

COMPASSION IN ACTION

Activities for Finding Hope in Grief

N-R





NIGHTMARE ART

Y—M—T

Suggested Group(s): Young, Middle, Teen

Purpose: To provide a safe and creative outlet for participants to explore challenging feelings and experiences, particularly those related to sleep and fears following a loss, and to foster a sense of agency and empowerment.

Task/Need:

- Identifying and expressing feelings

Materials:

- Markers, colored pencils, crayons
- Various types of paper (*different sizes, colors, textures if available*)
- Model Magic
- Old magazines, scissors, glue sticks (*optional*)

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Welcome the group and note that today they will have the opportunity to do some artwork related to sleep, fears, and NIGHTMARES.
 - *“Today, we’re going to use art to explore some of the big feelings that can come up, especially when we’re trying to sleep or feeling worried. It’s important to remember that it’s normal to have different feelings, and sometimes those feelings can even show up in our dreams.”*
- Lead discussion about difficulties with sleep and BAD DREAMS/NIGHTMARES.
 - *“Sometimes after a significant change or loss, our minds work really hard, even when we’re asleep. Has anyone ever experienced a dream or a feeling when they wake up that feels really heavy, confusing, or a little bit scary? Or maybe you’ve just had worries that make it hard to relax at night?”*
 - Ask guiding questions (focus on general feelings, not details of actual dreams unless group members want to share):
 - *“Does anyone in the group ever have BAD DREAMS or NIGHTMARES? What makes them different than other dreams?”*
 - *“What are some feelings that might come up if you have a TOUGH DREAM or wake up feeling worried?”* (For example, Scared—Sad—Confused—Frustrated—Lonely.)
 - *“How does your body feel when you have those big worries or CONFUSING DREAMS?”* (For example, Fast Heartbeat—Tummy Ache—Tense Muscles.)

- *“If you have a BAD DREAM, is there anything that you do to help you feel better or manage them?”*
- *“Has anyone ever wished they could somehow make those tough feelings or scary images smaller or less powerful?”*
- Explain that they are going to use ART SUPPLIES to make something related to their BAD DREAMS.
 - *“Today, we’re going to try something different. We’re going to give those difficult feelings or worrying thoughts a SHAPE or a PICTURE using ART. This isn’t about telling a story, but about what those feelings feel like to you, or what you imagine they might look like if they had a form.”*

Activity Description:

- Encourage the group to draw or use Model Magic to visually represent their BAD DREAMS, NIGHTMARES, or the feelings related to it.
- Allow the group members to have creative freedom as to how they choose to depict their NIGHTMARES, BAD DREAMS or feelings related to them—let them know that there is no right or wrong way to do it.
- Some guiding questions might be:
 - *“If that BAD DREAM or feeling had a color, what color would it be?”*
 - *“If it had a shape or a texture, what might it look like or feel like?”*
 - *“How might you use these materials to show how that feeling makes you feel?”*
 - *“Can you sculpt or draw something that represents the energy of that worry or BAD DREAM?”*
 - Remind group members that if a specific NIGHTMARE is too overwhelming to represent directly, they can choose to represent a feeling associated with it (fear, sadness, frustration, etc.) or even an opposite feeling they wish they had more of.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Allow the group to share if they like.
 - *“As we start to wind down our creative time, I invite you, if you feel comfortable, to share a little bit about what it was like to create your ART. You don’t have to explain your ART if you don’t want to, but perhaps you could share a word or a feeling about the experience of making it.”*
 - Guiding questions:
 - *“What was it like to put these feelings or images into your ART?”*

- *“Did creating this make any difference to how that feeling feels now? Did it feel easier, harder, or just different to represent it?”*
- *“What is one word you would use to describe the process of making your ART today?”*
- *“If your ART could tell us one thing about big feelings or worries, what do you think it might say?”*
- *“What helps you feel brave or safe when you have difficult thoughts or feelings, especially at night?”*
- Validate any feelings that group members share and highlight commonalities.
 - *“It’s really normal to have big feelings or worries. Thank you for sharing.”*
 - *“I noticed some of us mentioned feeling [‘a bit scared’ or ‘a sense of relief’] while making our ART. It sounds like many of us have experienced similar types of feelings.”*
 - *“What is it like to hear that others might have similar experiences or feelings as you?”* (This normalizes their experience and builds group cohesion.)
- Give the group options about their ART.
 - *“Now that you’ve created your ART, you have a choice. This is your creation, and you get to decide what happens next.”*
 - **Option 1: Mastery/Protection:** *“Some people choose to keep their ART. Maybe you want to keep it somewhere special to remind you that you can face big feelings, or even by your bed as a reminder of your strength, like it’s guarding your sleep.”*
 - **Option 2: Releasing/Taking Back Power:** *“Other people find it helpful to destroy their creation—gently and carefully, or powerfully—as a way to say, ‘I am in charge of this feeling, it doesn’t control me.’ If you choose to do this, how might you want to destroy it? Tearing, crushing, ripping?”*
 - *If ART was destroyed: “What was it like to destroy your creation? Did it change how you felt about the original feeling or worry?”*
 - **Option 3: Containing/Transforming:** *“Some prefer to put it in a ‘safe box’ or wrap it up, acknowledging the feeling but putting it away for now. We can provide envelopes or a small bag or box for this if anyone wants.”*

- Talk about other ways that they can manage BAD DREAMS and NIGHTMARES in the future.
 - *“We’ve used ART today to explore big feelings. What are some other things you already do, or perhaps learned about today, that can help you feel safer or calmer, especially when it’s quiet at night or you’re feeling worried?”* (Brainstorm together: Talking to a trusted adult—Deep breathing—Listening to music—Having a comfort item—Journaling—Doing a soothing routine before bed.)
 - *“Thank you everyone for sharing and creating today. We hope that creating these and our talks today can help you if you have any BAD DREAMS again.”*

Notes:

- **This activity may be most appropriate if your group members have brought up in previous meetings having difficulty sleeping or having BAD DREAMS.**
- **Group Appropriateness:** Before considering/beginning this activity, take a moment to assess the emotional temperature of the group. This activity involves exploring potentially uncomfortable or scary feelings.
 - Is the group generally settled and able to engage constructively? If there has been high stress for a group member recently; if many participants are showing signs of high anxiety; or if the group rapport/connection is still very new, this might not be the right time.
 - Listen to your instincts as a facilitator. If you feel the activity could be overly stimulating or potentially create more distress than relief for the specific group on a given day, it is perfectly acceptable and responsible to pivot to a different, less intense activity.
 - Remember the **I PASS RULE**—emphasize that participation is always a choice.
 - **Sensitivity & Avoiding Creating More Fear:** The goal of this activity is to help participants master fears, not to generate new ones. Be mindful of your language and tone throughout. Frame the discussion around existing feelings or worries they might already have, rather than introducing new concepts of fear or NIGHTMARES. Our aim is to provide a creative outlet for what’s already there and offer tools for managing it.
- Be aware that not everyone experiences NIGHTMARES in the same way or wants to represent them. You can easily change language/offer alternatives like TOUGH FEELINGS, WORRIES, or THINGS THAT FEEL HEAVY, to broaden participation.
- Be mindful of the group’s emotional state as the activity concludes. Ensure there’s a gentle transition to the next part of the meeting or to leaving, allowing

time for children to re-regulate if needed. Perhaps have them do an easy grounding exercise:

- **Find the Rainbow:** Find something in the room that is red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple.
- **Identify Five Senses:** 5 things you can see, 4 things you can feel, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, 1 thing you can taste.
- **Shake it out:** Put on music, get up and move, dance, shake, etc.
- Remember that the point is to create a safe, non-judgmental, and encouraging environment. Your job is to listen, validate feelings, and ensure everyone feels heard and respected.
- Consider using the Activities Room at the end if the conversation is heavy for the group.
- Remember to get a staff member if needed for support if a group member gets overly upset or if the conversation becomes too heavy.
- Group members may want to visit their adults for extra comfort if this becomes overwhelming. Get staff to take group participants to their adult when they make this request.

For Ongoing Groups:

- This Activity is appropriate for both Introductory and Ongoing Groups; assess if the group members have done this before in an Introductory Group.
 - If they have done this activity before, use prompts for discussion and processing like:
 - *“How might what you created today connect to something you’ve felt before or talked about in the group?”*
 - *“How is what you created today the same or different from what you made before?”*
 - *“What new insights or strategies are you taking away about managing difficult feelings after doing this again today?”*

NOTES TO ADULTS

Y—M—T—A

Suggested Groups: Young, Middle, Teen, Adult

Purpose: To build connection and community between adults and children/teens about their loved one, to allow children/teens to express their feelings, concerns, and worries to adults in a safe way. If used as an activity for ADULTS, the notes can be to others in their lives.

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
- Living on the grief spiral

Materials:

- Index cards
- Pencils/Pens
- Poster board or white board (*one for the children/teen NOTES, one for ADULT responses*)
- Drop off box for collecting CARDS securely

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- With children or teens, begin the discussion about how it can be difficult to talk about tough feelings.
 - *“Welcome everyone. Today, we’re going to do something really important that can help us connect, even when talking feels a little tricky. You know that ADULTS in your family are grieving too, but sometimes it’s hard for GROWN-UPS and children to talk about all the tough feelings and changes.”*
 - *“When someone important dies, things at home, in our families, or even inside us can change a lot. Let’s talk a little bit about that first.”*
 - *“What are some changes you’ve noticed at home since your special person died? (These can be things you like or dislike.)”*
 - *“Are there new worries or questions you have that maybe feel hard to ask the ADULTS around you?”*
 - *“Are there feelings you have (like sadness, anger, confusion, even happiness sometimes) that feel hard to show or talk about with ADULTS?”*
- Explain to the children/teens that they are going to let the ADULTS in their lives know how they’re feeling about the subject, but in a safe anonymous way.

- *“You’ll write your thoughts on these INDEX CARDS. And the super important part is these NOTES are completely anonymous. That means no names, and a staff member will even type them up later, so no one can recognize your handwriting. It’s just your thoughts and feelings, safely shared from KIDS TO ADULTS, helping them understand your world a little better.”*
- *“Your words will go onto a big poster. Then, at their next meeting, the ADULTS in the other group will read all your words. It will help them know what’s on your mind. We hope it helps them understand you, and then they will write back to you, anonymously too!”*

Activity Description:

- Based on the earlier discussion, offer specific, simple questions that resonate with their current feelings. Write the chosen question(s) clearly on a whiteboard for all to see. Examples could be:
 - *“What is one change at home since [my person] died that I don’t like?”*
 - *“What is one new worry I have that feels hard to talk about with grown-ups?”*
 - *“What is one thing I wish GROWN-UPS knew about how I feel?”*
 - *“What is one thing that has happened since [my person] died that actually feels OK?”*
 - *“What question do I wish I could ask my PARENT/CAREGIVER?”*
- Explain that they can write their answer on the INDEX CARDS provided. They can then place their questions in the box provided.
- Remind them that their questions will be typed up so they don’t have to worry about handwriting.
- Volunteers will turn the CARDS over to staff to type up.
- Staff will type up the responses (so that PARENTS/CAREGIVERS cannot decipher handwriting) and post the children’s/teens’ answers on a poster board (or list) to give to the ADULT GROUP at the following meeting.
- Let them know that the ADULTS will have a chance to respond in the next meeting and then you will come back together to see what their answers are and process thoughts about it.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Staff will let ADULT ROOM volunteers know about the questions and give the ADULTS the chance to respond anonymously as well. ADULT ROOM volunteers can use the poster to discuss concerns children/teens are having and allow the ADULTS to respond in a similar way that can be presented back to the children/teen group.
 - **Volunteers for ADULT GROUP—Setting the stage for the ADULT ROOM:**
 - *“Welcome back. Today, we’re going to share something very special and important from our children/teen group. As you know, children and teens grieve differently than ADULTS, and sometimes it’s hard to know what’s truly on their minds.”*
 - *“Here’s a poster with anonymous notes written by the children and teens in their group, sharing some of their thoughts and worries since their loved one died—we’re going to take a few moments to read and process them.”*
 - *“Let’s read these together. Take your time. What feelings come up for you as you read their words? Is anything surprising? Does anything make you feel understood, or perhaps make you think differently about what might be going on for your child/teen?”*
 - *“Now, we have an opportunity to respond to them, anonymously, in the same way. What would you want to tell them? Perhaps in response to a worry, or to a feeling they shared, or just a general message of support from ADULTS who are also grieving.”*
 - Provide INDEX CARDS and pens for ADULTS. Collect CARDS securely. Staff will then type up these ADULT responses onto a NOTES FROM OUR ADULTS poster for the next children/teens group meeting.
 - **Wrap-up (with the ADULTS):**
 - *“Thank you for being so open to hearing their words and for sharing your responses. This act of communication is incredibly powerful and shows your children/teens how much you care.”*
 - Take time to process any feelings or thoughts with the ADULTS related to the questions or their responses.
 - Provide staff with their responses to be typed up in between meetings and given back to the kids’ rooms.

