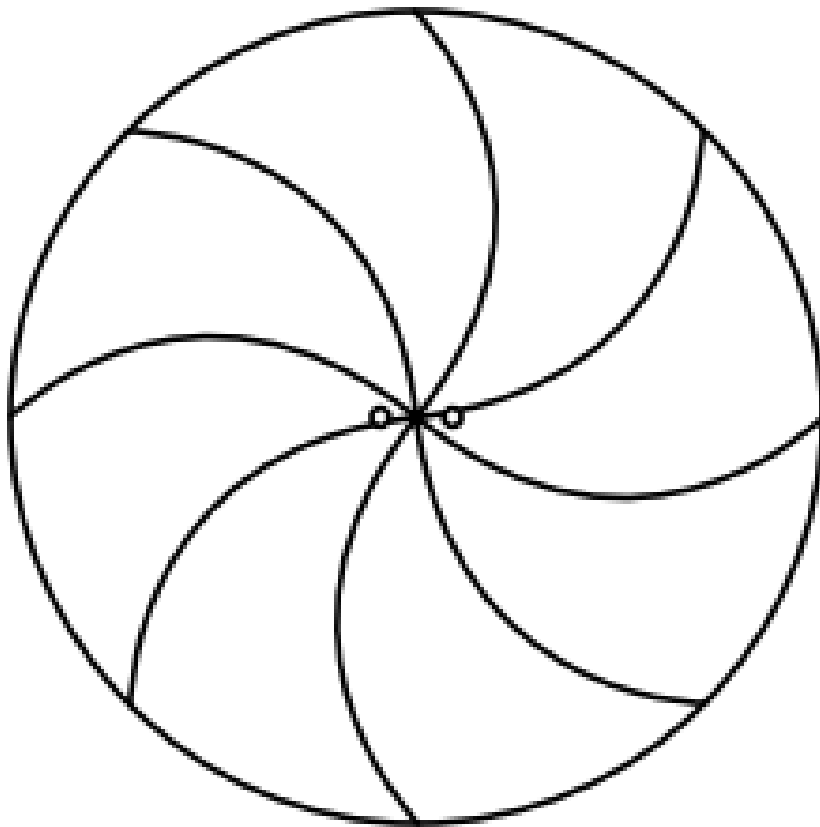
Notes:

