



Submodule 6.7 - Using the genogram and lifeline to explore family history and past losses

The experience of grief is profoundly influenced by our family history and the losses we have experienced in the past. Every family has its own grief culture, shaped by beliefs, rituals, and relational dynamics that are passed down from generation to generation. As a GRIEF COACH, it is essential to help your clients explore and understand these influences, in order to support them in their emotional healing process. Two particularly powerful tools for this work are the genogram and the lifeline, which allow visualizing and making sense of family history and past losses.

A genogram is a graphic representation of a family tree, including information about relationships, significant events, and characteristics of each member. By constructing a genogram with your clients, you invite them to explore family patterns related to grief, such as premature deaths, unresolved losses, secrets, or traumas that may have marked the family history. You can encourage them to think about how these events influenced the lives of their parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents, and how these experiences may have shaped their own relationship with grief.

For example, a client may discover that her grandmother lost a young child, an event that was never openly discussed in the family. By exploring the impact of this loss on the family dynamics, she might better understand her own mother's difficulty in expressing emotions or accepting death. This insight can pave the way for a more in-depth discussion about beliefs and behaviors related to grief in the family, and assist the client in developing greater compassion for herself and her relatives.

The lifeline is another valuable tool for exploring the personal history of losses and

transitions. It is a visual representation of a person's life events, from birth to the present. By creating a lifeline with your clients, you invite them to identify moments of loss, separation, or change that have punctuated their journey, such as the death of a pet, a move, divorce, or serious illness. You can encourage them to reflect on the emotional impact of these events, the resources they mobilized to cope with them, and the lessons they learned.

This exploration may help your clients recognize patterns of resilience and growth that have emerged from their past experiences, and apply them to their current situation. For instance, a client might recall how he coped with the death of his best childhood friend by relying on his family's support and engaging in creative activities. By identifying these coping strategies, he could find new resources to handle the current loss and make sense of his journey.

It is important to note that exploring family history and past losses can bring up intense emotions and painful memories. Your role as a GRIEF COACH is to create a safe and nurturing space to welcome these experiences, guiding your clients with compassion and respect. You can assist them to find a pace and depth of exploration that suits them, ensuring not to overwhelm or reactivate unresolved traumas. It is also crucial to encourage them to care for themselves during this process, by practicing soothing activities and seeking the support of their loved ones.

By using the genogram and lifeline in your grief coaching practice, you offer your clients powerful tools to make sense of their family and personal history, and to integrate their past losses into their present journey. You help them recognize influences that have shaped their relationship with grief, identify resources and strengths that have supported them in the past, and develop greater compassion for themselves and their family. In doing so, you accompany them in an emotional healing process that honors the complexity and richness of their journey, while paving the way for a new stage of growth and resilience.

Key takeaway points:

1. A person's experience of grief is profoundly influenced by family history and past losses.
2. The genogram is a tool that can help explore family patterns related to grief, such as premature deaths, unresolved losses, secrets, or traumas.
3. The lifeline helps clients identify moments of loss, separation, or change in their journey, and reflect on their emotional impact and the resources mobilized to deal with them.
4. The exploration of family history and past losses can bring up intense emotions and painful memories, requiring a safe and nurturing space created by the GRIEF COACH.
5. The GRIEF COACH should guide clients with compassion and respect, assisting them to

find a pace and depth of exploration that suits them, while encouraging them to care for themselves during the process.

6. Using the genogram and the lifeline allows clients to make sense of their history, recognize the influences that shaped their relationship with grief, identify the resources and strengths that supported them, and develop greater compassion for themselves and their family.