- **Volunteers For Children/Teens Group—Processing and Activity**
- **Wrap-Up (Subsequent Session):**
 - **Reconnecting:** *“Remember those NOTES we sent to the ADULTS last time? Well, the ADULTS read them, and they wrote NOTES back for you. Let’s take a few minutes to read their responses together.”*
 - *“How does it feel to read their responses? Did anything surprise you? Does anything make you feel understood, or less worried?”*
 - *“What’s it like to know they heard your messages and responded?”*
- **Wrap-up:** *“Thank you for engaging in this important conversation with your ADULTS. You’ve all shown courage, and we hope it was helpful. Does anyone feel like now that this was done, maybe in the future you might be able to talk with them directly? What are some thoughts about that?”*

Notes:

- Anonymity is key. Ensure clear procedures for collecting, securing, and transmitting CARDS to staff for typing.
- This is a multi-session activity involving both child/teen and ADULT GROUPS. Ensure coordination with the ADULT GROUP volunteers. Allow ample time for reflection and writing in *both* groups.
- This activity gives children/teens a voice and empowers ADULTS with valuable insights, bridging potential communication gaps that often exist in grieving families.

For Ongoing Groups:

- This is appropriate for Introductory and Ongoing Groups, and as group makeup and questions will change, no additional variation is needed.

OBJECT GRAB

Y—M—T—A

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

Purpose: To encourage group members to explore personal connections and memories by choosing an OBJECT that holds meaning for them, either about themselves or their loved one. This helps with sharing and feeling connected.

Task/Need:

- Group building
- Sharing memories and continuing bonds with the person who died

Materials:

- Basket or bin
- A collection of DIVERSE, INTERESTING ITEMS such as knick-knacks, small toys, abstract objects, and keepsakes
 - *Note:* Each site may already have designated OBJECT GRAB bins. Check with staff if you need to put one together or if there is one already available for you.

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Begin by inviting the group members to think about times when they've seen an OBJECT that reminded them of:
 - Themselves
 - The person who died
 - A memory
- Explain the idea of OBJECT GRAB.
 - *"Today we're going to do an activity called OBJECT GRAB. I have a basket full of different ITEMS. We're going to take some time to look through them, and then each of us will choose one OBJECT that means something special to us based on what we're talking about today."*
- Choose your focus and explain clearly to the group. If there is time, you can do more than one:
 - **Option A: For Group Building** (focus on "ABOUT ME"):
 - *"We're going to choose an OBJECT that reminds us of ourselves. Something that represents who you are or what's important to you."*
 - **Option B: For Memory Sharing** (focus on "ABOUT MY LOVED ONE"):
 - *"Today, we're going to choose an OBJECT that reminds us of the person who died. Something that makes you think of them, their personality, or a special memory you shared."*

- Depending on the size of your group, it can be helpful to lay out the ITEMS on the table versus passing the basket around. This makes it easier for them to see all the items and choose.

Activity Description:

- Give them time to explore:
 - *“Take your time. You don’t have to choose the first thing you see. Handle the OBJECTS gently and choose one that speaks to you based on [WHO YOU ARE or YOUR LOVED ONE].”*
- Invite sharing. Once everyone has chosen an item, gather the group (if they’ve been moving). Go around the circle and invite each person to share.
 - *“Now that everyone has chosen an OBJECT, let’s take turns sharing. When it’s your turn, hold up your OBJECT and tell us why you chose it. What does it make you think of when it comes to [WHO YOU ARE or YOUR LOVED ONE].”*
 - Important: Remind them it’s OK to pass if they don’t feel ready to share, or to keep their explanation short. *“You can share as much or as little as you like. If you’re not ready to share, that’s perfectly OK too.”*
 - Ask open-ended questions and invite questions from the group.
 - *“Thanks for sharing that! Is there anything else you would want to share with us about why you choose that? Or does anyone else have questions for [group member] about why they chose it?”*

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Thank them for participating and either collect ITEMS or have them place them off to the side.
- Note commonalities or themes: Look for broader themes or shared experiences that emerged during the sharing.
 - *“Wow, a lot of you chose ITEMS that represented what you like to do in your free time that is similar.”*
 - *“A lot of you chose items that reminded you of the special times you shared with your person—thank you for sharing that!”*
- Reinforce group connection and thank them for sharing.
 - *“Thank you all—this helps us learn more about each other and reminds us that we have more in common than we know! It was also great to get to know your person by the stories shared.”*

For Ongoing Groups:

- This is appropriate for Introductory Sessions or Ongoing Sessions. If they have previously done this activity in an Introductory Group, ask them to share if they chose the same thing (if they remember) or something different.
 - If used in an Ongoing Group, you can adapt this to have a different focus:
 - **Focus on specific emotions:** *“This time, pick an OBJECT that represents how you’re coping right now. Maybe it’s a feeling you’ve had recently, or a strategy you’re using to help yourself through a tough time.”* (For example, a smooth stone for feeling grounded; a twisted piece of metal for feeling confused.)
 - **Focus on your strength:** *“Pick an OBJECT that reminds you of a strength you’ve found in yourself, or a way you’ve grown since we last did this activity.”*
 - **Focus on the future:** *“Choose an OBJECT that reminds you of a hope you have for the future, or something you’re looking forward to, or something you’re building for yourself.”*
 - **Focus on their superpower:** *“Now, look through the OBJECTS in the basket. Choose one that represents one of your personal superpowers. It could be something you actually do, a feeling it gives you, or just an object that symbolizes a particular strength you have.”*

ONE LAST BANQUET

P—Y—M

Suggested Group(s): Preschool, Young, Middle

Purpose: To provide a creative and symbolic way for children to honor and remember a person who has died; facilitate emotional expression, remembrance, and the concept of Continuing Bonds with their person.

Task/Need Addressed:

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

Materials:

- Construction paper
- Chef hats (*optional but makes it fun!*)
- Long paper roll (*for the BANQUET TABLE*)
- An extensive collection of magazines, or consider cookbooks, lifestyle magazines, grocery store ads (*with food, people, scenery, decorations—see volunteer prep notes*)
- Scissors
- Glue sticks
- Crayons, markers, colored pencils
- Paper plates

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Prep materials before group members join the room:
 - **“Pre-Scan” Magazines:** While full scanning for all possible food items isn’t necessary, volunteers should flip through magazines to get a sense of what’s available (*foods, drinks, people laughing, flowers, decor*). It helps anticipate children’s requests and guide them. Have many magazines, as children will want a variety of items.
 - Place scissors, glue sticks, and construction paper neatly at each workstation. Have extra magazines in easy reach.
 - **Prepare the “TABLE”:** Roll out the long paper roll onto a Table (or on the floor if tables aren’t available). Tape it securely to prevent it from shifting. This is their blank canvas for the BANQUET.
 - Make Chef Hats or have a station where they can make them if they like.
- Welcome the group and explain the activity.

- *“Welcome, chefs! Today we’re going to do something really special together, a way to remember and celebrate our people.”*
- *“Have you ever thought about making a **SUPER SPECIAL MEAL** for someone you love? A **MEAL** where you could cook anything you wanted, share special stories, and just be together?”*
- *“Today, we’re going to imagine making a **MEMORY FEAST** or **ONE LAST BANQUET** for our special person who died. We get to choose all the yummy foods and beautiful things that would be at that **TABLE**, just for them.”*
- *“This isn’t really about cooking; it’s about using our imaginations and pictures from magazines to create something wonderful. It’s a way to feel close to our person and share our memories.”*
- *“First, let’s put on our Chef Hats—because today, we are the Master Chefs of Memories!”*
- **Show the TABLE:** Point to the large paper roll. *“This is our **BIG BANQUET TABLE**! We’ll fill it with all the things we imagine.”*

Guiding Questions for Facilitators (to be used throughout activity):

- *“If you could cook **ONE PERFECT MEAL** for your person, what would it be?”*
- *“Would you want to be alone with your person, or would you invite others to the **DINNER**? Who?”*
- *“Would there be flowers on the **TABLE**? Or a special tablecloth? We can look for those too!”*
- *“What would be on the menu? Think about things your person loved, or special **MEALS** you shared.”*
- *“What do you imagine you and your person would talk about during the **MEAL**? What stories would you share?”*
- *“Why did you choose these particular foods to make?”*
- *“What are some of your favorite memories of sharing **MEALS** or special times with your person?”*
- *“If your person could see this **FEAST** you made, what do you think they would say?”*

Activity Description:

- **Introduction:** Explain the activity and its purpose. Emphasize that this is a special way to honor and remember their person.
 - *“Even though our person isn’t here physically to eat with us, we can use our imagination and art to remember them and feel close to them. We’re*

going to create a BANQUET on this long paper, full of all the special things we'd share with them."

- **Pretend Cooking:** Children pretend to be chefs—encourage them to close their eyes and imagine their BANQUET. What would they make first? Ask what else they might do and why.
- **Collage Creation:** Volunteers assist children in finding and cutting out pictures of food items from magazines that match their imagined MEAL.
 - If a child says, "Chocolate Cake," you might point them to a magazine you know has desserts. *"Let's see if we can find a big slice of Chocolate Cake here!"*
 - Prompt them to look for flowers, candles, place settings, cups, even smiles on faces. *"Would your TABLE have beautiful flowers? What kind? We can look for them!"*
 - Ask open ended questions throughout: *"Tell me about this Pizza you chose—did your person love Pizza nights?"—"Who is this smiling person you've cut out? Are they at your BANQUET?"*
 - Gluing onto the "TABLE": Once they find items, encourage them to glue them down. *"OK, now let's place that on our BANQUET TABLE! Where does it go?"*
- **BANQUET TABLE Assembly:** Children glue the food images onto the long paper BANQUET TABLE to create a visual representation of their perfect meal.
- **Presentation and Sharing:** Children present their BANQUET TABLES to the group and share their thoughts and feelings about the meal and their person.
 - *"Who would like to be our first Chef to tell us about their FEAST?"*
 - Use the guiding questions above to encourage sharing about specific food choices, memories, feelings, and who else might be at their imagined MEAL.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Process feelings:
 - *"How did it feel to imagine this SPECIAL MEAL?"*
 - *"Did remembering these foods or times make you think of any memories?"*
 - *"Was there anything surprising about the MEAL you imagined?"*
 - *"Does anyone notice anything similar in our BANQUETS? Maybe lots of favorite foods?"*

- **Sharing Circle:** Have each child share one thing they learned or remembered about their person during the activity.
 - ONE WORD/ONE THOUGHT: *“Before we finish, I’d like each of you to share just one word or one quick thought about how you’re feeling right now, or one thing you’ll remember about your special person from our BANQUET today.”*
- Let them know that they can show their adults when they come to pick them up if they like.

Notes:

- **Model if they need ideas:** If children are struggling to get started, you can briefly talk through an idea of your own. (For example, *“If I were making a FEAST for someone I loved, I’d definitely include crispy tacos, because we always laughed so much making those!”*)—but avoid sharing about a *personal experience* directly, keeping the focus on the children’s experience.
- Provide a variety of magazines with diverse food options. Assist them in finding something or let them know that they can draw or color it if they can’t find something specific.

For Ongoing Groups:

- This is appropriate for Introductory or Ongoing Groups. If a group member did this in an Introductory Group, you can ask them to remember the MEAL that they made last time and how they might make it different this time. Note that they can make it a MEAL this time for a specific holiday, celebration, or birthday—how might it change what they make or do?

OUR GROUP IDENTITY/WHAT WE HAVE IN COMMON

Y—M—T

Suggested Group(s): Young, Middle, Teen

Purpose: To facilitate group building through sharing and identifying similarities.

Task/Need:

- Group building
- Telling their story

Materials:

- Copies of OUR GROUP or WHAT OUR GROUP HAS IN COMMON questions (*see Questions at the end of this activity write-up*)
- Paper
- Pencils or pens
- Measuring Tape or Yard Stick
- Large Post-it (*optional*)

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Welcome group and note that today they're going to play a fun game to learn more about each other.
- Ask: *"To start, let's just brainstorm a few things you already think WE MIGHT HAVE IN COMMON as a group. For example, maybe we all come from similar parts of the town, or go to school, or are around the same age? What about the reason we're coming here together?"*
- Ask if they think there are other COMMONALITIES in the group.
- Begin to talk about the experiences, talents, and knowledge the GROUP MIGHT HAVE IN COMMON that they might not know about yet.
 - *"We'll be looking at some fun questions together, either by interviewing each other or as a whole group, to see what cool things we all share and what makes each of us unique."*

Activity Description:

- This write-up describes two very similar activities, **OUR GROUP IDENTITY** and **WHAT WE HAVE IN COMMON**.
- Supply each member with a question list (OUR GROUP or WHAT WE HAVE IN COMMON) or develop your own questions in addition to these (ensure that they are inclusive). You may need to adjust questions to better fit your group. Have group members interview each other or ask the questions to the whole group and have them raise hands to get numbers. Emphasize group similarities and discuss.