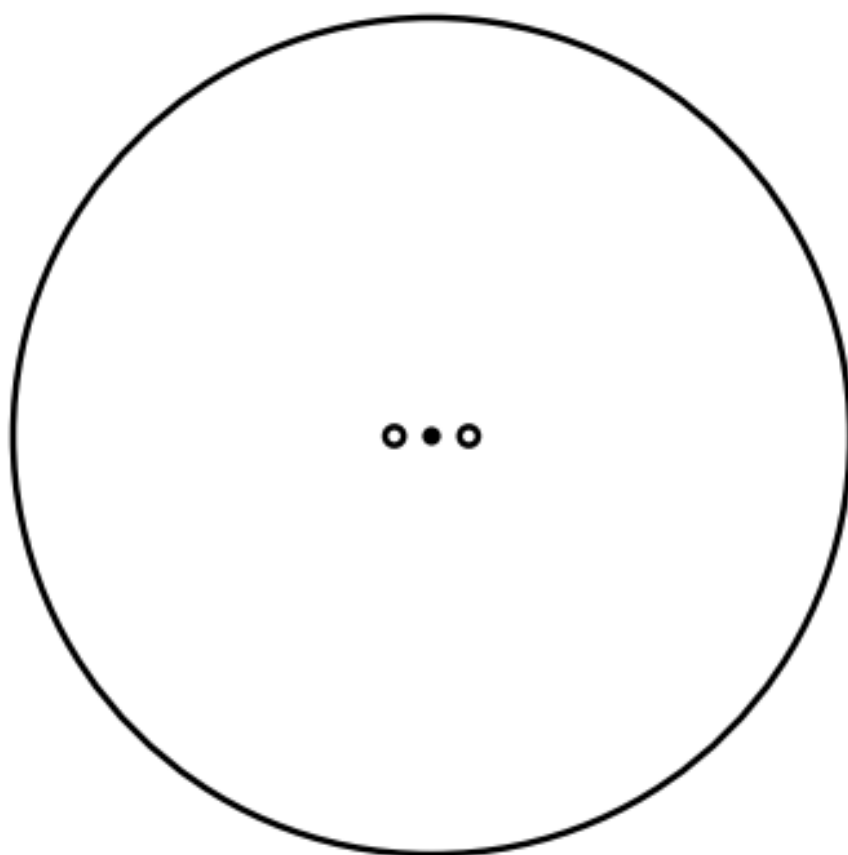
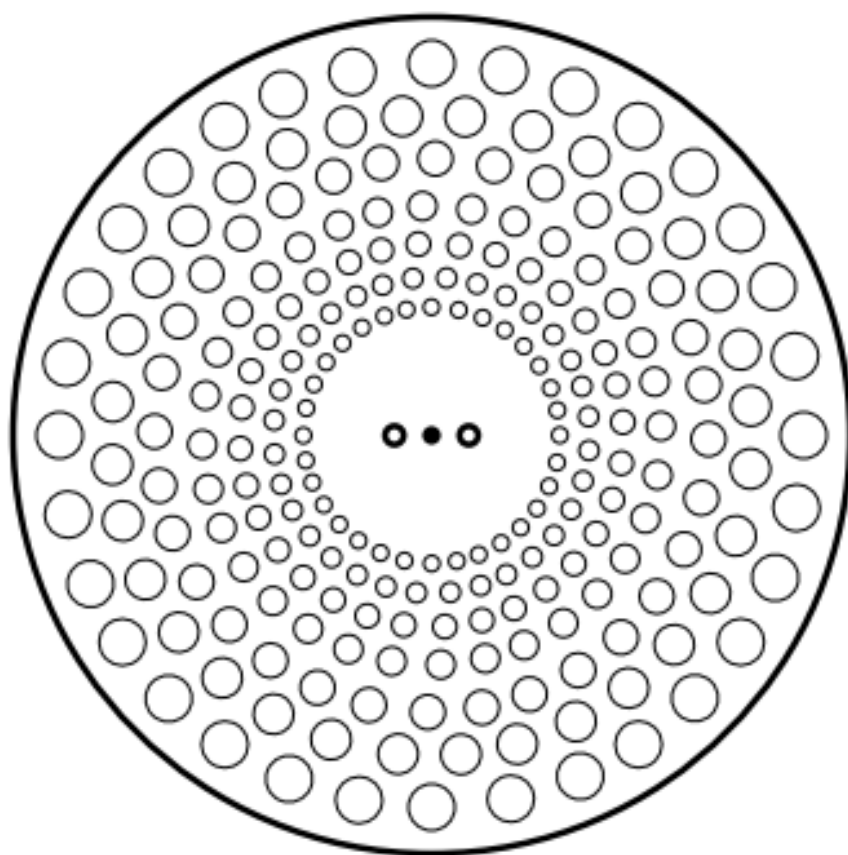
- Have an example ready to show them, so they can see what it will look like and to demonstrate how to use it.
- Be ready to help with cutting, gluing, or threading the string, especially with younger children or anyone who might find fine motor tasks challenging.
- Precut the cardboard circles to match the SPINNER templates and string to ensure that they’re the appropriate sizes.
- As noted, volunteers should make the holes in the center for safety.

For Ongoing Groups:

- No modifications are needed for use in an Ongoing Groups, as feelings may change, and the group discussion will be different.







FEELING SQUARES

M—T—A

Suggested Group(s): Middle, Teen, Adult

Purpose: To help group members identify feelings, process feelings, and learn coping skills

Task/Need:

- Identifying and expressing feelings
- Developing coping skills and supports
- Living on the grief spiral

Materials:

- Paper
- Pencils
- Markers
- Scissors
- Glue
- Magazines
- Envelopes containing individual feelings words

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Have different feelings words cut up and placed in separate envelopes for each word.
- Brainstorm a list of feelings words with group members and talk about times when they may have felt that way.
 - *“Start by thinking about all the different feelings we experience, especially when we’re grieving. There are so many! What feelings come to mind for you?”* (Write a list on a whiteboard or large paper.)
 - *“Can anyone share a time they felt [various feelings]? You don’t have to talk about your loss if you don’t want to, just generally.”* (This helps everyone connect to the words.)

