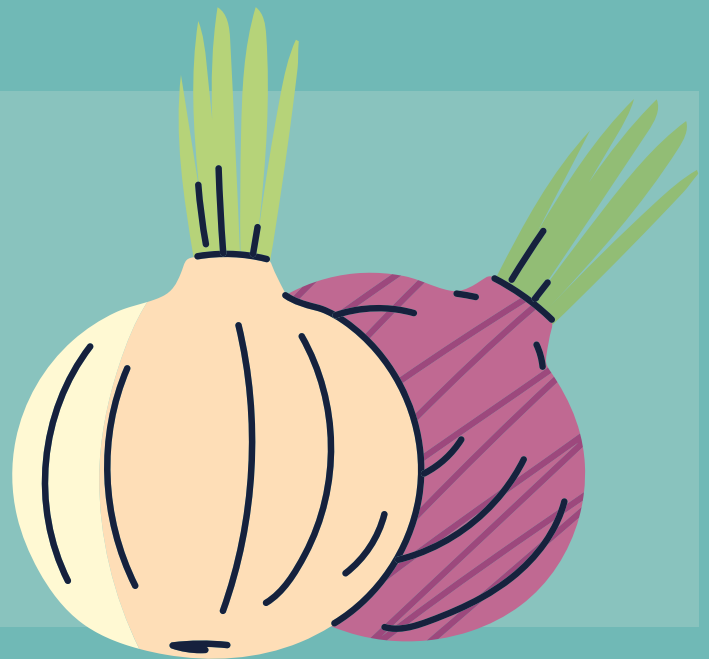


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EMOTIONAL INVENTORY + GUIDE

**A guide for both griever AND
their support people**

*Build your
awareness of the
layers of grief*



Why This Guide

Building your understanding of how grief shows up in your life is the important first step into healing your heart and then learning how to live with grief.

We know this exercise can help both griever and their support people.

For griever:

From holidays to death anniversaries to other calendar reminders of painful losses - this worksheet will help you:

- Gain clarity on what YOU need to better navigate your own unique non-linear grief
- Normalize and validate your grief experience
- Better understand your own grief and reaction to loss
- Get started on outlining the next steps to feel more supported and less alone

For those supporting griever:

Whether you are a spouse, a friend, a manager, or a neighbor - you may have questions on how to support someone following a loss. This worksheet will help you:

- Gain insight into the layers of loss the person may be experiencing.
- Build empathy for how difficult this time is for them
- Draft ideas for ways you can best offer support both now and throughout the non-linear process that is grief



Sometimes we don't know what we need until we sit with it and unpack it.

Our wish for you is...

Following this exercise, you feel empowered, more at peace, and validated in your grief, and knowing that **you are not alone** in this non-linear grief journey. Grief can be a taboo topic, and uncomfortable to talk about. We strive to make these difficult conversations less daunting by providing understanding, language, and tools to navigate loss.

If you want to learn more or know you need more support you can [schedule](#) a complimentary 30-minute consultation at www.yahdavhanlon.com.

A few suggestions to help you get started:

- Set aside some time (even just 20 minutes!) when you can have quiet and privacy.
- Avoid censoring yourself or overthinking the exercise. If something comes to mind, then there is a reason
- Be compassionate and gentle with yourself. You don't have to complete everything in one sitting. You may or may not feel emotional completing this exercise - please let it be ok either way.
- **Optional:** Find an accountability partner or reach out to us for support.

Content/Trigger Warning:

We have included some examples of our own personal emotional inventories so as to help you understand the process and further normalize the grief experience. Please know that there is mention of cancer, addiction, and suicide. If you feel this would be difficult to read, feel free to skip over our personal examples.

If you need support, please reach out at.

First, A Few Notes on Grief

Some insight into what grief is can help you in the process of completing this exercise - whether you are the griever or the support person.

Grief is:

- The **normal and natural response** to the loss of any kind.
- The **conflicting feelings** around a change in, or end of any familiar pattern of behavior.
- The feeling of reaching out for someone who has always been there for you and they are no longer there.
- Grief is cumulative and **negatively cumulative**.*

We can feel STUCK in grief when we feel incomplete with the pain of the loss. Some examples can be having regrets; feeling like the victim; or hurting over unmet hopes, dreams, and expectations.

Grievors usually feel heightened grief around holidays, anniversaries, birthdays, and life events.

Grief can also ebb and flow "randomly" - it can be hard to predict when a wave will come.

