

# Getting Unstuck


## Creative Techniques to Process Grief



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Author, *Mindfulness & Grief*  
and *From Grief To Peace*





It is not time  
alone that heals,  
it is what you do  
with your time  
that matters.



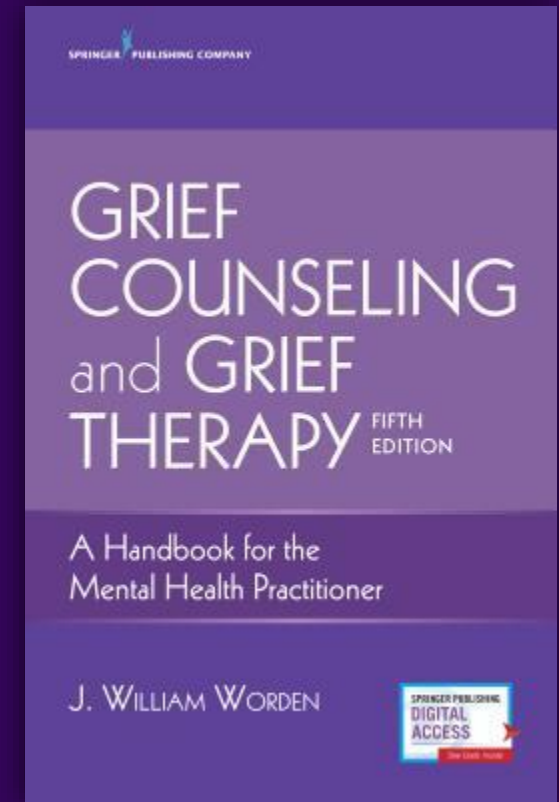
# Where Creativity Meets Grief Therapy

1. Understand the diverse frameworks of grief processing within the field of thanatology.
2. Appreciate that while there is no single correct approach, a structured path can significantly aid in integrating grief.
3. Explore creative techniques that support and respect individual journeys through grief.
4. Empower you with strategies that are both strong enough to guide and flexible enough to adapt to your personal experience.



# Four Tasks of Mourning

1. To Accept The Reality of the Loss
2. To Process The Pain of Grief
3. To Adjust to a World Without The Deceased
4. To Find An Enduring Connection With the Deceased In The Midst of Embarking On A New Life



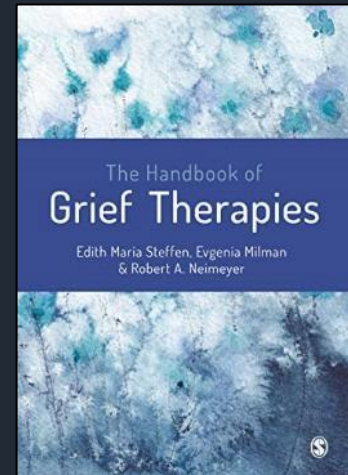
Worden (2008)



# Meaning-Focused Grief Therapy

“People’s lives are inscribed by their experience. That lived experience gets compressed into stories, themes and identities, all of which scaffold and constrain the meaning of their lives....Grieving entails the reaffirmation or reconstruction of a world of meaning that has been challenged by loss.”

- Inquiry Examples
  - “What will my life look like now?”
  - “What did the deceased’s life mean”
  - “How can I feel safe in a world such as this?”
  - “Who am I *now* that this death has occurred“?”