- For the OUR GROUP activity, volunteers can make a chart ahead of time, so responses are recorded and tallied in real time. The whiteboard or large flip charts could be used.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Point out that similarities and differences are part of what makes up the GROUP'S IDENTITY.
 - *"It's really neat to see all the different ways we connect. Sometimes knowing we share things with others can make us feel more understood and like we belong."*
 - *"And just like we have many THINGS IN COMMON, we also have lots of wonderful differences, and that's fantastic! Our differences add variety and strength to our group too."*
- Ask the group what it was like to do the activity.
 - *"How did it feel for you to play this game/do this activity today?"*
 - *"Was there anything about it that surprised you?"*
 - *"As we went through the questions, how did you feel when you found SOMETHING YOU HAD IN COMMON with someone else?"*
 - *"What was it like to hear what others in our group shared?"*
 - *"How did it feel when we talked about our similarities and differences?"*
- **Model if needed to encourage conversation:** If the group is hesitant, a facilitator can model by saying, *"For me, doing this activity made me feel [Surprised by how much we all HAD IN COMMON—or—Happy to hear everyone's favorite animal, for example]."*
- Thank the group for sharing.

Notes:

- If using this activity with Younger Children, you may need a "scribe" to help them write down and read the responses. Therefore, you need plenty of time and volunteers to do this with this age group.

For Ongoing Groups:

- This activity is appropriate for Introductory and Ongoing Groups. No modifications are necessary for an Ongoing Group; however, you can expand it by asking if the group might like to create their own new COMMONALITY QUESTIONS for each other based on what they've learned about the group so far.
 - Consider cultural and socioeconomic differences when developing categories. *(For example, some children may not have the opportunity to travel, or to attend professional sporting events.)*

OUR GROUP

How tall is our group in inches?

How many years of life have been lived by our group *(add ages of group members)*?

How many different places has our group traveled to beyond their local area?
(Don't count the same specific place more than once if visited by different group members.)

How many years of school has our group had all together?

How many times in the past year has our group been to a:

- Community event? *(Festival—Fair—Sports Event—Parade, etc.)*
- Live performance? *(Play—Musical—Concert—Dance Recital—School Show, etc.)*
- Movie?
- Museum, library, or educational center?

How many different instruments can our group play?

How many books, comics, or audio stories has our group read/listened to in the last month?

How many scoops of ice cream or popsicles has our group eaten since the beginning of the summer?

How many pets do we own as a group? *(total number)*

For pets, how many types and what number of each do we own as a group?
(for example, Dogs-4—Cats-3—Birds-1)

WHAT OUR GROUP HAS IN COMMON

Find someone in the group who is the same birth order in their family as you
(*Oldest—Youngest—Middle—Only Child*)

How many favorite colors does our group have in total?

Is anyone in the group born in the same month as you?

Has anyone in the group ever seen your favorite movie?

Does anyone in the group enjoy following a particular sport, game, or team?

Does anyone in the group share similar feelings about starting something new?
(*for example, A new school year—A new activity*)

Does anyone else have a favorite animal or a creature they find fascinating?

Does anyone else share similar feelings about different types of weather?
(*for example, Thunderstorms—Snow—Sunshine—Rain*)

Does anyone in the group like to spend time creating things?
(*for example, Drawing—Building—Writing—Cooking*)

Is there anyone in the group who loves to tell stories or hear stories?

Does anyone in the group have a special talent or skill they are happy to share?

Does anyone in the group enjoy reading or writing?

Has anyone in the group recently learned something new that excited them?

PARACHUTE FUN—“WAVING GOODBYE, WAVING HELLO”

P—Y

Suggested Group: Preschool, Young

Purpose: To provide a lively, interactive, and age-appropriate way for young children to explore feelings of connection and separation in a fun and controlled environment. This activity can help them externalize emotions, foster group cohesion, and practice turn-taking and cooperation, while offering moments of shared joy and connection, symbolizing how memories stay with us.

Task/Need:

- Group Building
- Identifying and expressing feelings

Materials:

- One large, colorful PARACHUTE (*suitable for the group size, with handles if possible*)
- Lightweight, soft balls or beanbags

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Clear a large, open area where children can sit or stand comfortably around the PARACHUTE without bumping into anything (recommended to use the Community Room). Ensure sufficient space around the perimeter.
- Introduce the PARACHUTE and safety rules:
 - *“Today we’re going to play a super fun game with this colorful PARACHUTE! Does anyone know what this big cloth is for? We’re going to make it wave, and hide under it, and laugh together!”*
 - *“With the PARACHUTE, we all need to work together. We’ll hold it gently and listen for when to wave it up high and bring it down low. Remember, we all hold a handle and stay safe with our friends.”*
- Ensure everyone has a space to hold onto and talk about the ways we’re connected and work together when we’re in our group.
 - *“Let’s all find a spot to sit down around the PARACHUTE and grab one of the handles or just hold onto the edge. Everyone needs to hold on so we can make it move!”*
 - *“This PARACHUTE is so big, and when we all hold onto it, we’re all connected, just like we’re connected here in our group. And it’s going to make us move and laugh, which is something we can do even when we miss someone special.”*

- For those who want to watch first, have a volunteer sit off to the side with them until they feel comfortable (maybe sitting just outside and tapping the PARACHUTE edge initially, for example).

Activity Description:

- **OCEAN WAVES (Gentle Introduction):** *“Let’s make Gentle Waves with our PARACHUTE! Gently, all together, raise it up a little... and bring it down softly. Up and down, like Gentle Ocean Waves. Can you feel how we all need to work together to make the Waves? It’s even more fun if we want to make ocean sounds while doing it!”*
- **HIDING UNDERNEATH:** *“Now, let’s make a Big Tent! When I say ‘UP!’ we’ll lift the PARACHUTE way up high, and when I say ‘DOWN!’ we’ll quickly pull it down to the ground and sit under it, like a cozy, colorful cave! Don’t let go of the edge!”*
- **POPCORN & JUMPING (Expressing Energy):** *“Let’s bring some lightweight, soft balls into our game! These are our Popcorn. Let’s put them on top of the PARACHUTE. Can we make the Popcorn jump and dance by shaking the PARACHUTE quickly and slowly? Fast and slow! Let’s make some Popcorn sounds—POP, POP!”*
- **PARACHUTE TUNNEL (Connection Reinforcement):** If the group is small and cooperative, lift the PARACHUTE high and allow children to run *underneath* it to the other side. This is an active way to show trust and feel supported by the group holding the edges.
- **WAVING GOODBYE, WAVING HELLO (Symbolic Play):**
 - *“When people we love die, we can still WAVE to them in our hearts even though we won’t see them again in person. Let’s make a big Wave that feels like WAVING GOODBYE and WAVING HELLO in our minds, even though we can’t see them.”*
 - *“Let’s lift the PARACHUTE up high, like a big HELLO WAVE. And bring it down gently, like a gentle GOODBYE WAVE. GOODBYE WAVES feel hard sometimes, don’t they?”*

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Guide the children to gently bring the PARACHUTE to the ground and lay it flat. Everyone remains seated.
- Use simple reflection questions:
 - *“That was so much fun! What did you like best about our PARACHUTE game today? Was it making the WAVES, Hiding Under, or making the Popcorn jump?”*

- *“When we make our big WAVING GOODBYE, WAVING HELLO WAVES, it reminds us that even when we miss someone very much, we can still think of them, and those thoughts stay right inside us, warm and safe. And we can remember together, here in our group.”*
- *“Now it’s time to gently let go of our PARACHUTE and give it a big thank you for all our fun. We’ll fold it up nicely so it can rest. We can go back to our room and play!”*

Notes:

- Use simple, concrete words. Keep sentences short. Avoid abstract concepts too complex for their developmental stage.
- Preschoolers have limited attention spans. Be ready to move quickly from one PARACHUTE game to the next, or to change the activity entirely if attention wanes.
- **Emotion regulation:** The excitement can sometimes be overwhelming. Be prepared to gently calm the group if energy gets too high—maybe move back to gentle waves with the PARACHUTE and Ocean Sounds before ending the activity.
- **Grief integration:** The activity’s primary goal is group connection and joy. The grief message is subtle and gently integrated (WAVING GOODBYE/HELLO with memories) rather than explicit processing, as is developmentally appropriate for this age.

For Ongoing Groups:

- As the group is different, this is appropriate as is for Ongoing Groups. No additional adaptations are needed.

PASS THE BALL

Y—M—T

Suggested Group(s): Young, Middle, Teen

Purpose: To foster group cohesion, encourage collaborative problem-solving, and provide a light-hearted experience that builds trust and communication within the group

Task/Need:

- Group building

Materials:

- Small ball
- Stopwatch or timer (*phone timer works well*)
- Comfortable space to sit in a circle

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Welcome the group back and explain the activity they will be doing today will be a little bit of a challenge that they will need to work together to do but will be a fun way to connect and support each other.
- Explain the “challenge” (*without giving the solution*)
 - *“Our task is simple: you’re going to try to PASS THIS BALL so that every single person in our circle touches it. The catch is, we want to see how quickly you can do it. There’s no right or wrong way to play this; it’s about seeing what works best for this group. Think of it as a team puzzle we’ll solve together.”*
- Remind them of the **I PASS RULE** and that if they want, they can observe or give suggestions that way if they like, but there’s no pressure to participate.
- Briefly explain how the timer will work (start when the BALL leaves the first hand, stop when it’s touched by the last person). Ask if anyone has any initial questions before you begin.

Activity Description:

- Sit in a circle and time how quickly the group can pass the BALL, so everyone touches it and gets back to the original person who had the BALL. Note that you will time the first round.
- Start the timer as the BALL leaves the first person’s hand and stop it as the last person touches it. Announce the time positively, regardless of how long it took.
“Great first attempt! That was [time] seconds.”
 - *“OK, that was our first try! Now, I want you to talk amongst yourselves. As a group, how do you think you could improve that time? What ideas*

do you have? Are there different ways you could pass the BALL? Don't be afraid to try something new!"

- Step back and allow the group to brainstorm and strategize on their own. Observe how they communicate, who takes initiative, and how they respond to different ideas. Do they delegate? Are some ideas dismissed quickly? This observation is key for understanding group dynamics.
- After each round, ask the group, *"How did that feel? Any new ideas to shave off more time?"*
 - The group will naturally start to experiment with different physical arrangements—huddling closer, even simultaneously touching the BALL to reduce the PASSING TIME. As the group "discovers" that touching the BALL all at once is the fastest method, this becomes a shared moment of realization and accomplishment.
- Observe group members as they huddle closer until they figure out the "trick." This observation will help facilitators figure out how to plan for future activities.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Start with acknowledgment: *"Wow, you all did a fantastic job with that! It was amazing to watch you work together and improve your time so much. Take a moment to just appreciate what you accomplished as a team."*
- Ask open-ended questions:
 - *"What was one thing you noticed that really helped our group work better together in this activity?"*
 - *"When you were strategizing, did anyone feel their ideas weren't heard, or perhaps that someone else's idea was really good? How did that feel?"*
 - *"Were there any moments that felt frustrating, or where you had to adjust your approach? How did the group respond to those challenges?"*
 - *"What was your favorite part of this activity?"*
 - *"If you were to compare how we worked together in this game to how we might support each other in our group discussions, what similarities or differences do you see?"*
 - *"What did you learn about teamwork or problem-solving that might be helpful in other areas, maybe even outside this room?"*
- End with a thank you and your observations:
 - *"As volunteers, we observed a lot of really great things: how you listened to each other, how you tried different strategies, and especially how you*

supported one another even when it felt a little tricky. Those are all really valuable skills we bring into our support group.”