Activity Description:

- Give each group member a piece of paper and have them fold the paper into four sections—folding it in half, and in half again. When unfolded, everyone’s will have four boxes or SQUARES.
 - *“Today we’re going to create a special FEELING SQUARE to explore one specific emotion. This will help us understand it better and think about ways to manage it.”*
- Pass out envelopes so that each member has a feelings word.
 - *“Each envelope has a different feeling word inside. Pick one envelope—this will be the feeling you will focus on for your FEELING SQUARE.”*

- Explain the following chart: *“Fill in each of the four boxes on your paper with different things about your feeling word. We’ll go through it one section at a time, so we can work on it together.”*
 - **Top-Left Box:** *“In this box, write down other words that mean almost the same thing as your feeling word. What are some synonyms for your feeling?”*
 - **Top-Right Box:** *“Look through the magazines to find and cut out pictures that show or represent your feeling word. Glue them into this box.”* (Encourage creativity!)
 - **Bottom-Left Box:** *“In this box, write or draw what this feeling feels like in your body, or what you might look like when you have this feeling. For example, if your word was ‘ANGER,’ maybe you’d write ‘tense shoulders’ or draw a frowning face.”*
 - **Bottom-Right Box:** *“Finally, in this important box, write down things you can do when you feel this way. These are your Coping Skills—healthy ways to handle this feeling. Remember our brainstorming earlier? What helps you?”*
- Do each section at a time with the group so that the group is working together on each SQUARE.
 - *“We’ll do each section together. Everyone will work on the Synonyms box first, and then move to the Pictures box, and so on.”*

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Have group members share their finished paper and have other group members guess the feeling word they did.
 - *“Now that your FEELING SQUARES are complete, would anyone like to share theirs? You can hold it up, and the rest of us can try to guess what your feeling word was based on what you created.”* (This can be a fun and engaging way to share.)
- Process with the group the different feelings they have and spend time discussing the Coping section with one another.
 - *“Let’s talk about the Coping Skills section. What are some of the helpful things you all put down for managing your feelings? It’s great to hear everyone’s ideas and learn from each other.”*
 - *“Remember, it’s OK to feel all these emotions, and it’s important to have ways to take care of ourselves when we do.”*

Notes:

- Make sure there's a good variety of magazines to appeal to different interests, and plenty of scissors and glue sticks.
- Be ready to offer help with writing, cutting, or finding magazine images, especially if someone is struggling or feeling shy.
- Remind the group that this is about their personal experience and expression. There are no right or wrong answers.
- Some feelings can be difficult to explore. Be prepared for silence, or for someone to share something heartfelt. Listen with empathy and acknowledge their feelings. If a participant becomes overly distressed, gently guide them to take a break or offer individual support, and alert a staff member.

For Ongoing Groups:

- No modifications needed for use in an Ongoing Group, as feelings and expressions can change. Different magazines and pictures may be available and the group makeup and dynamics may also contribute to a unique experience.

FEELINGS WALL

Y—M—T

Suggested Group(s): Young, Middle, Teen

Purpose: To introduce and explore a range of feelings, encouraging participants to identify emotions they feel comfortable sharing with others. To recognize that they are not alone in experiencing a variety of emotions related to their loss.

Task/Need:

- Group building
- Identifying and expressing feelings

Materials:

- Markers
- Construction paper
- Masking tape or magnets

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Discuss some basic feelings that the group may be familiar with, and the fact that feelings can be both comfortable and easy or painful and tough.
- Let group members know that there are all kinds of feelings.
- Tell members that sometimes others share our feelings but other times, our feelings are unique to us.
- Ask whether the group feels that it is OK to have different types of feelings.
- Remind group of the **I PASS RULE**

Activity Description:

- **Brainstorming:** Divide the group into smaller teams or work together as a whole to brainstorm as many different feelings as possible. Each feeling should be written on a separate piece of paper—each feeling has its own BRICK.
- **Create a FEELINGS WALL:** As group members identify and write down feelings, put the pieces of paper on a designated WALL or area. The goal is to fill the space with a wide variety of feelings.
- **Pictures or Words:** You can challenge the group to use pictures or images to represent feelings, instead of or in addition to using words. (*For example, a broken heart, a crumpled piece of paper, a piece of paper with a hole in it, etc.*)
- **Observation and Discussion:** Once a substantial collection of feeling words is on the WALL, gather the group for a discussion. Guide the conversation with questions like:
 - “Are there any duplicate words?”