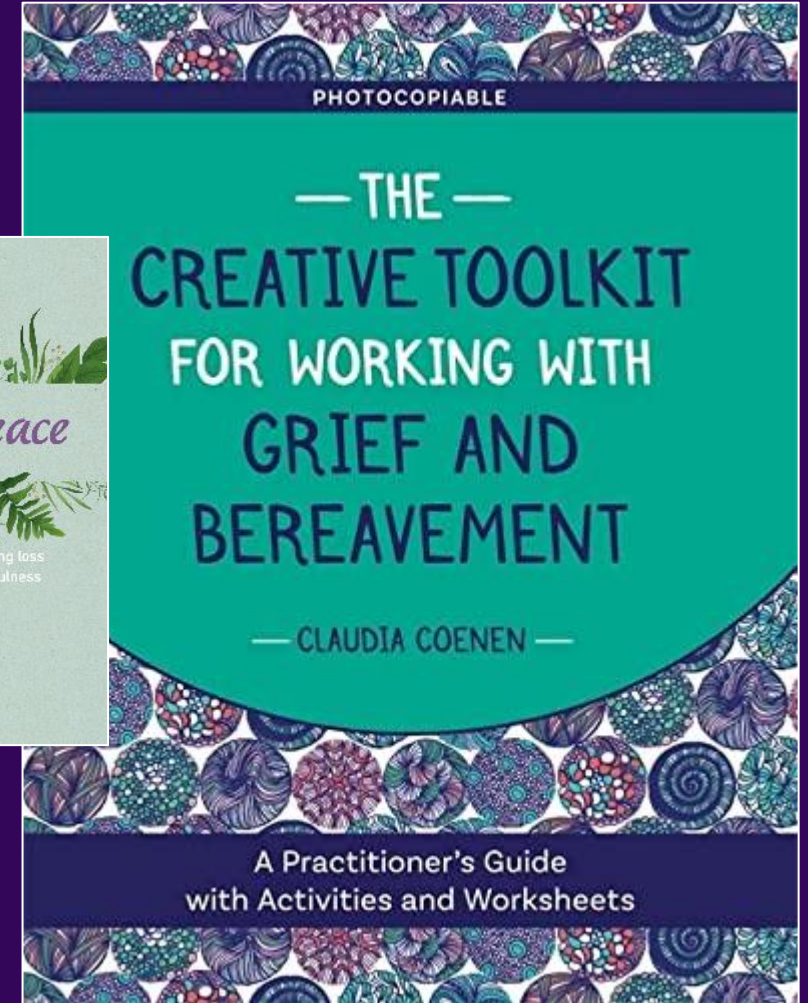
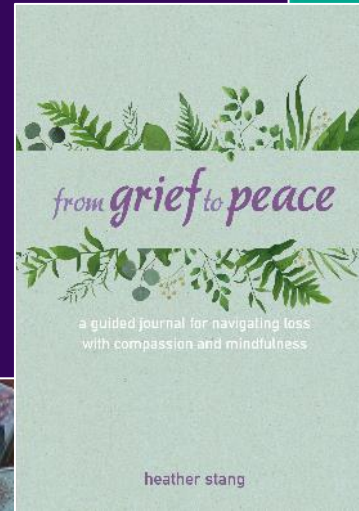


(Neimeyer, 2023, p. 65)



# Creative Approaches

- Journaling
- Music
- Expressive Arts
- Cinematic
- Meditation
- Movement



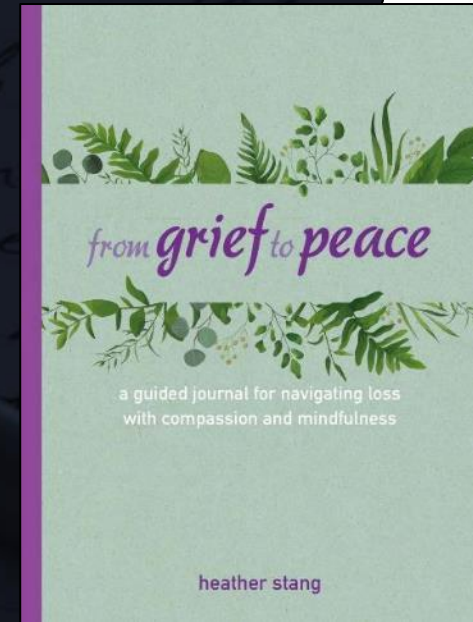


**Journaling for grief can help you release pent up feelings, process emotions, discover insights, and record your experiences.**

