
The Dawning Of A New Story: Rebuilding After Loss

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Purpose:

The intention of this intervention is to explore life both pre– and post–loss and to begin to have a conversation about life after loss. Meaning making, adaptation, and rewriting stories are also goals of this intervention. Used in a grief group setting, this has the potential to allow individual griever to encourage each other and glean strength from the stories of others. Group members are given an environment where loss adaptation can be explored and where they know that they are not alone. Stories can be rewritten and rebuilt using reimagined images of loss.

Materials Needed:

The game of Jenga® is needed as well as Paper and Pens/Pencils.

Procedures:

Step 1: Leaving Jenga® surrounded by the stacking sleeve, talk about how this may represent pre-loss living (ex. structure, support, order, predictability, etc.). Talk about how things were and include emotions associated with those thoughts.

Step 2: Remove the sleeve and have each member participate in playing the game, removing bricks and stacking them on top. Have each member name the brick they are moving (i.e., name abilities, preferences, relationships, “how things were” before the loss).

Step 3: If the tower has not toppled, purposely knock it over. Discuss how this mimics life after loss. Discuss how life has changed, how things are different. Engage members in addressing those things which they named in the prior step—how those things are different now.

Step 4: Give each member 5 bricks and have them name 5 things which have changed the most. These are most likely directly related to what was addressed in Step 3. These are to be written on the paper provided.

Step 5: Using those 5 bricks representing change, have each member build something new. During this step, note that the loss has not been erased, but rather their lives can start to be seen differently. Discuss how those things which have changed can be viewed from a new perspective.

New life can be formed from the rubble. The beauty from the ashes can start to emerge.

Process Questions and Follow-Up:

So often following loss, we want to, we try to, put the broken pieces back in the same position, in the same place as they were prior to the loss. Life is different.

What was the most difficult part of this exercise?

Has this altered your perspective on loss? If so, how?

What are some baby steps to take to rebuild?

Theoretical Rationale and/or Research Base:

This intervention is rooted in Narrative Therapy.

Limitations:

Each person will process grief differently and be at a different place in that process. It is imperative to keep that in mind and to be patient with the group members as they navigate this life-long journey.

Practice Settings:

- ☒ College Counseling
- ☐ Counselor Education and Supervision
- ☒ Mental Health Agency/Private Practice Counseling
- ☒ Rehabilitation Counseling
- ☐ School Counseling