- *“Which feelings were listed most frequently? Why might this be?”*
- *“Which feelings seem related to your grief?”*
- *“As we think about our grief, are we missing any feeling words?”*
- *“Do some feelings seem similar to others?”*
- *“Can you recall a time when you experienced some of these feelings?”*
- *“What would you say is the best feelings ever?”*
- *“What is the worst feeling ever?”*

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Invite the group to continue to think of new feelings and add them throughout the remaining meetings.
- Let the group know that writing down feelings can be a good outlet for emotional expression and processing.
- Tell the group members that they can create their own WALL OF FEELINGS at home
- Let the group know that they can talk about any feeling during the group.

Notes:

- If possible, keep the FEELINGS WALL up as a reminder of all the different feelings in the group.
- You can refer to the FEELINGS WALL when doing other activities later in the session.
- Allow group members to add feelings to the WALL throughout their group.
- Acknowledge how the FEELINGS WALL can grow or has grown during the group.
- This could be a good way to start each group by asking members if they have any new feeling that they would like to add to the WALL, or as a check in, asking group members to put their hand on a feeling they are feeling today.

For Ongoing Groups:

- Initiate a discussion by asking if members recall this activity from a previous session.
- Inquire if they remember any specific feeling words displayed on the WALL during their prior session.
- Prompt them to compare today’s feeling words: are they similar, different, or simply more numerous than last time?

FLASHLIGHT TALK

Y—M—T—A

Suggested Group(s): Young, Middle, Teen, Adult

Purpose: To encourage group members to share their experiences and feelings regarding the death as well as memories of their loved ones

Task/Need:

- Identifying and expressing feelings
- Sharing memories and continuing bonds with the person who died
- Living on the grief spiral

Materials:

- FLASHLIGHT
- Slips of paper with a variety of questions (*choose some questions from the “Questions for Q & A Activities” in the Appendix.*)
- Basket or bowl for the questions
- Markers (*optional*)
- Blocks (*optional*)
- Mock Campfire Logs (*optional*)

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Begin by discussing the idea of fireside or campfire chats:
 - *“Who has ever sat by a campfire or had a bonfire?”*
 - *“How does it feel to be talking around a fire?”*
 - *“What did you like or dislike about a campfire?”*
 - *“I wonder if sitting by the fire made it more comfortable to talk?”*
- Describe how the group will be having their own campfire chat, answering questions about feelings, memories, and other topics related to their person’s death and life.
- Ask the group prior to starting the activity if it’s OK to dim the lights. A FLASHLIGHT will be the only thing lit in the room.
- Explain that the only person permitted to talk is the person holding the FLASHLIGHT.

Activity Description:

- Have your group sit on the floor in a circle.
- Dim the lights and turn on the FLASHLIGHT.
- Ask who in the group would like to pick from the Question Basket first.

- Reinforce that it's always OK to use the **I PASS RULE** on any question.
- Pass the FLASHLIGHT to the first person and have them read the question on the paper.
- Once they answer, offer the question to the group. The FLASHLIGHT is passed to whoever answers.
- Allow silence for group members to think about their answers and take in what others have said.
- Repeat until all the group members have had a turn or they indicate they're finished answering questions.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- At the end of the activity, ask the group what it was like to answer the questions.
- How are group members feeling after they answered the questions?
- Which questions did they answer or discuss for the first time?
- Summarize any similarities or themes you heard throughout the conversation—encourage the group to elaborate on how it feels to hear that others have similar experiences.
- What other questions would you like to ask the group?
- Thank the group members for their bravery in answering tough questions and for sharing their experiences with one another.
- Offer a cool-down activity like the Activities Room or Model Magic to balance the intensity of the night.

Notes:

- Important Note: This can be an intense activity, so it may not be appropriate for all groups.
- Balance the tone of the questions. For example, do not include all heavy, intense questions. Incorporate some group building questions to balance the activity and provide a break for group members.
- Enlist the help of staff to ensure that the questions are age appropriate for group members.
- It's advisable to wait until the group members become comfortable with one another before introducing this activity (ideally night 6 or 7 depending on whether the group is an Introductory or Ongoing Group).
- Ensure that the environment is safe and supportive.