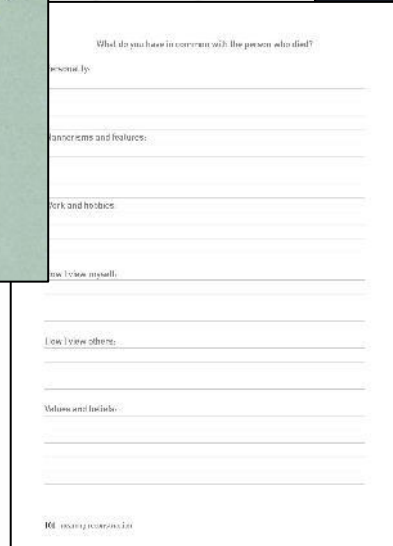


# Journaling Tips

- ♥ There are no right or wrong answers
- ♥ Mindfully engage with your whole being
- ♥ Walk up to the edge, but don't fall over
- ♥ Seek out physical and emotional support as needed
- ♥ If you are using a guided journal, go through in order — or don't
- ♥ Approach familiar subjects as if it were the first time
- ♥ Write with your non-dominant hand
- ♥ Change your POV (Point-of-View)
- ♥ Focus on the seemingly meaningless details
- ♥ Make it a habit by linking it to a regular activity



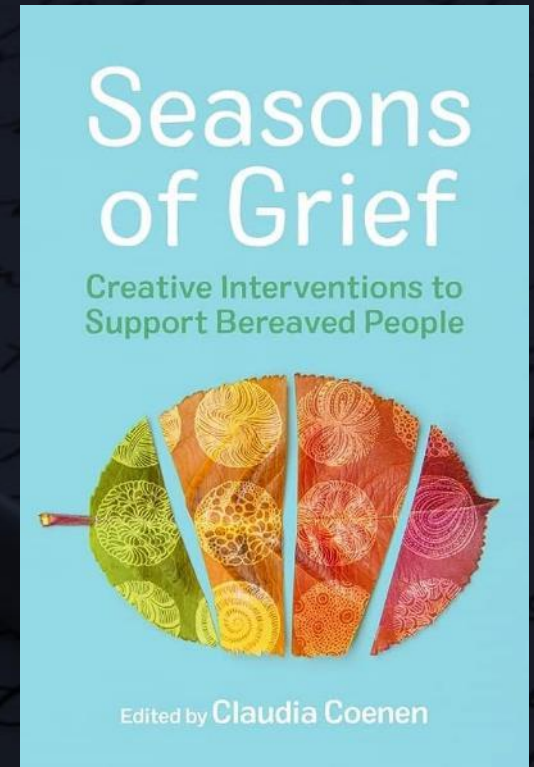
Stang (2021)





# Why We Journal (Themes)

- ♥ Become your own best friend
- ♥ Savor & share the memories
- ♥ Nurture the love that remains
- ♥ Document posttraumatic growth or change



Available January 19, 2024

"Journaling Through Grief & Beyond"



# Creating Your Own Grief Journaling Prompts

1. Find a place where you can keep a running list that you add to frequently.
2. Spend 3 minutes or more writing down a list of things you want to remember always.
3. In future journaling sessions, use one of these memories as your journaling prompt.
4. Add to the list regularly.

*From Grief To Peace (Stang, 2021)*



**Music can be a multifaceted therapeutic activity that helps individuals express and integrate experiences of trauma and grief, supporting their journey towards integration.**



# Benefits of Musical Expression

- Physical release
- Emotional expression
- Soothing vibrations
- Mindful presence
- Self-empowerment
- Resonance with emotions
- Neurological impact
- Social connection
- Ritual and structure
- Creative outlet



# Therapeutic Techniques

- Curated playlist (memory, mood, evocative)
- Playing an instrument
- Songwriting
- Singing or chanting
- Musical storytelling
- Improvisation
- Drum circles
- Music therapist