- *“Thank you all for jumping into that with such enthusiasm. It was a wonderful way to connect, and it reminds us of the strength we have when we work together.”*

Notes:

- Allow the group to lead the problem-solving. Your role is to facilitate the structure and then step back to observe and reflect, not to provide the answers.
- The activity is meant to be fun. If the group wants to play for longer or deviates slightly, as long as it's positive and safe, allow for that flexibility. The main point is positive interaction and connection!
- Let the group be creative—they are making group decisions, working together, and having fun—and that is the point.
- Children will often have their own variations of this game. Encourage them to try whatever variations they would like. Some suggestions have been:
 - PASSING THE BALL with eyes closed
 - Forming a line and PASSING THE BALL forwards and backwards
 - Using one hand
- **Variation: Name & Pattern Pass**
 - This variation is best introduced before the speed challenge or after they've had a few rounds of the standard PASSING (especially if you want to use it as a “warm-up” for name recognition before the complex timed challenge). This is great to use on group night 1 when group members are still getting to know one another.
 - *“Our goal is to create a pattern to PASS THE BALL so that every single person in our circle gets it once, and then it comes back to the person who started. When you PASS THE BALL, you must clearly say the name of the person you're passing it to.”*
 - Establish the pattern first slowly, saying each person's name as they pass it. Remind them that it is OK if they forget someone's name as it happens to everyone and just ask for a reminder.
 - Once they get the pattern down and it goes fast, you can introduce another BALL and pattern slowly. The goal is to get both BALLS going with a different pattern.
 - *“You all did great with one BALL and remembering names! Now, we're going to make it a little trickier by introducing a second BALL*

into the mix with a different pattern. This means [Person A] will pass their first ball to [Person B] (saying their name), and as soon as [Person A's] hands are free, they will start the second BALL by passing it to the next person in the second pattern."

- Expect collisions or dropped BALLS. Encourage teamwork to recover and restart. *"Oops! Let's get both BALLS back and see if we can do that part again, maybe a little slower to coordinate."*
- During processing, incorporate these questions:
 - *"How did it feel to remember everyone's names as you passed the BALL?"*
 - *"What was harder: establishing the pattern, or remembering to say the names?"*
 - *"When we added the second BALL, what changed? How did we need to work differently?"*
 - *"Did it feel different to PASS THE BALL to someone when you said their name, compared to just PASSING it?"*
 - *"What did you learn about how our group communicates, especially when things get a bit complicated with two BALLS?"*
 - *"Who felt more confident in remembering everyone's names by the end of this game?"*

For Ongoing Groups:

- This is a group building activity, so it is appropriate for Introductory Sessions or Ongoing Sessions. However, if they have done previously, they may already know the "trick."
- If one group member knows the trick, use this strategy: *"To make it interesting, for our first round, [Group Member's Name], since you know the trick, what's a small rule or challenge you'd like to add that changes how we pass the BALL?"* This immediately shifts the focus from simply knowing the trick to innovating on it.
- Suggested Variations:
 - *"PASS THE BALL only using your left hand."*
 - *"Everyone must close their eyes while the BALL is being PASSED (someone calls out 'STOP' when it feels like everyone touched it)."*
 - *"The BALL cannot be directly passed person-to-person; it must touch the floor once between each person."*

- *“Only verbal communication allowed (no hand signals for direction).”*
- *“No talking allowed at all!”* (Challenges non-verbal communication).
- *“Everyone must be standing/kneeling/sitting on one knee.”*
- This empowers the “expert” member by validating their prior experience and enlisting them as a creative contributor rather than just someone who “ruins” the game. It levels the playing field by introducing novelty for everyone.
- Alternate variation: Introduce more than one BALL.
 - *“You all mastered the ONE-BALL challenge! Now, let’s see how well we can coordinate when we introduce a second (or even a third) BALL. The rule remains: every BALL must touch every person, and we’ll see how quickly we can get all of them through.”*
 - The difficulty significantly increases with multiple BALLS, as timing, spacing, and awareness of others become much more critical. The old *“huddle and touch”* trick won’t work easily with multiple, separately moving objects.
 - This provides a new, tangible challenge that re-engages the entire group, even those who knew the original trick. It inherently requires more dynamic communication and coordination.

PASS THE SQUEEZE

P—Y—M—T—A

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

Purpose: To transition from group time to family time and departure. To strengthen the feeling of belonging and connection within the group.

Task/Need:

- Group building
- Group closure

Materials: None

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- This activity is best done at the very end of your Group meeting, just before families start to arrive or before everyone departs.
- Gently signal that the main discussion or activity is ending.
 - *“OK everyone, we’ve had a really meaningful (or fun, or reflective) time today. As our meeting comes to a close and families will be here soon, we’re going to do one last activity together that helps us feel connected.”*
- Tell them what the PASS THE SQUEEZE is for.
 - *“This activity is called PASS THE SQUEEZE. It’s a special way we can all say goodbye for now, feel our connection as a group, and bring a calm feeling to the end of our time together.”*
- Ask everyone, including yourself and other volunteers, to stand or sit in a circle.
 - *“Can everyone join me in making a circle? We can either hold hands with each other, or if that doesn’t feel comfortable, you can join your own hands together while standing in the circle.”*
 - The second option is important for those who may not be comfortable with touching others or have sensory needs.

Activity Description:

- Group members, including volunteers, form a circle and join hands or alternatively, can hold their own hands.
- Explain that a volunteer will start by PASSING THE SQUEEZE to the person next to them.
 - *“Now that we’re all connected, I’m going to start by gently SQUEEZING THE HAND of the person next to me [demonstrate a gentle SQUEEZE on one side]. When you feel that SQUEEZE, pass it along by gently SQUEEZING THE HAND of the person next to you. We’ll keep PASSING it until the SQUEEZE comes all the way back around to me.”*

- *“If you are holding your own hand, the person next to you will ‘THROW’ YOU THE SQUEEZE (demonstrate gently tossing an imaginary ball) and then you can SQUEEZE your own hands together. You can then PASS THAT SQUEEZE onto the next person by tossing an imaginary ball.”*
- Remind the group before you start that it is always a gentle SQUEEZE.
 - ***“Remember, it’s just a LIGHT, GENTLE SQUEEZE, so it feels comfortable for everyone. Pretend you are just giving a little SQUEEZE to an egg—we don’t want to break it! We’ll keep PASSING it until the SQUEEZE comes all the way back around to me.”***

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Acknowledge the completed SQUEEZE: When THE SQUEEZE returns to you, briefly pause.
 - *“And there’s THE SQUEEZE, back to me. Thank you, everyone, for sharing that moment of gentle connection.”*
- Just a quiet “Thank You” to the group.

Notes:

- For variations, here are some non-touch ideas:
 - **PASS THE WAVE**—*“Instead of squeezing hands, we’re going to pass a quiet WAVE or SPARK of connection. I’ll start by making eye contact and giving a small nod or a little ‘wiggle’ of my finger towards the person next to me [demonstrate a very subtle gesture—a quiet nod or gentle finger point, while making eye contact]. When you receive that nod or gesture, make eye contact with the person next to you and gently PASS IT ON. We’ll keep PASSING it around until it comes all the way back to me.”*
 - **PASS THE WIGGLE**—*“This last game is called PASS THE WIGGLE! It’s a fun way to share a little movement and a smile as a group. We don’t need to touch anyone, just share a WIGGLE around the circle.”* With this version, they can either mirror the WIGGLE the other person starts with or create their own.
 - **PASS THE WOOSH**—*“We’re going to finish tonight by PASSING THE WOOSH. This is a fun way to close out the night together. We’re going to stand in a circle, and a volunteer will start with a WOOSH—tossing a pretend ball while saying ‘WOOSH!’ to the person next to them. You then can pass the pretend ball to the person next to you with a ‘WOOSH!’ or whatever silly word you like. We will keep it going until it comes back around.”*

PAST PRESENT FUTURE BEANBAG TOSS

Y—M—T

Suggested Group(s): Young, Middle, Teen

Purpose: To provide an opportunity for group members to explore different feelings, thoughts, memories, etc. related to the past, present, and future.

Task/Need:

- Identifying and expressing feelings
- Helping them understand who they are after their loss
- Sharing memories and continuing bonds with the person who died
- Making meaning of the loss
- Living on the grief spiral

Materials:

- Feelings Target or Designated Zones:
 - **Option 1—Pre-made Target:** A BEANBAG TOSS game board with three holes of varying sizes. Label one hole PAST, one PRESENT, and one FUTURE. (*Suggestion: PAST can be biggest, FUTURE smallest, to visually represent certainty.*)
 - **Option 2—Adaptable Zones:** Use a standard cornhole board, or three hula hoops, baskets, or designated spots on the floor. Label each one clearly with PAST, PRESENT, or FUTURE.
- **BEANBAGS:** 3–5 BEANBAGS
 - *Optional:* If available, use BEANBAGS or small soft objects with feelings words on them (for example, Kimochis, or Feeling Flashcards taped to BEANBAGS) for an added dimension (see *Variation 1* in Notes).
- **Question Cards:** Pre-printed, simple Questions for each category: PAST, PRESENT, and FUTURE. Keep them in separate piles or clearly organized. (*Refer to the comprehensive Question lists at the end of this write-up.*)



Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Explain to the group that they are going to play a game about the PAST, PRESENT, and FUTURE. Note that it will be a fun way to share thoughts and feelings about memories, how things are now, and how things might be in the future. Define the terms if needed (PAST is memories, things that might have happened before their person died or how things used to be—PRESENT is what is happening now and how they might be feeling since their person died—FUTURE is what might happen next or what they hope or worry about coming up).

- Let them know that this BEANBAG TOSS GAME is different than a regular target game. They aim for one of the time zones when it is their turn, and when it lands in one of them, they will have the chance to share memories, feelings and thoughts based on some of the questions, or they can pass and allow others to answer.

Activity Description

- Explain the rules clearly:
 - Each person will get some BEANBAGS to toss.
 - You'll toss them one by one, aiming for any of the three zones.
 - Once all your BEANBAGS are tossed, we'll see which zone got the most.
 - Then, you'll choose one Question Card from that Time Zone (PAST, PRESENT, or FUTURE) to answer and share with the group. Others can answer as well if they like.
 - Then it will be the next person's turn.
- The purpose of this game is to encourage recalling and sharing memories about the person who died. This helps to keep their person's legacy alive and validate the group members' continued bonds with that person.
- Allow time for all group members to answer the Question, even if it isn't their turn—this allows for sharing and connections to be made.
- Remind them of the **I PASS RULE**.
 - A group member may choose to **PASS** on the activity completely.
 - Offer options like Model Magic, writing/coloring, or a secondary activity. Be sure that the group member is not sitting alone—if they **PASS** on the activity, a volunteer should sit with them to engage in the activity that they choose.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Once everyone has had a turn and answered their Questions, bring the group back together. Thank the group for playing and for sharing their thoughts and feelings!
- Honor the courage it takes to talk about their grief.
- Allow time for reflection on the experience:
 - *“What was it like to play the game? Was it fun or challenging?”*
 - *“Were there Questions that felt easy to answer? Some that felt hard to answer?”*

- *“Did anyone learn something new about themselves or someone else today?”*
- *“Did anyone learn anything new about their feelings?”*
- *“What was it like to hear what others shared? Did anyone think ‘I’ve felt that way too?’”*
- Summarize any common themes that came up as group members answered the questions.
 - For example, *“I noticed many of us shared really special memories of our person who died. It shows how much love we still hold for them.”*
 - *“It sounded like many of you are experiencing [common feeling] right now, and that’s OK, you’re not alone in that.”*
 - *“What was it like to hear that you’re not the only one who experienced _____.”*
- Thank the group for sharing their thoughts and feelings about the game.

Notes:

- **Timing:** This activity is generally more suitable later in a group’s progression (in an Ongoing Group or a few sessions into an Introductory Group), as group members will likely feel more comfortable sharing deeper reflections. In addition, they will have a better context to respond to the PRESENT Questions related to the Caring Place.
- Always preview and select Question Cards appropriate for your specific age group and their developmental level. Simpler, more concrete questions are best for Younger Children.
- When a group member says, **‘I PASS’**, offer alternative activities (like drawing, modeling clay, etc.) gracefully. A volunteer *must* engage with them during that alternative activity to ensure they are not isolated.
- The volunteer’s role is to facilitate and create a safe space, not to analyze or interpret their feelings, or to fix.
- **Variation 1—FEELING WORDS BEANBAGS:**
 - Instead of PAST/PRESENT/FUTURE Questions dictating the topic, use BEANBAGS with specific FEELINGS WORDS (Sad—Happy—Angry—Confused—Calm, etc.) tossed into generic FEELINGS zones.
 - When a BEANBAG lands, the child shares a time they felt that FEELING (related to their loss or current life) or act out the FEELING.

- During the discussion, ask: *“What was it like to know others have similar FEELINGS?”* or *“Which FEELING resonated most with you today?”*
- **Variation 2—CORNHOLE PICK-A-QUESTION:**
 - If using a standard CORNHOLE BOARD where holes are not labeled PAST/PRESENT/FUTURE, the child can simply choose which category (PAST, PRESENT, or FUTURE) they want a Question from after they make a successful toss (or even just after taking their turn, regardless of a toss). This gives them more agency.
- A wide variety of sample Questions are provided at the end of this activity write-up, organized by theme (General—Memories—Changes After Loss). Select the set that best fits your current Group’s needs and the activity’s session theme.