- Consider asking the group members to write their own questions for this activity.
- If you have a group that likes to build, ask the participants if they would like to build a Campfire out of the blocks. Or, if you have mock fire logs, ask the group if they would like to use them as a prop.
- Be sensitive to individuals who may be uncomfortable with the dark or with intense emotions.
- To lighten the activity for younger groups, consider having a snack like S'mores snack mix, or pretending to roast marshmallows. This could also be done as a last night activity for closing a group, with questions focusing on their time at the Caring Place and connections with group members/wishes for each other in the future.

For Ongoing Groups:

- Choose questions related to living on the grief spiral, changes in their lives, times their grief is more prominent, etc. Some examples:
 - *“What traits do you have from your person who died?”*
 - *“When do you miss your person most?”*
 - *“How has your life been different since your person died?”*

FLOWER OF MEMORIES

P—Y—M—T—A

Suggested Group(s): Preschool, Young, Middle, Teen, Adult

Purpose: To help group members express and share cherished memories of their loved one who died, fostering continued connection and providing a tangible representation of their bond. It also serves as a beautiful way to mark group closure.

Task/Need:

- Sharing memories and continuing bonds of the person who died
- Group closure

Materials

- **Petals:** Foam hand cutouts (*4 per participant, will be the petals*)
- **Stem:** Paint stirrer painted green (*1 per participant, will be the stem*)
- **Center:** Foam circle cut outs (*2 per participant, will be the center of the flower*)
- Small **Flowerpot** (*1 per participant*)
- **Inserts:** Styrofoam floral foam inserts (*to use to put paint stirrer in, can be glued to bottom of flowerpot before adding vase filler for stability*)
- **Filler:** Sand or other vase filler (*filler should keep the FLOWER in place*)
- Hot glue gun and glue
- Sharpie markers or paint pens
- **Photo:** A copy of a picture of their loved one (*it will be cut, so ensure it is not original- if family brings in original, staff can make a copy*)
- **Embellishments:** gems, stickers (*optional*)

IMPORTANT: Ensure that the group members are asked to bring in a picture of their person prior to group. Ask staff to send a reminder to participants. If they bring an original, ask staff to make a copy so they don't cut the original picture.

Framing and Activity Set-Up

- Prepare individual space for participants with 4 foam hand cut outs, 1 green paint stirrer and 2 foam circle cut-outs per person. Have the hot glue gun out of participants' reach—a volunteer should complete this step.
- Have a sample made to be able to show the group.
- Introduce the activity:
 - *"Today, we're going to create something special: a FLOWER OF MEMORIES. Each part of this FLOWER will help us honor and remember our loved one who died. This activity helps us hold onto those special MEMORIES and connect with our loved ones in a creative way."*
 - Show the sample so they see how it will be put together.

- *“First, we’ll write MEMORIES on the hand shapes. Then, we’ll bring our parts over to the glue station, where volunteers will help assemble our FLOWERS.”*

Activity Description

- Each person is given 4 foam hand cut outs, a green paint stick, two round foam cut outs, and access to sharpie markers and paint pens and embellishments.
- Ensure that each participant has the copy of their picture of their person, if they choose to bring one.
- Guide them in writing MEMORIES on the hand cut outs.
 - *“On each of your four foam hand cut-outs, I invite you to write or draw a special MEMORY of your loved one, or something you loved about them. What do you remember about them? What did you enjoy doing together? What qualities did you admire?”*
 - Allow time for them to decorate the petals if they like.
- Provide instructions on picture prep and gluing:
 - *“Once you’ve finished your four ‘Petals’ (foam hands), please bring them, along with your two foam circles and your loved one’s picture, to the designated hot glue station. A volunteer will be there to help you carefully assemble your FLOWER.”*
 - Have the participant cut their copied picture to fit within one foam circle. Help with cutting if needed. If they forgot a picture, offer that they can leave a space there to glue it on at home, or they can draw a picture of their person. Hot glue the picture to the center of one foam circle.
 - Allow the participant to arrange their petals as they like. Once that is complete, hot glue the Petals around the edge of the picture-adorned foam circle.
 - Hot glue the paint stirrer to the back of the foam circle (with the hands and picture).
 - **Seal Back:** Hot glue the second foam circle to the back, “sandwiching” the paint stirrer for stability.
 - **Offer Writing on Stem:** *“Would you like to write your loved one’s name on the green stem of your flower with a Sharpie or paint pen?”*
- Allow time for them to decorate their pot. They can decorate it however they choose; you can also prompt them to draw or write things that remind them of their person.