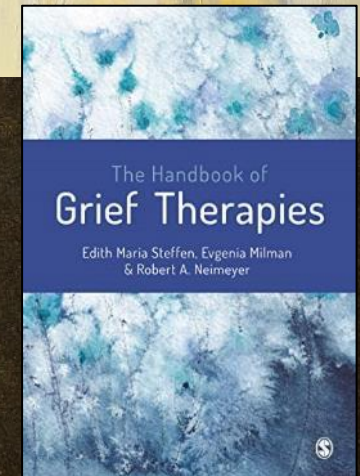
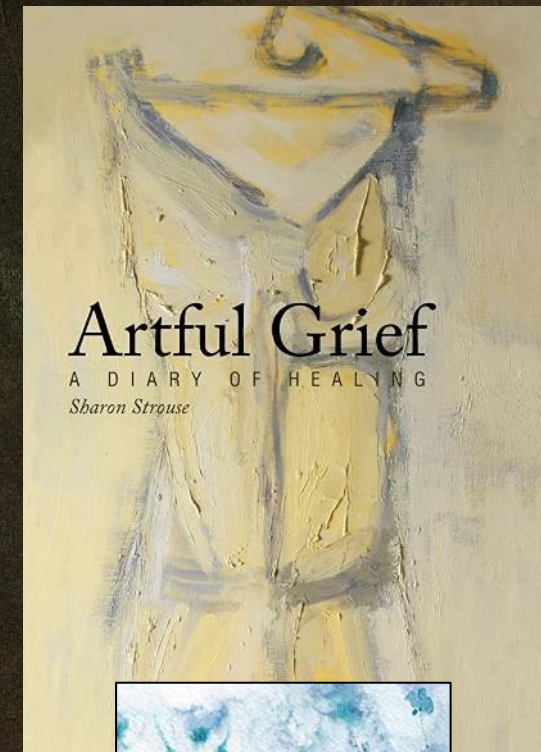
**Expressive art activities provide varied paths to engage with grief, allowing for a tangible form of expression when words may be insufficient. They can be self-guided or facilitated by a professional trained in expressive arts therapy.**



# Art-Assisted Grief Therapy

- Embodied artistic activities help express feelings that are hard to put into words.
- Using our senses and movement helps keep our emotions balanced.
- These activities can calm us or bring out strong feelings.
- Artistic expression allow us to step back and think about our emotions.
- What we create encourages understanding and communication.
- We learn more about ourselves which helps us move forward when we feel stuck.

(Strouse, 2023, pp. 162-163)



# Therapeutic Techniques

- Art journaling
- Collage
- Painting
- Sculpture
- Photography
- Mandala drawing



[ArtfulGrief.com](http://ArtfulGrief.com)



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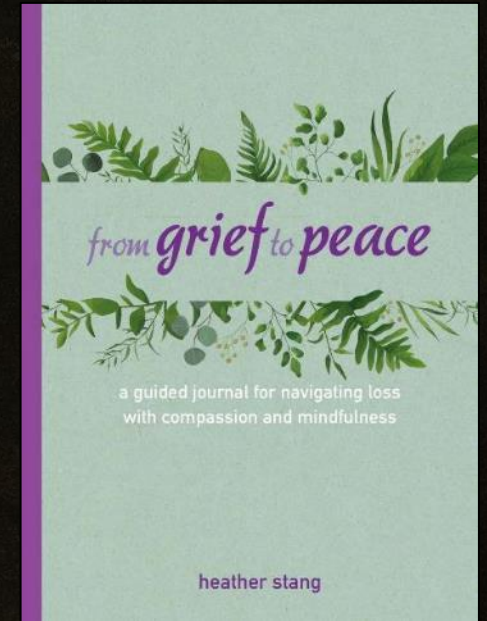




# Grief Landscape Activity

“Is grief like the desert? An unending wilderness? The untamed ocean? Maybe grief feels like another planet. Using the concept of a landscape as a metaphor, draw or collage your experience of grief. Include elements such as land, sky, bodies of water, plants, and even buildings or animals.”

*From Grief To Peace, Page 25*



# Crafting Your Self-Compassion Garden

# AWAKEN

## Mapping the Terrain:

Draw the outline of your garden on the paper. It could be a traditional rectangular garden, a series of interlinked circles, or even a wild, sprawling forest. Choose the shape that resonates with you the most.

## Planting Seeds of Self-Awareness:

Ponder upon the virtues or attributes you appreciate most about yourself. For each virtue, draw a unique plant or flower in the garden. You might draw a tall sunflower representing your resilience, or a bed of roses representing your ability to love and care.

## Coloring with Emotions:

Assign a color to each emotion you feel towards yourself. Blue might symbolize calm, red could represent passion, yellow for joy, and so on. Color the plants and flowers based on how you feel about those attributes of yours right now. Are they vibrant? Are they in need of nourishment? Let your coloring express your emotions.

## Crafting Pathways of Growth:

Draw pathways connecting different sections of your garden. These paths signify your journey of self-growth and self-compassion. Some paths might be straight, some winding. Shade or color these paths based on challenges you've faced or milestones you've achieved in nurturing self-compassion.