For Ongoing Groups:

- This activity is adaptable to discussing memories, changes before and after the loss for Ongoing Groups or if doing this activity later in Group Session.
- Change up the Questions using the list (*choose some questions from the “Questions for Q & A Activities” in the Appendix*)

PAST PRESENT FUTURE BEANBAG TOSS

Set 1: General Questions

PAST (*General Questions*)

- What was something special the person who died taught you or helped you learn?
- Can you share a favorite activity you loved doing with the person who died?
- Do you remember what their favorite food was? What kind of food did they enjoy?
- Did the person who died have a special place they loved to visit or spend time?
- What holiday/special celebration do you think was their favorite? What made it special for them?
- Do you remember their favorite color? Can you think of something they had that was that color?
- What was one of your favorite things to talk about with the person who died?
- Did the person who died have a special piece of clothing or an item they liked to wear?
- Do you still have something that belonged to them?
- If you have a favorite picture of the person who died, can you describe it or tell us about it?

PRESENT (*General Questions*)

- When you think right now about the person who died, how do you feel?
- Can you name some feelings that people might have when someone they love dies?
(*Prompt for multiple answers*)
- What makes you feel angry or frustrated about the changes in your life since the person died—or angry about their death?
- Do you have a favorite item or belonging that reminds you of the person who died?
- How are you feeling right at this moment, today?
- What's something you like about coming to the Caring Place?
- Do you have any questions you'd like to ask the group or the volunteers right now?
- When you first heard about the Caring Place, what did you think it would be like?
- What's one thing you're learning about yourself since the person you loved died?

FUTURE (*General Questions*)

What is something you're learning right now that you think will be helpful to you in the future?

What are some things you dream of doing or being when you grow up?

When you're older, do you think you might want to help other kids at a place like the Caring Place? Why or why not?

Do you ever worry about what your life might be like without the person you loved? What worries come up?

What is one thing you hope to always remember about your time here at the Caring Place?

Is there a special place you'd like to explore, discover, or revisit when you're older?

When you think about future events (like graduations, birthdays, holidays) that the person who died won't be there for, how does that make you feel?

Even though your person has died, how might their memory or something they said be important to you in the future?

If you met someone your age at school who had also experienced a loss, what might you say or do to support them?

PAST PRESENT FUTURE BEANBAG TOSS

Set 2: Focusing on Memories

PAST (*Memories*)

- Can you share a really funny memory you have with the person who died?
- What was a time when you felt really safe or loved with them?
- Do you remember a specific holiday, birthday, or other special day you spent together? What happened?
- What is one sound (like their laugh, or a song they liked) that brings back a good memory of them?
- What was something unique or quirky the person who died used to do?
- When was a time they made you feel really proud?
- What's a simple, everyday memory you have with them—maybe eating breakfast, walking, or playing?
- What's a favorite story the person who died used to tell?
- Can you describe a special trip or outing you took with them?

PRESENT (*Memories*)

- What's one memory that keeps popping into your mind these days?
- When you hear a certain song or see a certain object, what memory comes back?
- Is there a smell that reminds you strongly of the person who died? What memories does it bring?
- What memory of the person who died brings a smile to your face right now?
- Have you told a special memory about the person who died to someone recently? Who did you tell?
- When do you feel most connected to memories of the person who died today? (for example, *When I'm playing soccer—When I'm cooking—Before bed*).
- Is there a specific memory that sometimes makes you feel sad right now? What is it?
- What new memory would you have liked to make with the person who died if they were still here today?
- How do memories of the person who died help you in your daily life?

FUTURE (*Memories*)

What's a memory of the person who died you hope to tell your own children or future family one day?

How do you think memories of the person who died will help you when you face difficult times in the future?

What new memories do you want to create *for* the person who died (things you'll do in their honor)?

How do you imagine you will keep their memories alive as you grow older?

What's one specific memory of the person who died that you will always hold onto, no matter what?

Will you teach anyone else the lessons or games the person who died taught you?

How do you think remembering happy times with them will help you feel strong in the future?

If you could share one memory with the world about the person who died, what would it be?

What kind of memories do you hope to make with new friends and family that they would have liked to share?

PAST PRESENT FUTURE BEANBAG TOSS

Set 3: Focusing on Changes After Loss

PAST (*Changes—“How things used to be...”*)

- What was an everyday activity or normal event for your family (*or the people you live with*) before the person died that has changed now?
- Who used to do a specific job (like cooking or taking you to school) that is now done by someone else, or done differently?
- What was a special tradition your family (*or people you live with/are close to*) had before the death that is different now?
- How did your daily routine feel before compared to now? What felt different?
- What kind of special “firsts” did you share with the person who died (for example, First bike ride—First day of school)?
- What was your special person’s role in celebrating holidays or special occasions? How has that role shifted?
- Where did your family (*or people you live with/are close to*) spend most of their time together before? How has that changed?
- What were your family dinners or gatherings like when the person who died was still there?

PRESENT (*Changes—“How things used to be...”*)

- What is the biggest change you’ve noticed in your home, your family life, (*or the people you live with*) since the person died?
- What is something that feels very different in your everyday routine now?
- Has your school life or friendships changed since the person you loved died? How?
- What’s one thing you or your family (*or people you live with/are close to*) are doing now that you never did before the death?
- Who do you now go to for certain things that the person who died used to do? (for example, Help with homework—Listening to problems).
- What is something you’ve learned to do for yourself now that you didn’t have to do before?
- How do your feelings about different holidays or special events feel different right now?

- What is one way you see your other family members (*or people you live with/are close to*) coping with the changes, and how does that affect you?
- What is something new you've discovered about yourself as you've adjusted to these changes?

FUTURE (*Changes—“How things used to be...”*)

- What are you hoping will feel more normal or settled in the future as things continue to change?
- What is one new tradition or way of doing things that your family (*or people you live with/are close to*) you hope will continue into the future?
- What new strengths do you think you will gain from adapting to all these changes?
- What's something you feel a bit worried about changing in the future?
- How do you think your future relationships or family will be influenced by the changes you've experienced?
- What steps are you taking now to adapt to changes that you think will help you in the future?
- If you could plan one future family event, knowing about all these changes, what would it look like?
- How do you think your future self will look back on the changes you're going through right now?
- What new dreams or goals do you have that have come about because of the changes in your life?

PERSONAL LOGOS

M—T—A

Suggested Group(s): Middle, Teen, Adult

Purpose: To reinforce the child's sense of identity, identify group similarities, and help group members get to know each other.

Task/Need:

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

Materials:

- Plain white paper
- Markers
- Rulers
- Colored pencils, crayons, pens for variety (*optional*)
- A few examples of well-known company logos to show the group (*printed out or accessible on a device—optional*)

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Introduce the idea of logos:
 - *“Today we’re going to do an activity that helps us think about ourselves and get to know each other better. It’s called PERSONAL LOGOS.”*
 - *“To start, let’s just chat for a moment. What makes each of you, YOU? What are some things you really love doing, watching, eating, or just generally enjoy in life?”* Ask them to share 1–2 quick things.
- Give examples:
 - *“Now, let’s think about companies. Companies have special symbols that represent them, right? They’re called LOGOS.”*
 - Show 2–3 examples you’ve brought (for example, McDonald’s Arches—Apple—Highmark Caring Place heart/butterfly). *“Like these! When you see this symbol, you know exactly what company it is and what they represent, even if there are no words. They capture the company’s identity in a single picture or design.”*
- Connecting LOGOS to Personal Identity and Grief: *“So, today, we’re going to think about our own PERSONAL LOGOS. We’re going to create a symbol that represents who we are.”*
 - *“After someone important dies, many young people tell us they feel different. Sometimes they feel like they have changed, or like the world*

sees them differently, or maybe they just see themselves differently. Grief can shift things.”

- *“When you think about your own experience, have you noticed any ways that you see yourself differently now compared to how you saw yourself before the death? Maybe some parts of your life changed, or you developed new strengths, or things you used to love feel different now?”* Be sure to validate any responses and make connections if multiple people share.
- *“So, today, your PERSONAL LOGO isn’t just about what you love, but also how you see yourself now. It can include your interests, your unique personality traits, things that are important to you, and maybe even show some of those changes or new parts of yourself that have emerged since your person died.”*

Activity Description:

- Explain what they will each get a piece of paper that is about the size of a badge or small card and can make their own LOGO.
 - *“Your LOGO can be a picture, symbols, words, colors—whatever you feel represents you right now. There’s no right or wrong answer. Just create something that feels like YOU in a LOGO.”*
- Provide time to draw their PERSONAL LOGO and give suggestions as needed. Guide them to think about things like: favorite color; an animal that represents them; activities they like; personality type; strengths.
 - *“How might the changes you’ve experienced since your person died show up in your LOGO?”*
 - *“How might you use colors, shapes, or even symbols to represent both continuity (the parts of you that are always you) and change (the new parts or challenges you’ve faced)?”*
- Ask about their LOGOS while they are creating them and assist group members as needed.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- When you see most are done, start to transition into sharing.
- Ask if anyone would like to share their LOGO with the group, reminding them of the **I PASS RULE**. Let them know that they can share it without answering questions if they want to show it but not talk about it.
- If they are open to sharing, ask gentle, open-ended questions:
 - *“Tell us a bit about your LOGO. What does that [color/symbol/picture] represent for you?”*

- *“How did you come up with that idea?”*
- *“Did anything specific about your identity since [person’s name] died influence your design?”*
- *“Is there anything in your LOGO that you’ve noticed is new about you, or different now?”*
- As the group shares, point out similarities between LOGOS to help make connections. Allow group members to ask questions of each other if they’re open to it: *“Thanks for sharing—would you be open to questions from the group?”* If so—ask the group what thoughts or questions they have about the group member’s LOGO.
- Reflect on the process and connection to their grief:
 - *“Thinking about creating your LOGO, what was easy about it? What parts did you enjoy?”*
 - *“What was challenging about it? Was it hard to pick one symbol, or to show a feeling?”*
 - *“Does your LOGO represent a part of you that [person who died] would have recognized or loved?”*
 - *“Did your LOGO include anything that you feel has changed, grown, or stayed the same in your life since [person who died] died?”*
- Thank the group for sharing their LOGOS and feelings that they had while creating them.

Notes:

- If this activity is done on first night of group, it may be best to just have the group members focus on themselves, who they are, and what symbol represents them. It may be a bit challenging to also think about their person and strengths that have emerged in themselves.

For Ongoing Groups:

- As an Ongoing Group can have a different group makeup, this would be an appropriate activity.
- Alternatively, you can have the LOGO be more focused on discovered strengths or coping skills that have helped with their grief; or *“WHAT THEIR SUPERPOWER MIGHT BE”* **Variation** on this activity:
 - *“As we change and our grief changes over time, we often find ourselves facing challenges that build new STRENGTHS. Thinking about your original LOGO, or your current identity, what new SUPERPOWERS have you*

developed since your person died or since you first came to group? What ways have you become stronger, more resilient, more empathetic, or found new coping tools? Today, design a LOGO (or enhance your old one) that highlights THESE STRENGTHS—your GRIEF SUPERPOWERS.”

- As wrap up for this, discuss individual STRENGTHS and how they’re visible in their LOGO.
- Another **Variation** might be incorporating MUSIC in with their LOGO.
 - “We’ve all expressed ourselves visually with LOGOS before. Today, we’re adding another layer. After you’ve created or updated your PERSONAL LOGO, I’d like you to think of a SONG—a PERSONAL ANTHEM—that would go with it. What SONG perfectly captures the feeling, message, or identity in your LOGO right now? It could be an empowering SONG, a comforting one, one that represents strength, or hope, or even sadness.”
 - As wrap up, allow them to share their LOGO and their SONG choice, and even share a clip of the SONG if it’s appropriate.

PHOTO COASTERS

Y—M—T—A

Suggested Groups: Young, Middle, Teen, Adult

Purpose: To provide a tangible way for group members to remember and preserve cherished memories of their loved one, fostering a sense of continued connection.