- Stick finished FLOWER into small floral foam insert and hot glue to bottom of pot. Assist the participant with adding sand or vase filler to the pot.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Once the group members finish making their FLOWER and pot, have them place them in a row and allow the group to gather. Explain that this can be their MEMORY GARDEN. If a group member wants to hold onto it instead of placing it in the GARDEN, that is OK.
- Facilitate Sharing:
 - *“As we look at our beautiful GARDEN, each FLOWER holds so many special MEMORIES. Would anyone like to share their FLOWER and one or two MEMORIES they wrote, or tell us about the person they remembered?”*
 - Encourage respectful listening. Affirm each person who shares and make connections as they arise. (Example: *“Wow, [group member A] shared that they have good memories with their person on vacations, just like [group member B].”*)
 - Ask about how it felt to make this when they are sharing. *“As you share, please also share a little about how it felt to create your FLOWER and write those MEMORIES. What emotions came up for you during this activity?”*
 - Guide discussion on where they might keep this at home. *“Does anyone have any thoughts on where they might put this special FLOWER at home?”*
- Allow time for concluding thoughts.
 - *“Look at this GARDEN we’ve created together. It’s filled with so many different MEMORIES, just like every person here has their own unique journey.”*
 - *“Even though each FLOWER is special and unique, they all come together to make this beautiful GARDEN, showing us that even in our individual grief, we are not alone. Our MEMORIES bloom together.”*
 - Highlight any feelings experienced that the group mentioned during sharing: *“It sounds like many of you felt [Sadness—Warmth—Connection—A Mix of Emotions] while making your FLOWER. It’s OK to feel all these different things as we remember our loved ones. It shows how much love is still there.”*
- If using as a closing for a group session, allow time for discussion related to that: *“Just as these FLOWER bring beauty to this GARDEN, the MEMORIES of your loved ones bring color and meaning to your lives. And coming together like this has created a supportive GARDEN for all of us, where we can share our MEMORIES and our feelings safely.”*

Notes:

- A glue gun is necessary—other forms of adhesive will not dry or bind in one meeting.
- Consider how these will be transported—for Younger groups, you may want to use a different vase filler than sand; or fill it only half full.

For Ongoing Groups:

- No specific modifications are needed for an Ongoing Group, however if they have done this activity before; ask them how the FLOWER they made this time is the same or different.
 - *“Did you use the same picture as the last time you made it?”*
 - *“What MEMORIES did you include this time that were different from before?”*
 - *“Do you still have your FLOWER? Where do you keep it? What will you do with this one?”*

FOUR CORNERS

Y—M—T

Suggested Group(s): Young, Middle, Teen

Purpose: To discover commonalities and differences among group members

Task/Need:

- Group building
- Identifying and expressing feelings
- Helping them understand who they are after their loss
- Living on the grief spiral

Materials:

- Papers with questions that have four answers (*see suggestions below—or check with staff to see if there are premade sets of questions*)

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Inform the group that they will be playing a game to help get to know one another.
 - *“We’re going to play a game called FOUR CORNERS. It’s a great way to move around, get some energy out, and learn new things about everyone in the room.”*
- Explain that one volunteer will ask a question while the other volunteers will stand in the CORNERS of the room holding the answers.
 - *“Here’s how it works: I’ll read a question aloud. Once I do, the volunteers in the CORNERS will show you their answers. Then, you just walk to the CORNER that holds the answer that best matches how you feel or what’s true for you. Don’t worry if you’re the only one in a CORNER—that just makes you unique! Once everyone has chosen a CORNER, we’ll take a moment to look around, see who’s with us, and hear why you picked your spot. Then we’ll all come back to the center and do it again with a new question!”*
- Instruct the volunteers who are holding the answers to stand in in each CORNER of the room and let the group members know that if they aren’t sure, they can stay in the middle or go between two CORNERS.
 - *“Remember, the idea is to learn and have fun together. If you ever feel like you don’t have a clear answer, you can always stay in the middle for that question. This is all about what feels right for you.”*

