

DISCUSSION GUIDES

Sessions 1–13

NOTES

Group Discussion Guides for each of the 13 sessions are included in this section.

The Discussion Guides will help you maintain a schedule and give you ideas to jump-start the support group discussion time; however, we want to encourage group leaders to be sensitive to what is on the hearts of group members during each meeting. If group members do not seem to have much interest in talking about the content of the video seminar, there may be other things that have occurred in their lives in the previous days that constitute more pressing concerns.

The best thing you can do for group members is allow them to express their feelings, concerns, anger, fears and successes. Be careful not to let one member of the group dominate, and be sure to guide the group back on track if members are giving inappropriate advice, but also allow group members the freedom to express their hearts. There is great healing in this kind of sharing.



If you sense that the members of the group want to talk about other things, spend a few minutes reviewing the key points of the video to make sure there are no questions, comments or misunderstandings, then allow participants to share on the topics and experiences important to them.

Group leaders will find they can rely on the prompting of the Holy Spirit to guide the group in the proper direction.

Make sure that each group leader views the Leader Training Video (DVD Disc 6).

It is also essential that group leaders have the opportunity to view each of the video seminars before the day of the session they are to lead. Your leaders need time to process and absorb the material so they can lead it more effectively.

Need copies?

You are free to copy the Discussion Guides (the following 13 pages) for use by your co-leaders/facilitators as they lead a GriefShare group.

If you would like to have these pages in an electronic format, you can download them from the GriefShare LeaderZone at www.griefshare.org/leaderzone in the Leadership Library under "Leading a Group."

Make Bibles available for participants

Some participants will not have Bibles. Plan ahead of time to have gift Bibles available to give to your participants so they can complete the From Mourning to Joy workbook exercises at home.

www.griefshare.org

- Register for email Leaders' Forum
- Find GriefShare groups around the world
- Visit the GriefShare bookstore
- Learn more about GriefShare
- Daily email encouragement messages
- Free online leader resources:
www.griefshare.org/leaderzone

Session 1 – Discussion Guide

LIVING WITH GRIEF

Goals

Help members of your group become comfortable with you, each other and the support group environment.

Introduce group members to the process of sharing their grief-related experiences and feelings to demonstrate the value of participating in the group discussion.

Begin to build a sense of “community” or “family” among group members.

Introduce group members to the daily From Mourning to Joy and journaling exercises, and explain the value of completing this material each week.

What to Expect

Many people in the group may be nervous about coming to the group this first time, especially about what might take place during the sharing time after the video. Encourage participants to share what is happening in their lives, but reassure them that they will never be forced to talk.

Opening the Session

1. Icebreaker: Ask each person to share his or her name and favorite junk food. (The icebreaker question is designed to be one that anyone can answer without feeling on the spot. Feel free to substitute your own questions or use our suggestions on page 97, but avoid those that can be awkward, embarrassing or hard to answer.)
2. Welcome participants. Explain how GriefShare works. Introduce the participants to their workbooks, directing them to the note-taking outlines, From Mourning to Joy exercises, weekly journal, The Foundation for Healing, Thank You/Invitation Cards and Care Cards. Review the group guidelines (see page vii in the workbook).
3. Have gift Bibles available.
4. Remind participants that their GriefShare group is designed to be a safe place where people can share and learn about the journey of grief.
5. Ask each person to briefly share his or her loss. Let your participants know you will go first. Reassure them that although sharing is a part of healing, they will never be forced to share.
6. Briefly share your journey of grief.

View Video – 34 minutes in length

Give participants an overview of this week’s topic: “You will learn more about what living with grief is like, why you shouldn’t be ashamed of your grief and why you shouldn’t rush your healing.”

Discuss Video

1. How have others suggested that you need to “get over it” and move on? What do you want to say to them when they tell you this?
2. David and Nancy describe grief as a disruptive, unwanted houseguest. How has your grief disrupted an area of your life (work, relationships, church, school)?
3. Sandy says the best advice she’s received is to “lean into your grief.” If you tried to “lean in,” how would your grief experience be different?
4. What comment from the video did you most identify with?
5. The GriefShare experts recommend postponing big decisions. What decisions are you facing? How would you benefit from putting off a decision?

Closing the Session

- Encourage participants to complete the workbook exercises; recommend they use a separate notebook for journaling.
- Do a “group tear,” having everyone tear out the Care Card for this week.
- Invite group members to share prayer requests. Lead a closing prayer that mentions the requests. The closing prayer should typically be led by group leaders so as not to put anyone on the spot.
- Encourage participants to come back for the next session.

Next week’s session, *The Journey of Grief*: “Grief is like a journey, and the next session will help prepare you for what to expect along the way.”

Questions?

We’re here to help.

Call the GriefShare Helpline at

800-395-5755 or

919-562-2112.

Visit the GriefShare LeaderZone at

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Connect with other leaders:

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Session 2 – Discussion Guide

THE JOURNEY OF GRIEF

Goals

Sharing – Create an environment in which people feel comfortable sharing where they are on their grief journey and the challenges they are facing as a result of their loss.

Reassure participants that this week's session will help them understand what to expect on their journey of grief.

Emphasize the value of completing the workbook exercises by:

- Gently urging participants to take ownership of the grief process by learning all they can about the process
- Prompting a discussion on the benefits of journaling
- Reviewing the previous week's From Mourning to Joy

What to Expect

At this stage in the development of your group, you will find a range of feelings among the group members. Some are still uncomfortable about expressing emotion and openly talking about how they feel.

Others have returned enthusiastically after finding the first session helpful.

It is important at this stage to continue to work on helping each person feel comfortable and accepted.

Why have the leader pray?

Most groups will consist of Christians and non-Christians (who may not have any experience at prayer!). If you ask them to lead or participate in the prayer, they may feel on the spot and might not return.

If you are sure that your group consists of mature Christians, you can begin to involve them in group prayer in the coming sessions.

Opening the Session

Icebreaker: Begin by having each person share his or her first name and favorite flavor of ice cream. Then, ask each person to share a short description of the circumstances surrounding his or her loss. Repeating this exercise will help group members remember names and circumstances as well as assist newcomers in getting to know others in the group. (Remember, no one is required to share.)

From Mourning to Joy Discussion

1. What comfort do you find in Psalm 62:5–6? (p. 9, workbook)
2. Discuss your reaction to Psalm 34:18. How is God close to the "brokenhearted"? (p. 10, workbook)

View Video – 35 minutes in length

Give participants an overview of this week's topic: "You will discover what to expect along your journey of grief and how everyone's journey will be unique."

Discuss Video

1. **Describe a time when you realized your grief was affecting you more than you previously thought it was.**
2. **Have participants complete the following sentence: "My life will never be the same again because ..."**
3. **What do you plan to do with your loved one's belongings?**
4. **Imagine that you've decided to write, or dictate, a grief letter. What would you tell friends and family that you need from them?**

Closing the Session

- Point out the article in the participant workbook "How to Write a Grief Letter" (p. 23).
- Encourage them to write a grief letter.
- Pray!
- Encourage participants to come back for the next session.

Next week's session, *The Effects of Grief*: "You will begin to understand which reactions to the death of a loved one are normal, and which are not."



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