Task/Need:

- Sharing memories and continuing bonds with the person who died

Materials:

- 4 x 4 white bathroom tiles
- Sponge paint brush
- Mod Podge clear acrylic sealer (*spray format is often easiest and most consistent*)
- Felt (*self-adhesive felt circles or larger felt pieces to cut*)
- Copies of PHOTOS (*sized to fit a 4 x 4 square*)—group members can email copies to staff or bring copies to group and staff can make copies for them

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Prepare group members a week in advance for this activity. They will need to select a PHOTOGRAPH—perhaps from a family vacation, holiday gathering, or another significant moment with family—and either email it to staff or bring it in. The final image should fit within a 4 x 4-inch square, though resizing it on the copier is an option if necessary.
- See the Reminder Note on the last page of this Activity. Ask staff to print one copy for each child in the group; you can give a copy to each child (or their adult) at the end of the meeting a week before the Coasters Activity will be happening.
- Begin by acknowledging that it's normal to have lots of feelings after someone important has died.
 - *"We're going to create something special that helps us honor the memories we hold of our loved ones. It's completely normal to have many different feelings after someone important in our lives has died—sometimes we feel sad, sometimes happy reflecting on memories, sometimes even worried we might forget. Does anyone ever worry about that?"*
 - Allow time for discussion or sharing if this brings up thoughts from the group members.
- Discuss the idea of capturing memories so that they will not be lost. Memories can be kept in their hearts and minds about their person, but keepsakes are another way to remember. Explain that the PHOTO COASTER they will make is a keepsake to keep their memories close not only in their minds, but also a tangible

object they can see and use. Let them know that they can look at it and remember their person or feel their presence through the PHOTO.

- Explain early on that the project will take two meetings as this can be helpful to manage expectations.
- Before they start, give them some general things to think about while making their COASTER to remember their person.
 - “*What memory does this PHOTO bring to mind?*”
 - “*What was happening in this PICTURE?*”
 - “*What feelings come up when you look at it?*”
 - “*What makes this specific memory meaningful to you?*”
- If a group member forgot their PHOTO, let them know that they can bring it next time; or a volunteer can help them look for a general image on the iPad to print out for them. They can also draw on the COASTER instead if they would like to do that.

Activity Description:

Night 1:

- Prior to starting, have the group member work on a piece of construction paper with their name on the bottom of it—this allows for easy identification of the COASTER’S owner.
- Have the child or cut the PHOTOS to fit the 4 x 4 tile block (*assist them if needed*).
- Apply a thin coat of Mod Podge to the back of the PHOTO and adhere it to the tile. Allow to dry for a few minutes before moving on to the next step.
- Once dry, have them apply one coat over the PHOTO. Demonstrate that it should be a light coat and start at top and go to bottom to be a smooth coat. Allow a few minutes to dry and then apply a second coat.
- Let the group members know that in between the meetings, staff or volunteers will spray them with acrylic sealant so that they will be ready to go at the end of the next meeting. Coordinate with staff for this step.

Night 2:

- Prior to the group members returning, apply the felt (*with adhesive or a hot glue gun*).
- When group members return, pass out their COASTER and wrap up activity as noted.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Allow time for sharing.
 - *“Now that our COASTERS are complete, let’s take a little time to share the stories behind them. This is a special part of our time together, as it allows us to hear and honor each other’s memories. Remember, sharing is always a choice. Would anyone like to start by sharing about their COASTER?”*
- They can describe the PICTURE, why they chose it, and what was meaningful to them about that memory.
- Ask open-ended questions and encourage group members to ask questions of each other as well.
 - *“What memory does this PHOTO bring to life for you?”*
 - *“What made this particular PICTURE feel like the right one to capture on your COASTER?”*
 - *“Can you describe what was happening in this memory?”*
 - *“What emotions or feelings arise when you look at this COASTER and recall that memory?”*
 - *“Did creating this COASTER bring up any unexpected thoughts or feelings?”*
 - *“How does it feel to have this physical reminder of your loved one?”*
 - *“What do you think you will do with your COASTER when you take it home? Where might you keep it, or how might you use it?”*
- Thank the group for sharing their photo COASTERS and special memories.

Notes:

- Remind the group members to bring in a PHOTO for this activity.
- This activity will require two group nights to complete because of the drying time needed.

For Ongoing Groups:

- This can be done in Introductory or Ongoing Groups. If group members have done this activity previously, ask them to bring in their COASTER from the previous Session to share with the group, if they still have it. Allow them to make another COASTER if they would like, or, they can add decorations or something new to the COASTER they previously made.

Photo Memory Coaster

Next week we will be making Memory Coasters. Your child can bring in a photo, or you can email a photo to staff and we can print that. If they would rather not bring in a picture, they can draw a memory or whatever they like to be glued to the tile to make the Coaster.

The tile to make the Coaster from is four inches by four inches square—like the blue square to the right. That's the size of the photo (or drawing) we would need for this project.

4" x 4"

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PUPPET SHOWS

P—Y

Suggested Group(s): Preschool, Young

Purpose: To provide a safe, expressive outlet for exploring and understanding grief-related feelings, experiences, and memories through the imaginative medium of puppet play. It encourages connection, communication, and validates diverse experiences of grief.

Task/Need:

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

Materials:

- PUPPETS—a variety of premade PUPPETS of different sizes and expressions
- PUPPET making supplies—socks, googly eyes, markers, and assorted yarn or felt to make new puppets
- Glue
- Scissors

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Introduce the use of PUPPETS and a PUPPET SHOW—ask if any of the kids have seen a PUPPET SHOW or played with PUPPETS before.
- Explain that sometimes it's easier to talk about big feelings or difficult experiences through stories, and PUPPETS can help with that.
 - *"You know how sometimes it can be hard to talk about really big feelings or things that make us sad, mad, or even confused? PUPPETS can be great helpers! They can 'say' things we might find tricky to say ourselves."*
- Introduce the topic chosen for the PUPPET SHOW if there is a specific theme (see below under "Activity Description").
 - *"Sometimes when we're sad because someone died, it feels like our feelings go in circles, or sometimes we feel good and sometimes we feel bad. It's like going up and down, all around, and that's OK. Today we can use the PUPPETS to help us explore all those different parts of our grief."*
- Emphasize that the purpose is to express and explore, not to perform. Reassure them that there are no "wrong" answers or stories.
- Show them the available PUPPETS or materials for making PUPPETS.
 - *"We have some PUPPETS here, or if you prefer, you can make your own PUPPET using these socks, eyes, and felt. Sometimes making your own PUPPET can help you tell your own special story."*

- If most want to make a PUPPET, allow time for them to make a PUPPET and don't rush the process. Explain that once everyone has their PUPPET ready, the volunteers have some questions to ask the PUPPETS to help them prepare for the show.

Activity Description:

- If it is a larger group, have them split into smaller groups of 2–3 with one volunteer with each group.
- In the small group, share some prompts/themes for their PUPPET SHOWS:
 - **Feelings:** Your PUPPET showing feelings like sadness, anger, confusion, happiness, or being surprised.
 - **Memories:** A favorite memory your PUPPET has with the person who died or wished they had with the person.
 - **Things I Miss:** What your PUPPET misses about the person who died (*like their laugh, their hugs, special activities they did together*).
 - **Saying Goodbye:** What your PUPPET remembers about saying goodbye, like a funeral, memorial, or the last time they were able to see them.
 - **What I'd Say:** What your PUPPET would say to the person who died if they could talk to them one more time.
 - **Getting/Giving Help:** How your PUPPET asks for help when sad, or how they might comfort another PUPPET who is sad.
 - **Special Treasures:** What special object reminds your PUPPET of the person who died.
 - **Favorite Place:** Your PUPPET talking about a favorite place they went with the person who died.
 - **Dreams:** What your PUPPET might dream about the person who died.
- Let them know that they can use one of the ideas, or make their PUPPET SHOW about whatever they like.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Bring everyone back together. Instead of jumping straight into comments, start with open-ended questions to encourage reflection.
 - *"I wonder if any of our PUPPETS have something they'd like to share with the big group today? No pressure at all, but if your PUPPET has a special feeling or a little piece of its story it wants to show, now's the time."*
- Encourage supportive comments from the group to the PUPPETEERS.

- Point out similarities in the shows. This is important for validating their experiences and helping them feel less alone.
 - *“It sounds like a lot of our PUPPETS sometimes miss their person very much. That’s a feeling many of us share.”—“It’s interesting how different PUPPETS had similar feelings of happiness when remembering a special time.”*
- Allow time for sharing or reflection, as appropriate for your age group.
 - *“Remember how we said PUPPETS can help us show our big feelings? Did it feel different to talk about things through your PUPPET?”*
 - *“Was there anything that surprised you from doing the PUPPET SHOW or watching others PUPPET SHOWS?”*
- Thank the group members for sharing their creativity and imagination through their PUPPET SHOWS.

Notes:

- Be prepared to follow the group member’s lead. If they don’t want to make PUPPETS, have more pre-made ones available. If they don’t want to perform for the whole group, allow sharing within smaller groups or even one-on-one.
- The pre-made PUPPETS are excellent for group members with special needs, or those who find fine motor tasks challenging.

For Ongoing Groups:

- This can be done in Introductory or Ongoing Groups, and little variation is needed; however, below are suggestions to modify it slightly:
 - Pick a different theme for the activity if groups members have done the activity before, or use a theme from below:
 - **Continuing Bonds:** How your PUPPET finds ways to still feel close to the person who died, even if it’s different now (*like talking to a picture, hearing a special song, or remembering a saying*).
 - **Handling Tough Days:** How your PUPPET manages special days or family events that are different without the person.
 - **Support:** Your PUPPET showing how they get support from family, friends, or even this group, and how that feels.
 - **PUPPET-to-PUPPET Advice:** If your old PUPPET could give advice to a brand-new PUPPET (or even a new group member) about grief, what would it say?
 - Allow group members to make new PUPPETS. Ask how their new PUPPET is the same or different from their previous PUPPET.
 - Allow group members to bring in their PUPPETS from previous sessions. Include PUPPETS from previous sessions into the PUPPET SHOW that is currently being done.

PUTTING THE PIECES BACK TOGETHER

Y—M—T

Suggested Group(s): Young, Middle, Teen

Purpose: To offer a creative and symbolic way for individuals to express their personal grief experience, to build connection within the group by seeing how diverse grief experiences can form a collective whole, and to reinforce that even with missing pieces, a new, meaningful picture can emerge.

Task/Need:

- Group building
- Telling their story
- Identifying and expressing feelings

Materials:

- Pre-cut PUZZLE PIECES (*approx. 10" x 10"*), one for each child and a few extra—if a child is absent, or there is an odd number, you can make a Caring Place logo or group message to complete the puzzle
- Markers, pencils, crayons
- Magazines
- Glue or glue sticks
- Scissors
- Miscellaneous Aart Supplies

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Make sure you have one PUZZLE PIECE for each participant. If someone is absent, you can use a “Caring Place” center PIECE or save their PIECE for them to complete the following week.
- Explain that they are going to create something special together as a group, a PIECE OF ART. Tell them to think of each of them as a unique piece of a PUZZLE—a PUZZLE that is still being put back together after someone has died.
- Explain that this activity can help them think about their own grief and how it connects and fits with other members in the group; to see that even though grief is personal, they are all connected through similar journeys. No two PIECES will look the same, just like no two people grieve in the same way, and that’s OK.
- Help them to get comfortable and create an atmosphere that’s quiet to allow group members to think. Give them the choice of closing their eyes to think about feelings that they have experienced since their person died, or just to think about it quietly.
- As their eyes are closed and/or the room is quiet, you might ask questions for group members to focus on like:

- *“What are some feelings you have when someone you love dies—what comes to mind?”*
- *“What are some feelings you’ve had when you think about grief?”*
- *“If you had to pick some words, phrases, or symbols to describe what your grief feels like, what would they be?”*
- *“Do you see any colors when you think about your grief? What colors come to mind?”*
- Let group members know when they can open your eyes now. Be aware of where different group members may be in their thoughts or meditation. Don’t rush to end this component.