- Tell the group to notice where everyone is standing before the next question is read aloud.
 - *“Does anyone have any questions before we get started? Everyone can start standing in the middle of the room. I will read the question, and the volunteers in the CORNERS will hold up their answers—then you can move to go to which answer fits for you. Once everyone is there, we’ll look around to see who is standing where and what we have in common, or differences we have. Sound fun? OK, let’s get started!”*

Activity Description:

- Have four volunteers present to assist (or adjust as needed and just point to CORNER).
- Use questions that would pertain to different topics (*see suggestions below*). Mix general preferences with subtle grief-related inquiries to gently open up conversation.
- Each volunteer takes an answer and moves to a CORNER.
- The participants are sitting/standing around the table or in the middle of the room.
- Have each volunteer say their answer *before* the question is read to pique interest from the participants, and then the volunteer with the question reads the question.
 - Remember that volunteers should share only non-personal information to model vulnerability without disclosing personal information or details.
- The participants then proceed to the answer/CORNER that pertains to them.
- After the participants have picked their CORNER (their answer), they can discuss their commonalities and differences and then go back to the table or center of the room to prepare for the next question and answers.
- **Suggestions for Questions:**
 - What is your favorite season? *Spring—Summer—Winter—Fall*
 - What kind of loss have you experienced? *Grandparent—Parent—Sibling—Other*
 - What kind of pet do you have, or wish you had? *Dog—Cat—Other Pet—No Pet*
 - How did you feel about coming to the Caring Place tonight? *Nervous—Excited—Scared—Curious*
 - What is your favorite snack? *Sweet—Salty—Spicy—Other*

- How old are you? *(list ages in group; you can use ranges)*
- What grade are you in? *(list grades in group)*
- After a hard day do you want to? *Relax at home—Talk with a friend—Watch TV—Do something active*
- What is your favorite subject in school? *Science—History—Math—English*
- What is your least favorite subject in school? *Science—History—Math—English*
- When you get overwhelmed, do you...? *Get Quiet—Talk with Others—Want to be Alone—Need to Move Around?*
- What is your favorite thing to watch on TV? *Sports—Reality—Comedy—Movies*
- What would you want your superpower to be? *Flying—Invisibility—Super Strength—Mind Reading*
- If you were home right now, what would you be doing? *Video Games—Reading—Sleeping—Watching TV*
- If I could draw how I feel right now, it would be: *Bright colors—Dark Colors—Swirly Lines—Hard edges*
- My favorite dessert is... *Brownies—Ice Cream—Cake—Cookies*
- My favorite type of movie is... *Comedy—Action—Sci-Fi—Animated Movie*
- How did you feel when you found out your person died? *Anger—Sadness—Confusion—Other*
- A comforting thing in my life is: *A Pet—A Person—A special toy/object—A place*
- One word to describe me is: *Kind—Brave—Creative—Curious*
 - Be sensitive to children who select a CORNER that no one else does. Validate that everyone has unique feelings and interests.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Bring everyone back to the middle of the room or sit back down.
- Ask the participants open-ended questions about how they felt when they realized there are others in the room that had the same answers as them as well as those that had different answers.

- Generate discussion within the group.
 - *“What was it like to participate in the activity? Did you like moving around?”*
 - *“What was something interesting you noticed about your group members tonight?”*
 - *“What did you learn about other members of the group?”*
 - *“How did it feel to be in a CORNER with others who picked the same answer?”*
 - *“What did you learn about how similar or different we all are in this group?”*
 - *“Sometimes, when we’re grieving, we can feel really alone. Did this activity help you see that even when we have different experiences, we also share a lot in common?”*

Notes:

- Ensure there is enough space in the room for participants to move freely between CORNERS.
- Consider the physical abilities of the participants when planning the activity.
- Be prepared to adapt the questions to suit the specific group.
- Encourage respectful and open-minded discussion within each CORNER.
- Have volunteers participate for a round or two at the beginning, but ensure the focus remains on the group members. When they participate, model safe and brief sharing (*for example, “I picked reading because after a long day, I love to unwind with a good book”*).