## Weeding Out Negativity:

Identify any areas of self-doubt or negativity in your life. Represent these as weeds or overgrown patches in your garden. Instead of shading them in dark colors, use a blend of colors that represent both the challenge and the growth that emerged from it.

## Watering with Kindness:

Draw raindrops, a river, or a small pond to represent moments of self-kindness and compassion that nourish your garden. The more nourished areas might be more vibrant, while areas needing more self-kindness might be closer to water sources.



**Movies hold a mirror to our deepest emotions  
can be a source of comfort and understanding.  
They allow us to see our pain reflected in others,  
providing cathartic release, emotional  
connection, and normalize the intense emotions.  
They can even inspire growth and hope for a  
path forward.**



# Superhero Grief

- Explores the transformative power of loss through the lens of the superhero archetype.
- Uses Marvel and DC universe to explore themes of loss, hope, and resilience.
- The shared experience of watching a movie can help family members, friends, or support groups, process their grief together.
- Accessible to a wide range of readers, including children and teenagers who might struggle with traditional self-help books or resources.



(Harrington, 2020)



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# Superhero Grief

**The Hulk**

Scientist, learns to control anger

**Superman**

Super strength, fights for justice, protective

**Wonder Woman**

Loves deeply, brave, strong, just (demi-god)

**Batman**

Human – brilliant detective skills, beacon of hope

**Iron Man**

Engineer with super suit for powers and protection

**Captain Marvel**

Brave, strong, just, stubbornly picks herself up when knocked down

**The Flash**

Brilliant, quick, loyal, runs but then faces his deepest fears

**Spiderman**

Compassionate, mindful, quick, genuine



(Harrington, 2020)



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**Q. What is the role of complementary therapies – such as meditation, relaxation and yoga – in helping bereaved people find meaning and/or reengage with life after loss?**

**A.** As contemporary research demonstrates, grief is a multidimensional experience, one that profoundly perturbs our emotional lives, our ability to find sense and orientation in the landscape of a changed world, and even our bodily needs and rhythms. At a deep level, time-honored practices of mindfulness, meditation, relaxation, imagery work and yoga help restore a sense of equilibrium compromised by loss, ultimately yielding greater clarity and compassion for self and others during a turbulent passage.

When we are more firmly grounded in our bodies, as Heather Stang and other contributors demonstrate, we are better able literally and metaphorically to find a new footing in the world, and to restore a life of meaning and coherence.