Activity Description:

- Give each member a PIECE of PUZZLE after group members have opened their eyes or finished thinking. Explain that the PIECE is to decorate to show what their grief feels like, or what it means to them. Allow them to use any materials on the table or in the room—markers, crayons, magazines, stickers, or anything else they like.
- You may offer suggestions like:
 - *“You can use words—single words, sentences, or even poems—to describe your feelings.”*
 - *“You can cut out pictures from magazines that show how you feel or what your experience has been like, or memories of your person.”*
 - *“You can draw anything you want—abstract shapes, symbols, pictures that represent before and after, colors that speak to you.”*
 - *“You might even make half your PIECE represent one feeling, and the other half another, or show a journey from one feeling to another.”*
- Remind them that there is no right or wrong way to do it and it is unique to them.
- During the creation of their PUZZLE PIECES, volunteers should move around the room and offer encouragement and support. Ask open-ended questions if they seem open to talking.
 - *“That’s really interesting. Can you tell me a little about why you picked this?”*
 - *“What inspired you to draw/glue that image on?”*
 - *“Is that a feeling word? What does that word mean to you today?”*
 - *“What’s happening on your piece here?”*
 - *“It looks like you’re putting a lot of thought into this.”*

- Do not pressure group members to talk if they don't want to. Sometimes, just sitting quietly with them as they work, or making an observation, is enough. The art itself is the expression.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Gather the PIECES and collaboratively fit them together on a large table or the floor. If using a Caring Place center PIECE, fit that into the middle or appropriate space.
- Acknowledge how the PIECES have come together to create the group PUZZLE and allow time for sharing.
 - *“Wow, look at the amazing PUZZLE we’ve created together!”*
 - *“This is a chance to share your PUZZLE PIECE with the group if you feel comfortable. There’s no pressure, but if you’d like to, you can tell us a little bit about what you drew or wrote on your PIECE, and what it means to you.”*
 - As children share, the volunteers should listen carefully and thank each child. Make connections between things on the PUZZLE PIECES as you see them—point them out.
 - *“I notice that your PIECE has some blues like [group member]. Do they mean the same thing?”*
 - Encourage other children to ask questions if they have questions about their group members’ PUZZLE PIECES.
 - *“Does anyone have a question for [group member name] about their PIECE?”*
 - **Important:** If no one wants to share, that is perfectly OK. The creation and visual representation are powerful enough. Don’t force it.
- Acknowledge how no two PUZZLE PIECES look exactly alike, just like no two people grieve in the same way and that is OK.
- Ask if the PUZZLE feels like there are missing PIECES. Let them express what they feel the missing PIECES are. Explain that sometimes grief can feel like a PUZZLE when we are missing people in our lives.
 - *“Sometimes, when we look at a PUZZLE about grief, it might feel like there are still missing PIECES. What might some of those missing PUZZLE PIECES represent for you, or for our group?”*
 - *“When someone important dies, it often feels like there’s a big, missing PIECE in our own personal PUZZLE, and in the PUZZLE of our life. Does that feeling fit for anyone?”*
 - Allow time for processing of feelings with reflection questions:

- *“How did it feel to focus on your grief and put those thoughts and feelings onto your PUZZLE PIECE? Was it easy, hard, surprising?”*
- *“Did anything about making your PIECE surprise you? Maybe a color you didn’t expect to use, or a picture that just came to mind?”*
- *“Did any feelings come up for you while you created your PUZZLE PIECE?”*
- Thank the group members for sharing their grief stories and contributing their PIECE of the PUZZLE to the group

Notes:

- **Variation—Getting to Know You PUZZLE PIECES:** This can be done as a general group building activity, especially in early Sessions, to introduce things about themselves and their person without focusing directly or intensely on grief itself. In this Variation:
 - **Framing:** Instead of focusing on grief feelings, introduce the activity as a way for the group to get to know each other and the special people in their lives. Guide participants to use both sides of their PUZZLE PIECE or split it in half and do one side about them, one side about their person.
 - **Side 1—ALL ABOUT ME:** *“On one side of your PUZZLE PIECE, think about yourself right now. What are some things you like to do, your favorite colors, your hopes, or something special about you?”*
 - **Side 2—MY PERSON:** *“On the other side, think about your person who died. What was special about them? What are some things they loved, or what do you remember about them that made them unique?”*
 - **Discussion:** During sharing, participants can show both sides and discuss what they chose for each:
 - *“What did you learn about yourself by putting those things down on paper?”*
 - *“What did it feel like to bring your loved one’s qualities and memories into this PIECE with you?”*
 - This approach still encourages connection and remembrance, but with a lighter initial touch, which can be helpful for new groups or younger participants.
- If a child is absent or the group is uneven, use a CENTER PIECE decorated with the Caring Place logo.

For Ongoing Groups:

- This can be used in Introductory and Ongoing groups. This activity uses PUZZLE PIECES to tell personal stories. Given that there are different group members in each Session, the experience will be unique compared to previous sessions; however, below are some slight variations that can be used.
 - Ask members who have participated in this activity before if they remember doing it in a previous Session. Let them know that even though the activity might be similar, their feelings might be different now, and that's OK because grief changes over time. Ask them to think about how their grief feels now—is it the same or different? How might they represent their grief either the same or differently on their puzzle piece this time?
 - If they have done the activity before, ask them in what ways the activity today was similar or different from the previous one. Did they choose different colors, different words, or draw something that felt new?
 - If they have done the activity before, ask them about their collective PUZZLE before compared to this time. Were there different themes, colors or pictures used?

QUESTIONS BASKET OR BOX

M—T—A

Suggested Group(s): Middle, Teen, Adult

Purpose: To normalize the grief experiences of group members by exploring common questions and discussing answers.

Task/Need:

- Group building
- Telling their story
- 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:

- A BASKET or BOX
- Small pieces of paper
- Markers, pens, or pencils

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Before the meeting begins, write 5–7 common grief-related QUESTIONS on separate pieces of paper and place them in the BASKET (choose some QUESTIONS from the “Questions for Q & A Activities” in the Appendix, or see the examples provided in the “Notes” below). This ensures there are QUESTIONS to start the discussion, especially if the group is initially hesitant.
- Start the conversation by asking: “Has anyone ever had a QUESTION about grief that they were afraid to ask?” Allow time and space for them to answer, then explain what the activity will be today.
 - “Today we’re going to provide a safe space to ask those QUESTIONS (or share thoughts that you might have). You can write them down anonymously if you prefer or write your name with your QUESTION if you want to be able to ask more once we read it.”
 - To further encourage participation, you might offer a brief, general example: “For example, someone might wonder, ‘Why do I feel so angry sometimes when I’m grieving?’ or ‘Will I ever feel truly happy again?’ There’s no wrong QUESTION here.”

Activity Description:

- Provide each child with multiple strips of paper and a writing utensil.
- Ask them to write down a few QUESTIONS they have, or QUESTIONS they think others might have about grief. Tell them to use one QUESTION or thought per piece of paper.
- Have them fold each of the papers and place them in the BASKET/BOX.
- Group members take turns selecting a QUESTION and guiding the group discussion.
- The person who picks the QUESTION can answer it first (*if they want, or they can I PASS RULE*). Then, others will have the opportunity to share as well.
- Remember to throw the QUESTIONS out to the whole group after the first person responds. This will allow more sharing and connection-building.
- Remind everyone that it's OK if some QUESTIONS don't have easy answers, some might have different answers depending on who you ask, and some might not have answers at all. Talking about them is what is important.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Thank the group for their participation and reflect on the process:
 - *"We've discussed some really thoughtful and important QUESTIONS today. What was it like for you to put your own QUESTIONS in the BASKET, or to hear other people's QUESTIONS?"*
 - *"Was there anything said today that is still 'sitting with you,' or something that sparked a new thought or QUESTION that you didn't get to explore fully?"*
- Acknowledge and validate their strength and courage to explore these QUESTIONS together.
 - *"It takes real courage to ask these difficult QUESTIONS, and even more courage to share your thoughts and experiences with the group. We really appreciate everyone engaging in this activity today."*
- Final thoughts or takeaways—allow time for reflection and remind them that there is an open invitation for continued sharing.
 - *"Before we finish, what is one thing that stood out to you from today's discussion? Maybe it was a new perspective, feeling less alone, or simply realizing that it's OK to have these tough QUESTIONS about grief."*
 - *"Remember that the Caring Place is always a safe space for your QUESTIONS, even the ones that feel tough. Don't feel like this is the only time to ask them and know that we can leave the BOX out if anyone would like to add to it or the group wants to revisit it later."*

Notes:

- Prior to starting, add a few QUESTIONS from the *“Questions for Q & A Activities” in the Appendix (or see the examples below)* to get the discussion going and address common issues for this age group.
- Include QUESTIONS that don’t have simple answers to encourage more in-depth conversation.
- Below are some QUESTIONS you can add, but remember to also reference the *“Questions for Q & A Activities” in the Appendix*:
 - Why do you think we have funerals or memorial services? What are your thoughts about them?
 - Where do you believe your person is? What does that mean to you?
 - Something I still don’t understand about death and dying is...
 - What might you anticipate your grief to be like in a year or two? What do you hope will be different, and what might stay the same?
 - In the future, as you grow older, what times do you think might be difficult? What might you do to make these times easier?
 - What is something that someone said or did for you after the death that was genuinely helpful or comforting?
 - What is something that someone said or did that was unhelpful or even hurtful? How did you respond, or how would you wish you could have responded?
 - Do you think you will grieve forever? What do you think “grieving forever” might look like or feel like as you get older?
- Remember—you are here as a guide, not the expert. Your role is to facilitate conversation, create safety, and gently encourage sharing. You’re not expected to have all the answers. If a QUESTION is deeply personal or beyond the scope of peer support, gently redirect it by affirming the feeling and reminding the group that complex feelings are normal, then follow up with staff as needed.
- **“I Don’t Know”** is OK—Let the group know that it’s perfectly fine to say, *“That’s a really good question, and honestly, I don’t know if there’s one ‘right’ answer,”* or *“Different people believe different things about that.”* The goal is discussion and connection, not definitive solutions.

For Ongoing Groups:

- As the QUESTIONS will be dependent on the group member, no additional adaptations are needed to do this in an Ongoing Group.

QUILT SCAVENGER HUNT

Y—M—T

Suggested Group(s): Young, Middle, Teen

Purpose: To allow the group members to interact with each other and discuss QUILTS to prepare for QUILT NIGHT in an Introductory Group; or to share their QUILT SQUARES (if they completed one) in an Ongoing Group.

Task/Need:

- Telling their story
- Sharing memories and continuing bonds with the person who died
- Living on the grief spiral

Materials:

- **Pre-Prepared Question Sheets:** A separate sheet for each group/individual with questions related to the QUILTS displayed in your site (*check with staff for current version that may already be available*)
- Pencils/Pens
- Clipboards or Hard Surfaces: For writing while walking
- For Volunteers, a “Cheat Sheet” with answers to all SCAVENGER HUNT questions to guide groups, if needed

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Welcome the group and explain that you will be going on a SCAVENGER HUNT during group time today with a focus on the QUILTS that are hanging in the building.
- For an Introductory Group, spend a little time talking about the QUILT SQUARES and how they will have the opportunity to make one together with their caring adult and others who come with them to the program.
- Explain that the idea is to allow them to see what others put on their SQUARES, to start thinking about how they might want to remember their person on the QUILT SQUARE if they choose to make one.
- For an Ongoing Group, let them know they will have a chance to share their QUILT SQUARE with their peers and teach each other a little bit about themselves, their families and their person who died.
- Explain that they will work in small teams and a volunteer and that they will be completing the SCAVENGER HUNT, but also really look at the QUILTS and think about the memories and feelings that they hold.

Activity Description:

- Check with staff prior to doing this activity to see if there is a pre-made QUILT SCAVENGER HUNT for the site.
 - If not, prior to the session you will need to ask staff to help formulate the questions or generate 10–12 general questions about QUILTS for the SCAVENGER HUNT. Give staff time to approve the list prior to the start of the group night.
- Some general questions may be:
 - How many QUILTS have butterflies on them in the Activities Room?
 - Find the SQUARE of the oldest person on the QUILT by the fish tank. What hobbies did they have?
 - How many sports fans do you think there were in the QUILT near *[location]*?
 - How many QUILT SQUARES in *[specific hallway]* have musical instruments on them?
 - Find a QUILT SQUARE:
 - With a picture of your favorite animal, character, or sports team.
 - With a picture of something that reminds you of your loved one.
 - With a picture of an activity or hobby that you and your person liked.
 - With handprints.
 - With a person's birthdate that is the same month as your loved one's birthdate.
 - That has a word or quote that you like.
 - With hand-drawn wording or pictures.
 - A color that is your favorite color or your loved one's favorite color.
- Some questions for an Introductory Group may include:
 - Find a QUILT SQUARE that has something like what you would like to put on the QUILT SQUARE for your person who died. Talk as a group about the types of things that you'd like to include.
 - If you were making a SQUARE right now, what's one idea you get from seeing this QUILT?
 - What does this QUILT SQUARE 'say' about the person it's remembering?

- Does anything on this QUILT remind you of your loved one, or something special about them?
- How do you think you will feel when creating the QUILT SQUARE?
- Questions/suggestions for an Ongoing Group may include:
 - Find the location of the QUILT SQUARES completed by each member of your session (*request this from staff the week prior so you can easily locate them*).
 - Allow the group members to share about their QUILT SQUARE and encourage questions from other group members.
 - Ask them how they felt when creating the QUILT SQUARE—was it easy or difficult?
 - Ask them how they feel when seeing it again today.
 - If not all group members completed a SQUARE, ensure you are inclusive—what are some ways you remember and honor your loved one?