For Ongoing Groups:

- Consider incorporating more sophisticated questions like when their person died:
 - My person died: *Less than 1 year ago—1-2 years ago—2-3 years ago—More than 3 years ago*
 - My grief journey right now feels like: *A Stormy Night—A Foggy Path—A Rollercoaster—A Quiet River*
 - Something that helps me remember my person is: *A special photo or item—A favorite song—A place we visited—A story we shared*
 - Ask staff for more ideas if needed; you can play with certain themes like memories, coping skills, or feelings.
- Let the group members create some questions and help guide the answers to ensure that they are appropriate.

FUTURE PHOTO ALBUM

M—T

Suggested Group(s): Middle, Teen

Purpose: To explore ideas, fears, and dreams about how they imagine their future selves

Task/Need:

- Helping them understand who they are after their loss
- Living on the grief spiral

Materials:

- Construction paper
- Hole punch
- Paper fasteners or rings
- Magazines
- Markers
- Glue/glue sticks

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Perhaps open with, *“Sometimes, when we’ve experienced a big change like losing someone special, it can feel hard to think about what comes next. Or maybe it makes us think about the future even more. Today, we’re going to take some time to explore those thoughts.”*
- Introduce the idea of creating an ALBUM about their future selves. *“We’ll be making a special ALBUM about your future selves. It’s a chance to think about who you’re becoming, what you’re dreaming of for your future, and how the person you lost might still be a part of your life journey, even if they’re not physically here.”*
- Frame the activity as an opportunity for self-discovery and choice. *“This is your ALBUM, and you get to decide what goes in it. There are no right or wrong answers, just what feels true to you.”*
- When you introduce the question *“What might you wish to share with the person who died about you in the future?”*, you can explain: *“Even though our special people aren’t here with us, sometimes we still imagine sharing things with them, or we think about what they’d be proud of. This is a space to explore those feelings.”*

Activity Description:

- Bind several pieces of construction paper together to create an ALBUM.
- In the ALBUM, illustrate answers to the following questions using drawings, magazine pictures, and words:
 - *What will you do for a living?*
 - *Where will you live?*
 - *What will you enjoy doing?*
 - *What will your family look like?*
 - *What might you wish to share with the person who died about you in the future?*

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Give group members the opportunity to share their work and talk about why they chose the future illustrations that they did.
- Ask the group how they felt as they created their ALBUM. *“Tell us more about what you included in your ALBUM.—What was a part of your future that you were excited to imagine?”*
- Remember to validate and normalize all emotions: If a child/teen expresses sadness, fear, or a sense of missing their loved one, acknowledge it directly. *“It sounds like imagining your family in the future also brought up feelings of missing [loved one’s name/relationship]. That’s a very understandable feeling.”*
- When commonalities or expressions of longing for the deceased arise, facilitators could say, *“It sounds like many of you are thinking about how your loved ones would react, or how you wish you could share these moments with them. This shows us that even as we look forward, our special people are still a part of our hearts and our journey, and that’s a really important part of grief.”*
- Connect themes or feelings as they naturally surface. Emphasize any commonalities in the group like, *“Some of you used this type of picture in your ALBUM.”* Or, *“It looks like many of you want to share _____ with your person.”*
- Remember to use the Listening/Facilitation Statements throughout the discussion: *“Tell me more about that...”*—*“It sounds like you really miss your special people”*—*“I wonder if anyone else felt the same way as you worked on your ALBUM.”*
- Acknowledge the courage group members showed while creating their ALBUMS: *“It takes a lot of courage to imagine your future, especially when you’re also*

navigating difficult feelings. Thank you for being brave enough to share parts of your journey with us today.”

- Ask what the group would like to do with their PHOTO ALBUM. Where will they keep it? Will they share it with someone else in their family?

Notes:

- At the end of the activity, you may want to encourage the group members to keep their ALBUMS and reflect on them in another 5, 10, or 15 years to see if their guesses about their future were accurate.

For Ongoing Groups:

- This is a great activity for Ongoing Groups because this activity is not commonly done in Introductory Groups.
- If an ALBUM *was* done in a previous group session, ask group members to bring it in and compare the similarities or changes about their future plans.

HIGHMARK.

CARING PLACE 

finding hope in grief

COMPASSION IN ACTION

Activities for Finding Hope in Grief

