



## Submodule 6.2 - Therapeutic Writing and Journaling Exercises

Therapeutic writing and journaling are powerful tools in assisting bereaved individuals through their emotional healing process. These practices provide a safe and confidential space to express thoughts, emotions, and memories associated with the loss of a loved one. By putting words to their experience, bereaved persons can gradually make sense of their grief, explore their ambivalent feelings, and find new perspectives on their life after loss.

James Pennebaker, a pioneer of therapeutic writing research, demonstrated that writing about difficult emotional experiences for 15 to 20 minutes a day, over a period of 3 to 4 consecutive days, can have beneficial effects on physical and mental health. Participants in his studies reported a decrease in symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression, as well as an improvement in their immune function and overall quality of life. In the context of bereavement, therapeutic writing can help individuals to organize their thoughts, identify their emotional needs, and find healthy coping strategies.

As a GRIEF COACH, you can offer your clients various therapeutic writing and journaling exercises, depending on their needs and preferences. You can invite them to write a letter to the deceased person, expressing feelings and thoughts that they did not have the chance to share while alive. This exercise can help them find a form of emotional closure and say goodbye in a symbolic way. You may also suggest keeping a gratitude journal, noting each day's moments of joy, connection, and meaning that they have experienced, despite their grief. This practice can help them cultivate a more balanced perspective on their life and recognize the positive aspects that remain after the loss.

Another form of therapeutic writing involves drafting a life story of the deceased, tracing

the key moments of their existence and exploring the impact they had on those around them. This exercise can help bereaved individuals to honor the memory of their loved one, integrate their legacy into their own life story, and find meaning in their relationship beyond death. You can also encourage them to write about their own strengths, inner resources, and capacity to cope with adversity, in order to build their resilience and self-esteem.

It's important to note that therapeutic writing and journaling aim not to produce perfect or aesthetically pleasing texts, but rather to provide a space for authentic and judgment-free expression. Encourage your clients to write spontaneously and intuitively, without concern for grammar, spelling, or narrative coherence. The aim is to allow raw thoughts and emotions to emerge, without censorship or self-criticism. You may also suggest they practice handwriting rather than using a computer, as the physical act of writing can foster a more intimate connection with their emotional experience.

By incorporating therapeutic writing and journaling into your grief coaching practice, you provide your clients with a valuable tool to explore and express their grief in a creative and personal way. You help them put words to their experience, find meaning in their loss, and cultivate a healthy relationship with their deceased loved one. Accompanying them in this practice, you enable them to develop greater self-awareness, better emotional regulation, and increased resilience in the face of grief challenges.

Remember that each grieving person is unique, and that therapeutic writing and journaling can elicit intense emotions and painful memories. Creating a safe and caring space for the exploration of these practices, and respecting the pace and boundaries of each client, is essential. Encourage them to take care of themselves during and after writing sessions, by practicing soothing activities and seeking support from their loved ones if needed. Guiding them compassionately and respectfully in their therapeutic writing journey, you offer them invaluable support on their path toward healing and personal growth.

#### Key Points:

- Therapeutic writing and journaling are powerful tools for assisting bereaved individuals in their emotional healing process.
- Writing about difficult emotional experiences for 15 to 20 minutes a day, over a period of 3 to 4 consecutive days, can have beneficial effects on physical and mental health.
- Therapeutic writing exercises can include: writing a letter to the deceased, keeping a gratitude journal, drafting a life story of the deceased, and writing about one's own strengths and inner resources.
- The goal of therapeutic writing is to allow raw thoughts and emotions to emerge, without

ensorship or self-criticism, by writing in a spontaneous and intuitive manner.

- Therapeutic writing helps grieving individuals put words to their experience, find meaning in their loss, and cultivate a healthy relationship with their deceased loved one.

- Creating a safe and caring space for the exploration of these practices, and respecting the pace and boundaries of each client, is essential.