# The Mindfulness & Grief System



## Conscious Relaxation

Self-care for Your Grieving Body



## Mindfulness For Grief

Finding Peace in the Present Moment



## Compassion For All

Care for Yourself & Others



## Skillful Courage

Harness Your Strength & Vulnerability



## Getting Unstuck

The Space You Need to Move Forward



## Meaning Reconstruction

Cherish The Love That Remains



## Allowing Transformation

Discover Your Authentic Self



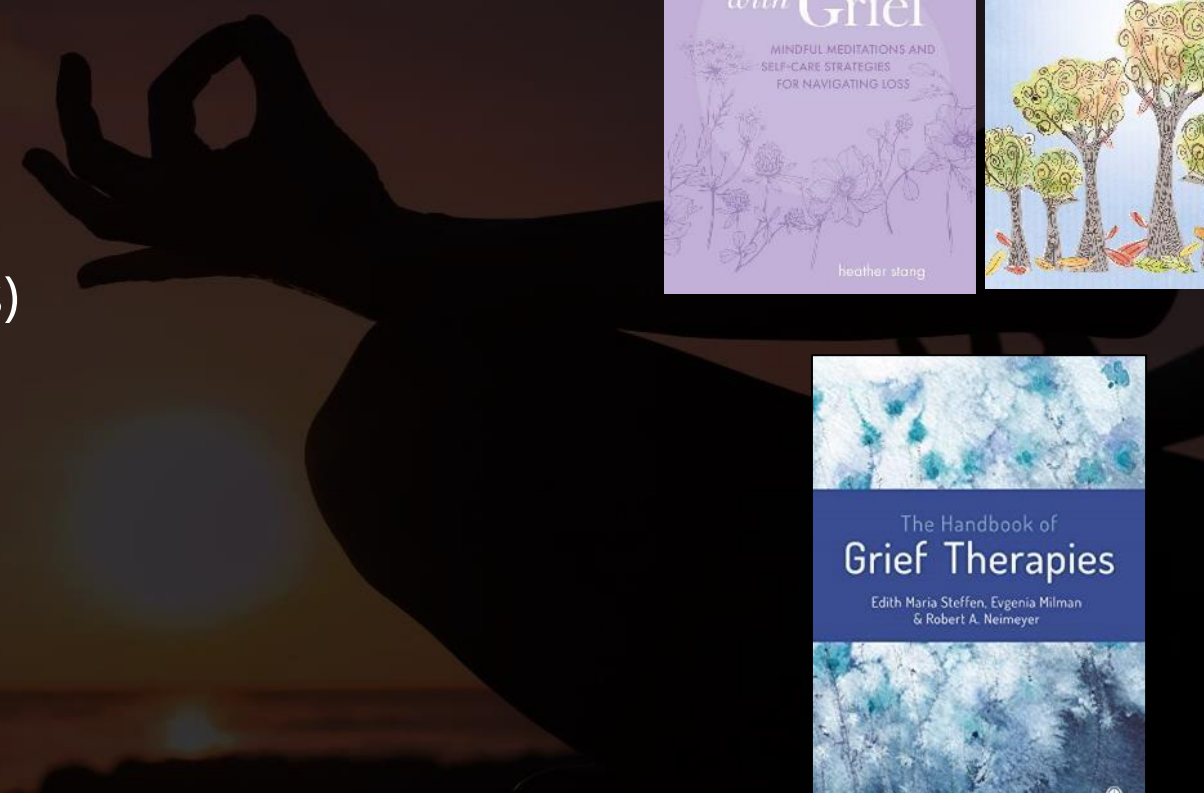
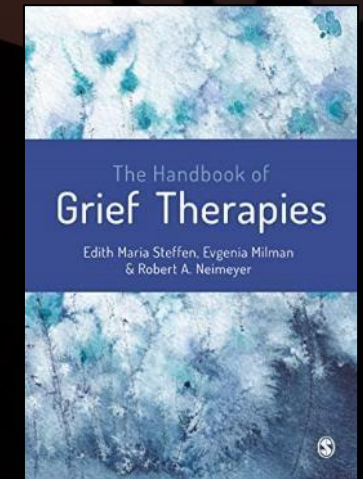
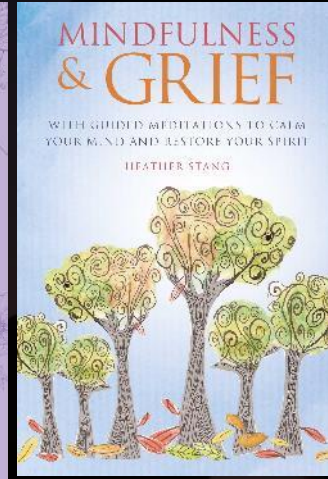
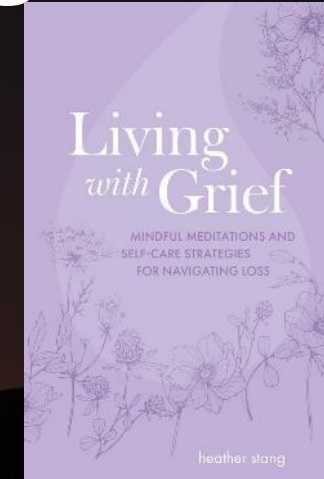
## Perpetual Mindfulness

A Healthy Lifestyle for Grief & Beyond



# A Few Meditation Techniques

- Focusing
- Relaxation
- Breath
- Mindfulness
- Metta (Compassion and Lovingkindness)
- Self-compassion
- Visualization
- Gratitude
- RAIN
- Tonglen





# The Dance of Strength & Vulnerability

1. Move your body in a vigorous way that is also safe for your body.
2. Move into or imagine a position that feels safe.
3. Exaggerate that – make it feel even more safe.
4. Move into or imagine a position that feels strong.
5. Exaggerate that – make it feel even more strong.
6. Move back and forth between the two, noticing the transitions.
7. Which position feels the most true in this moment?
8. Journal about that.





# May you know peace.

Awaken Grief Support Program  
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