It is in giving voice to these feelings that we can begin to heal and feel more complete with our loss. We will always have our loss, yet the grief does not need to overshadow our lives and joy.

*James, J. , Friedman, R. The Grief Recovery Handbook. Harper Collins, 2009. New York, NY.

What losses do we grieve?

If we experience grief when something changes or ends, then a whole range of life events can be grieved (and this includes positive events as well!)

We can grieve positive life events because the change can be uncomfortable (like changing your name when getting married), and sometimes previous losses are triggered (like not having a deceased loved one at your wedding).

40+ loss types have been identified. Some examples include:

Loss of safety: natural disaster, racism, sexual assault, robbery, financial hardship, vehicle accident

Loss or change of health: health diagnosis, significant injury, menopause, pregnancy, infertility, aging, loss of mobility/autonomy, loss of memory

Death: of a child, a spouse, a parent, a friend, an acquaintance, a celebrity, a pet, a person with whom you have an unresolved negative relationship

Live events: becoming a parent, moving, graduating, new job, empty nest, marriage, buying/selling a home

Relationship changes: divorce or other romantic breakups, end of a friendship, estrangement from a loved one, marriage, new relationships

Changes at work: promotion, job role change, demotion, personal improvement plans, company or department reorgs, death of a coworker, company hardship, layoffs, firing

Community/world events: war, pandemic, natural disaster, elections, violence, mass shootings

The intensity of grief will vary by loss type as well as by individual. Also, we listed a lot of loss types and *this may be a lot to take in*. We have each experienced so much loss and collective trauma - more than we can capture or do any justice on this page.

A Tricky Thing About Grief

We can grieve grief itself. Hear us out. We can feel sorry for ourselves that we are grieving, and that things feel so darn hard. We can wish we grieved a different way - maybe more vocal if people shame us for being too "stoic" or maybe less "emotional" if people tell us to "get over it" or stop overreacting.

Also, grief can make it hard to get much done, and the **symptoms of grief** can cause ripple effects in our lives. Not having an appetite can make us have even less energy. Not having energy can lead to guilt that we aren't showing up for the things or people we usually support. Not being able to concentrate can cause stress when we have work deadlines or even just want to have a conversation but keep getting distracted.

Below are some common symptoms of grief to help you think of how they may be adding layers to your own grief experience.

Common Symptoms of Grief:

- Difficulty Concentrating
- Changes in personality
- Impaired memory
- Changes to eating habits - more or less consumed, and/or irregular patterns
- Disrupted sleep - again, more or less than usual
- Anxiety, depression, or anger
- Isolation

You may also notice:

- reduced productivity, changes in behavior, increased accidents or mistakes, a weakened immune system or flareup of chronic health issues.

These are likely symptoms that you may not even realize are being caused - at least in part - by your grief.

Reflection:

- Did you learn anything new about grief that has shifted your understanding or appreciation for how it shows up in our lives?
- Are there losses you did not previously realize were grieving experiences?
- Which of the grief symptoms outlined have you experienced?
- Did you equate these symptoms with grief?
- How has grief shown up in your daily life? Have you noticed reduced productivity or changes in behavior?

About the Emotional Inventory[©]

This is an exercise we love to teach in our workshops, and is also one of the first tools we present in our workbook, "Grief & Gratitude: Building Your Coping Action Plan".

The Emotional Inventory is inspired by an exercise highlighted in the book "When Children Grieve" by Russell Friedman and John James. The original exercise was developed to help parents and other caregivers support a child in navigating loss, however, we passionately believe it is valuable for all grievers of any age. (If you are supporting a child in grief, we strongly recommend you check out the book!)

We have adapted the main concept of this exercise and tailored it for you.

Taking your Emotional Inventory is an exercise that can be used for any life event or change and can be helpful in many ways:

- Building awareness of the layers of conflicting feelings pulling our attention when we go through change or loss
- Assisting in decision-making by providing clarity and insight.
- Validating one's feelings
- Highlight areas where you may need support during difficult grief times such as anniversaries or holidays
- Developing empathy for another's situation




You can liken this process to that of peeling off the layers of an onion.

*James, J. , Friedman, R. The Grief Recovery Handbook. Harper Collins, 2009. New York, NY.

Creating an Emotional Inventory:

- Start by choosing one main loss/primary life event.
- Then list all the secondary losses, stressors, and ANY changes - **whatever** comes to mind. (It all takes up energy and adds up).
 - Some things may feel as if they are not directly related to your grief or loss, but they add stress to this time. Be sure to include those as well.
 - What secondary losses did you experience?
 - What concerns did you have?
- Avoid censoring yourself
 - NO self-judgments or critiques.
- Utilize self-compassion and curiosity.