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Ask how the experience went. Was it difficult? Were there any questions they didn't find the answers to? What was something interesting or surprising that they saw on a QUILT?
- Allow time for discussion, as appropriate.
 - For Introductory Groups:
 - Did seeing all these different ways people remembered their loved ones spark any new thoughts or feelings for you?
 - What's one thing you saw on a QUILT that might give you an idea for when you make your *own* QUILT SQUARE?
 - What feelings did you have while looking at the QUILT SQUARES and thinking about QUILT NIGHT that is coming up?
 - For Ongoing Groups:
 - When you look at your QUILTS, how does that make you feel today?
 - Did you see a new detail on a QUILT today that you hadn't noticed before, or that resonated with you in a new way?
 - What similarities did you notice in how different people remembered their loved ones?
- Thank the group for joining the SCAVENGER HUNT and for sharing their thoughts/feelings.

For Ongoing Groups:

- Before conducting this activity with an Ongoing Group, please verify that *all* group members created a QUILT SQUARE. If some members did not participate in QUILT SQUARE creation, it might be advisable to skip this activity to avoid potentially excluding anyone.
- For Ongoing Groups, confirm in advance that the group members' QUILTS are currently displayed at your site. If they are not, please check with staff to ensure the QUILTS can be made available for the activity. If availability cannot be confirmed, it may be best to consider an alternative activity.
- See notes throughout the activity about doing this in an Introductory or an Ongoing Group, as Activity Set-Up and Activity Wrap-Up will be different.

QUILT WALK & REVIEW

Y—M—T—A

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

Purpose: To allow group members to share stories about their loved ones, to foster deeper connection among group members, and to facilitate movement and organic interaction among group members.

Task/Need:

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

Materials:

- No materials are necessary (*but have tissues available as needed*)
- Color photo of the QUILT SQUARE (*provided by staff if needed*)
- For those who didn't complete a QUILT SQUARE—personal memorabilia brought from home if they choose

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Prior to doing this activity, obtain a list of group members and verify with staff which participants have completed QUILT SQUARES, if any are still being put together by quilters, or if any members may not have one.
 - For those with QUILT SQUARES completed, ask staff to verify where the QUILT is hanging in the building.
 - For QUILT SQUARE not yet put together, staff may be able to offer a picture of the SQUARE.
 - For those who did not complete QUILT SQUARES, offer group members the opportunity to bring a meaningful item or photograph as an alternative to share, ensuring this is communicated to members prior to the group meeting so they can prepare. This inclusion ensures everyone has an opportunity to participate equally.
 - Based on where the QUILTS are located, plan a route to guide the flow.
- Prepare group members the week prior, in case you have those that you need pictures of or if they would like to bring something in.
- Explain to the group that they will be doing a QUILT WALK with the purpose of moving around, view the QUILT SQUARE they made and hear more about their person from looking at the QUILT SQUARES together as a group.
 - *“As we walk, we'll invite each of you to pause at your QUILT SQUARE (or your special item, for those who brought one) and share a little about your loved one. Please share whatever you feel comfortable with,*

whether it's a favorite memory, a characteristic they had, or what their QUILT SQUARE means to you."

- *"For those who didn't create a QUILT SQUARE, or chose a different way to share today, we're eager to hear about the meaningful item you brought that reminds you of your loved one."*

Activity Description:

- Allow time for the group to walk around and view the various QUILT SQUARES of each of the group members.
- Allow group members to share about their QUILT SQUARE if they would like.
 - This activity can be very impactful for the group. We often walk by QUILTS without knowing the stories. This activity gives each of us a personal connection to the QUILTS. Each SQUARE was created and sewn with great care and symbolizes the loved one remembered and honored in a special way.
- Don't rush the activity. Use the "10-Second Wait" Rule. Let the description and comments sink in.
- Encourage connection between group members. After the person shares their QUILT SQUARE or item, open up the floor for other group members to ask questions.
- This activity's impact lies in the shared stories and emotional processing. Be prepared for grief to rise and normalize those feelings.
- Allow enough time for the group members to draw attention to other QUILTS. Often a family comes to the Caring Place because they know another family who has come through the program. Seeing those QUILTS may also elicit memories and general conversation.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- After the WALK concludes, return to the group room and allow time for reflection.
- Ask open-ended questions and discussion to occur:
 - *"I'd like to open it up for any thoughts, feelings, or observations about our QUILT WALK today. What was it like for you to share your QUILT SQUARE or your item?"*
 - *"What was it like to hear others' stories, or to see their QUILT SQUARES?"*
 - *"Did anything particularly stand out to you, or did any stories resonate with your own experiences?"*
 - *"How did it feel to connect with your memories in this way, walking among these powerful tributes?"*

- *“Sometimes, activities like this can bring up many different feelings. What emotions might be present for you right now?”*
- Thank the group for their thoughts and contributions and sharing their QUILT SQUARE or item with the group.
 - *“One of the beautiful things about this activity is how it highlights the unique impact each person has on their loved ones, and how our memories connect us all.”*
 - *“Thank you again for your courage, openness, and vulnerability today. Each story shared makes our community stronger and reminds us that we are not alone in our grief.”*

For Ongoing Groups:

- This activity is specifically for Ongoing Groups and cannot be done in an Introductory Session when families have not completed a QUILT.
- Be aware that some members in an Ongoing Session may not have completed a QUILT SQUARE or may have chosen not to do one. Refer to the notes within the activity set up and throughout as to how to ensure you are including those group members.
- If you have group members who did not complete a QUILT SQUARE, you could pair this with MEMENTO NIGHT and allow group members to bring in a MEMENTO and also show their QUILT SQUARES *(if applicable)*.

REUNION BUILDING

P—Y—M

Suggested Group(s): Preschool, Young, Middle

Purpose: To invite memories and wishes about what a child and the person who died did together or what the child wishes they might have done together.

Task/Need:

- Sharing memories and continuing bonds with the person who died
- Telling their story
- Helping them understand who they are after their loss

Materials:

- Wooden blocks
- Art Materials—construction paper, crayons, markers, pipe cleaners
- Group iPad to take pictures (*ask staff*)

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Begin by explaining to the group that today they will be doing an activity where they will have the chance to talk about their person who died.
 - *“We’re going to think about the people who died that we miss so much. Who was the person in your life who died? Think about what kinds of things they liked to do and what things you did together. Does anyone want to share a little bit about that?”*
 - Allow time for brief sharing and point out any similarities.
- Thank them for sharing and ask if anyone in the group wishes that they could have one more special time with their person, or if they like to think about things they wish they could do with them (*allow discussion*).
- Explain that today they will have the opportunity to build a SPECIAL PLACE—it could be a PLACE they remember having memories with their person, or a new PLACE they wish they could spend more time with their person.
- Remind them that although they can’t bring them back, sometimes it is helpful to imagine or think about special memories to help remember them. Note that sometimes this can bring up different feelings—maybe happy while they imagine or think of things, but also sad that they can’t have more time with them—note that all feelings are OK.

Activity Description:

- Encourage group members to choose their materials and begin building.
- Ask open-ended questions & assist as needed:
 - *“What are you thinking of building here?”*

- *“What part of this PLACE makes you think of your special person?”*
- *“Are you thinking of any memories as you build?”*
- Don’t rush the building process. Allow plenty of time and encourage discussion among the group members while building. Point out similarities as they are building.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Discuss their CREATIONS and invite them to share their SPECIAL PLACES and stories with the group if they choose. Ask questions like:
 - *“Where is your SPECIAL PLACE?”*
 - *“What does it look or feel like?”*
 - *“Who are the people with you in your SPECIAL PLACE?”*
- Acknowledge all group SPECIAL PLACES, even if there are members who said, **“I PASS.”**
 - *“It’s totally OK if you don’t want to share about your PLACE right now. Your SPECIAL PLACE is yours, and we see how much effort you put into it.”*
- Ask if anyone would like to take a picture of their SPECIAL PLACE. If so, ask staff to take a picture on the iPad and ask if they would like a printed picture that staff can have ready for the next meeting.
- Let group members know that their BLOCK STRUCTURES might not be up next time, but they can keep the picture to remember it.
- Thank them for building and sharing their SPECIAL PLACES and memories.

Notes:

- This can be an emotional activity. Allow enough time for members to create and share their SPECIAL PLACE.
- If needed, this can be an activity that can be done over two group meetings (*however please coordinate with staff first, as the blocks or space may be used in between*)
 - The first meeting can be used to build their SPECIAL PLACE.
 - The second meeting can be used to share.

For Ongoing Groups:

- Inquire whether group members recall doing this activity previously and if so, what their thoughts were about the activity. Do they remember what they built last time? How is the place they build today different or the same?
- To keep engagement fresh for Ongoing Groups, introduce different building materials (Cardboard Boxes, Lego/Duplo, etc.) or different art techniques (painting, collage) if the REUNION BUILDING theme is revisited.

ROCK HEAVY FEELINGS

T—A

Suggested Group(s): Teen, Adult

Purpose: To help group members talk about their feelings about grief, understand that others share similar feelings, and feel supported by the group.

Task/Need:

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

Materials:

- ROCKS with various feeling words inscribed (*including positive, negative, and neutral emotions, as well as some blank ROCKS*)
- A bag or bowl to hold the ROCKS

Framing and Activity Set-Up:

- Begin by acknowledging the wide range of feelings that can arise with grief.
- Explain that feelings can be comfortable, uncomfortable, or neutral.
- Emphasize that sharing feelings can help them feel less alone and understand that what they are feeling can be a natural part of grieving. Hearing what others are feeling and sharing their feelings can also help them to support each other. Note that the feelings can be like the ROCKS before them—sometimes heavy, sometimes smooth, and that there can be many different feelings like those on the ROCKS. Guide discussion by asking questions like:
 - *“Are there feelings you sometimes wish you could share more openly?”*
 - *“Are there feelings you prefer to keep private?”*
 - *“Are there feelings you wish you didn’t have to experience?”*
 - *“Do you ever wish others could help you carry the burden of your difficult feelings?”*
 - *“Are there feelings you have that you can’t imagine burdening others with?”*
- Initiate a group discussion asking them about how they cope with different feelings; point out any similarities and honor differences. Note that having supportive individuals in their lives can be helpful, and that we’re hoping they can support one another.

Activity Description:

- After discussion, note that you have a bag/bowl of FEELING ROCKS and would like them to reach in and pick one ROCK.
- Facilitators can choose one of two methods:
 - **Selection:** Have group members choose a ROCK from a selection that represents a feeling they currently have.
 - **Blind Pick:** Have group members blindly choose a ROCK from a bag of “FEELING ROCKS.”
 - Group members discuss when they last experienced that feeling.
 - Alternatively, they can ask others if they have ever had that feeling.
 - Members can exchange feelings (*ROCKS*) if another group member has experienced it or is willing to take it, or the feeling on the ROCK feels too heavy for another group member to keep. They can also give a ROCK to another group member if they are not yet ready to carry it themselves. For example, they may not feel ready to hold ‘joy.’
 - Include a blank ROCK in the blind picks. This allows a member to write their own feelings on the ROCK or choose to introduce a new feeling that has not been expressed.
- Encourage group members to share their feelings on their ROCK with the group.
- After each member shares, ask if others have experienced similar feelings—either have them nod or raise their hand, or just share their experience with that feeling.
- If a ROCK’s feeling is too difficult for someone to hold alone, offer the option of sharing the burden with another member or selecting a different ROCK.

Processing and Activity Wrap-Up:

- Thank the group for being open and courageous in sharing their feelings with the group, as well as supporting one another.
- Guide conversation on what the experience was like for them. Ask open ended questions like:
 - *“What was it like for you to share or to hear others’ feelings?”*
 - *“Did anything surprise you?”*
 - *“Did hearing others share, or sharing yourself, help you feel more understood?”*
 - *“Was there anything you learned from someone else in the group?”*

- *“Did anyone share anything that is sitting with you, or made you think or reflect more?”*
- Group members can either return the ROCKS to the bag or keep them as a personal reminder.
- If the group liked the activity, offer to incorporate this activity as a regular opening or closing exercise. Solicit input from group members on how and when to use the activity, such as at the beginning and end of each session or each group meeting.

Notes:

- Consider introducing this activity later in the group process, once members have had a chance to build rapport and trust. If used too early in the group, they may be resistant to sharing deep feelings or emotions.
- This activity can be particularly helpful for quieter groups, as reading the feeling words can prompt acknowledgment or discussion.
- Ensure a diverse range of feelings is represented on the ROCKS, including blank ROCKS for personalization. For teens, consider having them suggest words for ROCKS beforehand, in a prior group meeting.

For Ongoing Groups:

- This activity is particularly well suited for Ongoing Group Sessions. Since feelings evolve and group members change, each session will bring new perspectives and different expressions of feelings to be inscribed on their ROCKS.

HIGHMARK.

CARING PLACE 

finding hope in grief

COMPASSION IN ACTION

Activities for Finding Hope in Grief

