



Submodule 5.3 - Setting SMART Goals and Developing an Action Plan

Setting clear objectives and developing a concrete action plan are crucial steps in any coaching process, and grieving coaching is no exception. Even though the path of grief is unique and non-linear for each person, it is important to define landmarks and directions to move step by step towards better well-being. Goals provide a course, motivation, and meaning to the support process, while the action plan translates these intentions into reality, through pragmatic and achievable steps. For the GRIEF COACH, helping the client to formulate SMART objectives and build a customised action plan is a key skill to promote their autonomy and resilience in the face of loss.

SMART objectives are a valuable tool for defining clear, motivating, and achievable goals. SMART is an acronym that stands for: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-bound. A specific objective is formulated in a precise and concrete manner, answering the questions: What? Who? Where? When? How? For example, rather than saying "I want to get better", a specific goal would be "I want to resume my painting activity for one hour a week, at home or in a workshop, to express my emotions and make myself feel good." A measurable objective is quantifiable, it allows the evaluation of progress and goal attainment. It can be measured in terms of frequency, duration, quantity, or quality. For example, "I want to be able to talk about my deceased son without crying, at least once a day, for a month." An attainable objective is realistic considering the resources and constraints of the individual, representing a challenging but not insurmountable challenge. For example, "I want to participate in a support group for bereaved people once a month, choosing a time slot compatible with my schedule and family responsibilities." A realistic objective is in line with the person's values, needs, and deep aspirations, it means something to them. For example, "I want to create a personalized ritual to honour the

memory of my spouse, choosing gestures and symbols that resemble and comfort me." Finally, a time-bound objective is set within a precise deadline, a reasonable and motivating timeframe. For example, "within three months, I want to be able to tidy up my mother's belongings by making donations and keeping some precious mementos."

To help the client formulate SMART objectives, the GRIEF COACH can use various interview and exploration techniques. They can ask open-ended questions to clarify the client's needs and motivations, such as "What is important to you in your current grief journey? What would you like to be able to do or feel differently?" They can also use assessment scales to help the client measure their starting point and desired endpoint, like "On a scale of 0 to 10, where do you place yourself today in your ability to talk about your loss? And where would you like to be in a month?" The coach can also suggest visualization or projection exercises to help the client concretely imagine the benefits and stages of their objective, like "Imagine that you have achieved your goal of creating a personalized ritual for your spouse. What do you feel? What are you doing? What has changed for you?" These techniques make the objectives more vivid, embodied and motivating for the client.

Once the SMART objectives are defined, it is essential to develop a concrete action plan to achieve them. The action plan is a roadmap detailing the steps, resources, deadlines, and progress indicators for each objective. It organizes the client's approach, making it tangible and achievable, and celebrates advancements as they occur. To build the action plan, the coach can invite the client to break down their objective into progressive and realistic sub-steps, starting with simple and accessible actions. For example, for the objective of resuming painting, the sub-steps could be: buying the necessary materials, setting up a dedicated space at home, choosing a weekly slot, starting with fun exercises of 15 minutes, then gradually increasing the duration and complexity of the projects. The coach can also help the client to identify the resources they will need for each step, such as support, information, materials, and time. They can encourage them to anticipate potential obstacles and plan fallback solutions to maintain motivation and confidence. For example, if the client struggles painting at home, they could alternate with outdoor sessions or in a workshop. The coach and the client can also define progress indicators for each step, in order to measure progress and strengthen the sense of personal effectiveness. For example, an indicator could be the number of paintings completed, the uninterrupted painting time, or the pleasure felt during the activity.

It is important to remember that in the context of grief, objectives and action plans must remain flexible and adaptable, according to the client's needs and reactions. Grief is a fluctuating process that includes highs and lows, moments of regression and progression. It is normal and healthy for bereaved individuals to review their priorities, desires, and rhythms over the course of their journey. The role of the GRIEF COACH is to welcome these movements with kindness and flexibility, while maintaining the course towards the client's fundamental objectives. They can suggest adjustments, breaks, or celebrations depending on the situation, while valuing the client's efforts and achievements. For example, if the

client goes through an intense period of sadness that prevents them from painting for a few weeks, the coach can invite them to accept this necessary withdrawal period, to allow themselves to experience their grief, while maintaining a link with their objective through simple gestures such as looking at their paintings, imagining future projects or remembering the benefits of painting. The key is to respect the client's pace and needs, while helping them maintain a direction and perspective of better well-being.

Beyond tangible objectives, working on objectives and action plans in grief coaching has a deep symbolic and therapeutic value. It allows grieving individuals to regain a sense of control and meaning in a period of chaos and loss of markers. By setting achievable goals and achieving them step by step, they can regain confidence in their resources, reconnect with their desires and values, and project themselves again into a future filled with hope. The objectives then become beacons on the path of grief, invitations to take care of oneself, to honour the memory of the deceased, to relearn to live and love despite the absence. They pave the way for a life reshaped by loss, but still rich in meaning and possibilities. In this sense, working on objectives in grief coaching is an act of resilience and creation, affirming the force of life in the face of adversity.

In guiding bereaved individuals in the formulation of SMART objectives and the development of customised action plans, the GRIEF COACH accompanies them through the grieving process and the rebuilding of their lives. This requires creativity, empathy, and precision, to adapt to the unique pace and needs of each person. By providing a caring and structured framework for setting landmarks and directions, the coach supports the bereaved individuals' resources and deep aspirations, and helps them transform their sorrow into a force for life and resilience. The objectives then become the seeds of a renewed life, which germinate and blossom in the heart of loss, giving rise to new possibilities and connections. Step by step, goal after goal, bereaved individuals relearn to walk, to dream and to create, carrying within them the loving memory of those who linger in their hearts, beyond absence. Coaching then becomes an art of living and hope, in service to metamorphosis and healing.

Key Takeaways:

- Setting clear objectives and developing an action plan are crucial steps in grieving coaching to provide a course, motivation, and meaning to the support approach.
- The SMART objectives (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound) are valuable tools for defining clear, motivating and achievable goals.
- The GRIEF COACH can use various interview and exploration techniques to help the client formulate SMART objectives: open-ended questions, assessment scales, visualization exercises.

- The action plan details the steps, resources, deadlines, and indicators of progress for each objective. It structures the approach and allows for the celebration of advancements.

- In the context of grief, objectives and action plans must always remain flexible and adaptable according to the client's fluctuating needs and reactions. The coach embraces these movements with empathy while keeping the course.

- Working on objectives has deep symbolic and therapeutic value: it restores a sense of control and meaning, allows the client to reconnect with their resources and to project into a hope-filled future.

- In guiding the formulation of objectives and action plans, the GRIEF COACH supports the grieving journey and rebuilding. Objectives become seeds of a renewed life blooming at the very heart of loss.