View this as a
“heart dump”

Nothing is too big or too small. If you feel it, include it.

This tool serves as a powerful way to build deeper awareness around events in our life.

Remember: In order to work through emotions we must be aware of them. We can only process what we are aware of.

To help illustrate the power and breadth of this tool, we provide 3 examples:

- Moving to a new state (general example),
- Death of a parent (Ilana’s personal example)
- Death of a sibling (Kim’s personal example)

 *Content/Trigger Warning Reminder:* 

Our examples include mention of deaths by cancer, addiction, and suicide. Please be mindful of your personal needs when deciding whether to read about our experiences.

Example Emotional Inventory: Moving

Main loss:

Moving to a new state

Secondary losses and concerns:

- Missing friends and neighbors
- Worrying about move logistics (movers, setting up utilities, shipping car...)
- Finding a new favorite coffee shop/restaurant
- Finding a new place of worship/religious community
- Finding a new school
- Finding new medical providers
- Differing political landscape
- New climate or weather patterns
- Differing demographics
- Building a new community /making friends & support network
- Navigating a new job
- Making a new residence feel like “home”
- Possibly being far from family and support network
- Missing old home and neighborhood and town
- Finding a new vet
- “Starting over”, creating new routines
- Different neighborhood noises (i.e. moving from city to countryside)
- Downsizing and needing to get rid of stuff
- Upsizing and feeling like you may not have enough stuff

And probably much, much more...

Note: this is for example purposes and not exhaustive.

Example Emotional Inventory: Loss of a Parent

Main loss:

Ilana's father died of a Glioblastoma (brain cancer) at the age of 52, the day after she turned 24. Ilana was living and working in China when her dad was diagnosed, and traveled back and forth throughout his 6-months of chemotherapy and radiation. She returned home two days before her dad died. His last words were, 'happy birthday.'

Secondary losses and concerns:

- Planning funeral with family
- Writing/delivering eulogy
- People struggled with my strong emotions/their emotions and were nasty to me
- 2 other deaths during Shiva
- Fear of grief ambushes/having to share about dad's death
- Wanting to keep all of dad's stuff/ mom donating/giving
- Thinking I was 'damaged goods' and unloveable
- Anger at the sun for still rising
- Feel deeply cheated by the doctors who said the medicine would work
- Struggling with my faith in G-d
- Returning to China because I knew that's what my dad wanted for me
- Difficulty relating to work friends and colleagues
- My 18-year old cousins's suicide
- Dad's quasi-sister's death
- Losing my wogging (walk/jog) partner
- Unable to talk about my dad for many years/admit he was dead
- Grandpa said, 'you're not the princess anymore'
- Little brother's graduation
- Changed relationship with mom & brothers
- Changed relationship with friends (lost/gained some)
- Death of grandfather 6 mo later
- Not walking me down the aisle
- Never meeting my husband, daughter, nieces/nephews
- If dad was alive, I would not have met my husband
- Harry & Zeffy's deaths (my kitties)
- Never got to have an adult relationship with him
- Death of both grandmothers
- Can't remember the sound of his voice/laugh/no recordings
- Not having my doctors handpicked by him
- Not being able to get his medical opinion on Covid

Example Emotional Inventory: Loss of a Sibling

Main loss:

Kim's brother died of drug overdose at the age of 29, just two weeks after returning home from a month in rehab. Kim had been concerned about him for many years. She took less than a week off after his death, as she was just returning to work after short term disability leave and also did not know what else to do.

Secondary losses and concerns:

- Planning funeral with family
- Telling family and friends
- Cleaning out his trashed apartment
- Worrying about parents' grief
- Wanting to quit everything
- Applying to graduate school
- Therapy, Al Anon - not enough
- Regrets
- Stigma around drug overdose
- Difficulty answering small talk around family
- Feeling like "Brother is Dead" was stamped on my forehead
- Going for promotion at work
- Difficulty sleeping, eating
- Anxious, waiting for next loss, feeling shattered after losing grandparents and dog as well
- Guilt about relief that he was no longer struggling
- Felt guilty if I laughed
- Difficulty seeing niece and nephew play, or other young siblings
- Crying in public
- Sensitive to movies, conversation
- Planning a wedding without him
- Needing advice from big brother
- Now an only child
- Terrified of losing memories
- Taking longer to complete work tasks to avoid mistakes
- Trial for doctor who prescribed him oxy
- Not sure how to honor him on anniversaries, birthdays, and holidays
- Loss of identity
- Going in a grief fog every fall and winter
- Death of a close friend the same year
- Changes in friendships
- "Coming out" as a bereaved sibling with each new friend
- I likely wouldn't have found my current career if he hadn't died
- Trauma
- Not having him as uncle to my son
- Wondering what his life could have held
- Anxiety as a new parent

