



Submodule 4.9 - Psychological and Social Transitions Related to Grief

Grief is an experience of loss that deeply shakes the psychological and social balance of the bereaved person. Beyond emotional suffering, grief involves multiple transitions that affect the person's identity, roles, relationships, and lifestyle. These transitions can be a source of destabilization and questioning, but also of opportunities for growth and self-reinvention. The GRIEF COACH must be attentive to these issues to accompany bereaved people in this period of change and help them find a new balance.

On a psychological level, grief confronts the person with a series of emotional and cognitive tasks that disrupt their inner world. They must accept the reality of the loss, experience and express the associated grief, adapt to an environment where the loved one is absent, and find a way to stay connected to them while reinvesting in their own life. These tasks often involve a reevaluation of the person's beliefs, values, and priorities, as well as a redefinition of their identity and their relationship to the world. For example, a person who has lost their spouse may question their religious faith, discover unsuspected resources within themselves or develop new interests. The GRIEF COACH can help them explore these inner changes, give them meaning, and integrate them into a broader and more flexible vision of oneself and the world.

On a social level, grief profoundly changes the bereaved person's roles, statuses, and relationships. They may lose not only a loved one but also a part of their social identity, their references, and their sense of belonging. They may feel isolated, misunderstood or marginalized in a world that seems to continue spinning as if nothing had happened. They may also face contradictory social expectations, between the injunction to "move on" quickly and pressure to honor the memory of the deceased indefinitely. For example, a

person who has lost their child may feel excluded from friends' conversations and activities, while enduring clumsy remarks about the need to "turn the page". The GRIEF COACH can help them navigate these social tensions, communicate their needs and boundaries, and find new spaces for support and sharing.

Grief can also involve concrete transitions in the bereaved person's roles and responsibilities. They may have to shoulder alone tasks previously shared, such as child-rearing, budget management, or home maintenance. They may also have to face changes in social or economic status, like moving from a spouse status to a widowed one, or the loss of income related to death. These practical transitions can be a source of stress and overload, but also opportunities for personal development and acquisition of new skills. For example, a person who has lost their long-term partner may have to learn to drive, manage their finances, or make significant decisions alone, while discovering new autonomy and pride in themselves. The GRIEF COACH can help them identify their resources and needs, define priorities, and put in place concrete adaptation strategies.

Beyond these individual transitions, grief can also involve rearrangements in family relationships and systems. Family roles and dynamics can be profoundly altered by the loss of one of its members, especially if it is a central figure like a parent or spouse. Each family member may experience grief in their own way and at their own pace, which can create mismatches and tensions in communication and mutual support. Latent conflicts can resurface, while new alliances can form. For example, in a family that has lost a parent, adult children may find themselves managing the grief and affairs of the surviving parent alone, while renegotiating their own place and relationships within the siblings. The GRIEF COACH can offer a space for mediation and dialogue to help the family navigate these relational transitions, clarify everyone's needs and expectations, and regain balance and cohesion despite the loss.

Finally, grief-related transitions take place in a broader social and cultural context that influences how they are experienced and perceived. Each society conveys norms, rituals, and discourses about grief that can facilitate or complicate the adaptation process of bereaved individuals. Some cultures value open expression of emotions and community support, while others advocate restraint and private grief. Some religions offer frameworks of meaning and hope in the face of death, while others leave the bereaved in an existential void. The GRIEF COACH must be sensitive to these sociocultural influences and help individuals find their bearings, while respecting their freedom of conscience and their uniqueness.

In summary, grief is a multidimensional process involving deep psychological, social, family, and cultural transitions. These transitions can be destabilizing and painful, but also meaningful and growth-oriented. The role of the GRIEF COACH is to offer bereaved individuals a compassionate and adapted accompaniment to navigate these stages of change. By helping them explore their emotions, redefine their identity, rearrange their

relationships, and find new bearings, the GRIEF COACH can contribute to making grief an experience of resilience and personal development. Each transition then becomes an opportunity to reinvent oneself, form new connections, and renew the meaning of life, without forgetting or denying the loss suffered. Grief thus appears as a life path, certainly strewn with obstacles, but also rich in discoveries and metamorphoses.

Key Points to Remember:

- Grief profoundly shakes the psychological and social balance of the bereaved person, involving multiple transitions that affect their identity, roles, relationships, and lifestyle.
- On a psychological level, grief leads to emotional and cognitive tasks that disrupt the inner world and involve a reevaluation of beliefs, values, priorities, and a redefinition of identity.
- On a social level, grief alters roles, statuses, and relationships, and can generate a sense of isolation and contradictory social expectations. It also involves concrete transitions in responsibilities and roles.
- Grief causes rearrangements in family relationships and systems, with everyone experiencing it differently, leading to potential misalignments and tensions.
- The transitions of grief are coloured by the larger social and cultural context, influencing their experience through norms, rituals, and discourse.
- Although destabilizing and painful, these transitions can also be meaningful and carry potential for resilience and personal growth if the person is adjustably supported to navigate and reinvent themselves through them.