My Own Emotional Inventory

Main loss:

Secondary losses, stressors, and concerns:

Emotional Inventory...Plus:

There are a few ways to take the Emotional Inventory tool a step further. Here are some ideas, and you may have your own!

You can choose one, two, or however many feel potentially helpful for your own unique situation.

- Review your Emotional Inventory and **star those that you can control and think about what steps you can take to ease your situation.** Some examples:
 - Delegating tasks
 - Asking for support
 - Releasing an expectation
 - Building awareness around triggers
- **Put an "X" next to things that are outside the realm of your control,** and see about finding someone to support you through those or hear your heart as you share your feelings.
- If you are a support person using this exercise to gain insight, you can review your lists and brainstorm ways you or others can help with specific tasks.

This exercise can also be used proactively! If you are heading into a difficult grief time, such as the holidays, you can:

- List that as your primary concern
- Then list all other worries, stressors, or heartaches as secondary concerns.
- Review your list and brainstorm ways you can ease the load on your heart, mind, and energy during that time:
 - What traditions can you add or shift?
 - What self-care would feel supportive?
 - Who can you call during moments of upset, or arrange a meeting with to have a light in the "storm"?
 - Who or what can you/do you need to avoid?
 - Can you schedule an extra therapy session leading up to this emotional date?

Reflection: Emotional Inventory

Pause. Close your eyes for a moment. Take several deep breaths, in and out. Think about what the new awareness that you have gleaned.

What new awareness do you have around your grief?

Did you learn more about the secondary losses around your first loss?
Was there anything that surprised you?

Was there anything that you had completely not thought about?

How did these exercises make you feel?

Is there anything else that came up for you?

Was there anything that you realized that you would like additional support around? If so, what is it? Who will you go to for support?

For the support people:

What insights have you gained into the grief experience of your person?

What are some ideas for supporting your person that have come from this exercise?

Has this process highlighted areas of your own grief?

Bringing It All Together

We hope you have new insights into your grief experience while feeling validated as to why grief is such a struggle.

You may or may not choose to do one of our "Plus" exercises to highlight areas you need support or can make changes to add ease to this time. Do what feels best for you.

You can revisit this exercise and use it in future losses or around difficult grief days.

Sometimes just this process of drawing your attention to how you feel can be so healing in and of itself.

If you continue to feel stuck in your grief, you likely have unresolved grief. **As we shared before, this is typically around things you wish were different, better, or more.** Maybe you wish you could have done or said something one more time, or you always expected you would grow old with someone and now you are not able to.

Please reach out for additional support.

You do not have to live in the grief maze.

Stay in Touch

Do you have any questions? Let us know, we are here to help!

Email: griefsupport@yahdavhanlon.com

[Schedule a complimentary 30-minute session](#)

Connect with us!

Website: <https://www.yahdavhanlon.com/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/YahdavHanlonGriefSupport>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/yahdav-hanlon>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/yahdavhanlongriefsupport/>

Youtube: <https://bit.ly/YahdavHanlonYoutube>



Ilana Yahdav, MPA & Kim Hanlon, MA



We are passionate about making grief more gentle and less isolating by providing an array of tools and resources to both individuals and organizations.

This is our way of helping to make the world a better place - something extra important to us now that we have little ones we are raising.

We hope this Emotional Inventory + Guide will serve you in your non-linear journey in grief.

All of our work is in memory of two special people who we miss every day - Ilana's dad, Eric Shapiro, MD, and Kim's brother, Steven English.

Attributions:

We are proud to be Advanced Grief Recovery Method Specialists, and much of what we share about grief draws from our certification as well as from the accompanying book, *The Grief Recovery Handbook*. The Emotional Inventory exercise shared in this guide is adapted from our workbook, *Grief & Gratitude: Building Your Coping Action Plan*, which was originally inspired by the Emotional Energy Checklist exercise in the book *When Children Grieve*, by John James and Russell Friedman.