

# OPTIONAL MODULE: GRIEVING AND TBI

## GOALS/OBJECTIVES:

This optional module contains information to allow the participants to better understand how grieving is a factor that must be addressed when dealing with TBI. If the facilitator decides to use this module the number of group sessions should be increased to 7 and this module will fit best in week 3 or 4 of the group.

Grief is most often associated with death. However, death is not the only cause of grief. Although death is an important reason, there are other losses in life that we also need to grieve. These too are life-changing and will elicit the same grief responses as death does.

Grief can also result from a disease such as Alzheimer's or a catastrophic injury such as a brain injury. This kind of grief is profound. People must grieve who they were, and the family also grieves the person who is no longer "there", albeit physically present. Even if the injury was not catastrophic and may have previously been unidentified, once a person is aware that they sustained a brain injury, they also become aware of the losses in typical development, identity, personality, relationships, etc. that could have resulted from that injury. Our society is only beginning to understand how profound this type of grief is.

The primary goals of this week will be for participants to:

- Better understand grief in the context of brain injury
- Learn how grieving is an on-going process
- Provide strategies for addressing grief

## TIME:

Allow 1.5 hours for the session.

## NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS:

A minimum of four participants is recommended.

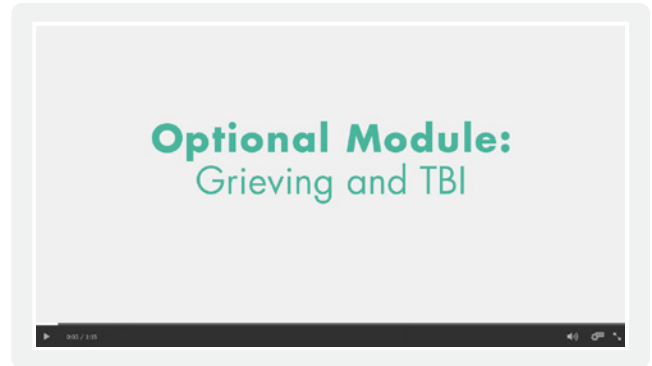
# GRIEVING AND TBI PREPARATION



## VIDEO

The following video provides a helpful example of how grieving related to brain injury can be different from what we traditionally think of related to brain injury:

<https://tinyurl.com/brainline-video>



## PRINT HANDOUTS

Grieving and TBI Recognition and Coping Strategies

Developing a New Self-Concept

Take-Home Impressions

*These handouts can be found in the handout section for this section, the facilitator's guide will indicate when these should be referenced.*



## WRITE

Write the following group rules on the white board for reference for participants throughout the treatment group:

- **Confidentiality:** The information we discuss in this group is private, and members are expected to keep it that way.
- **Respect:** Give your attention and consideration to participants, and they will do the same for you. Examples include:
  - No talking over each other,
  - Pay attention to the person talking (listen, don't just wait for your turn to talk)
  - Encourage each other, etc.
- **Participation:** You are expected to take part in the discussion and contribute to this group. The pace of this group, however, may limit some participation. Let's briefly discuss one way that the group leader(s) can signal you when we need to wrap up discussion and move on.

**Note:** *If additional rules were agreed upon, be sure to include each additional rule during this review. For more information on grieving and brain injury, visit [www.brainline.org](http://www.brainline.org)*

# GRIEVING AND TBI PREPARATION



## WRITE

Write the following learning objectives on the white board for reference throughout the treatment group::

- Structure and topic
- Homework review
- Grieving & TBI
- Break
- Group Activity
- Reflection/Homework

# GRIEVING AND TBI ACTIVITIES

## ESTABLISH GROUP RULES

5 MINUTES

Now we are going to review the rules that we will follow throughout the duration of this treatment group. If you have any questions about any of the group rules, I can help to clarify what is meant by that rule.

- 1. Confidentiality:** The information we discuss in this group is private, and members are expected to keep it that way. What is discussed in the group may be highly personal at times, and should not be discussed outside of the group.
- 2. Respect:** Give your attention and consideration to your fellow participants, and they will do the same for you. Examples of respectful behavior include:
  - Not talking over each other
  - Paying attention to the person talking (listen, don't just wait for your turn to talk)
  - Encouraging each other by responding to each other in a positive manner.Have the participants give other examples of how to show respect, and add those to the list as desired.
- 3. Participation:** You are expected to take part in the discussion and contribute to this group. The pace of this group, however, may limit some participation. Often individuals who have TBI struggle to stay on topic. Let's briefly discuss one way that the group leader(s) can signal you if you are off topic and/or when we need to wrap up discussion and move on.

**Note:** Ask the group participants what other rules they believe should be in place, and add them to the list if they are applicable and constructive rules that are agreed upon by most or all the group members. It may be helpful to write the group rules on the board, or to create a written list on a large sheet of paper that may be posted in the group room for easy reference. Be sure to communicate to participants the expectations you have for their behavior (for example, how you would like people to excuse themselves from the group if a break becomes necessary, how the group should handle conflicts among group members, etc.). Setting these specifics out ahead of time will help to avoid confusion when these situations inevitably occur.



## DISCUSSION PROMPT

What other rules does the group want to establish?



## ICE BREAKER AND INTRODUCTION

5-10 MINUTES

*If incorporating new participants into the group, WRITE the Icebreaker questions outlined in Group 1 on the white board so members can refer to them. The facilitator should utilize one or both of the following Icebreaker questions in order to warm up the group and build rapport. The facilitator should feel free to share their own responses to these questions alongside the group members.*

- What is a weird fact you happen to know?
- If you could pick up a new skill in an instant what would it be and why?

### **Review Take-Home Impressions Form**

- During the past week, have you done anything differently because of what you learned in previous groups? If so, please describe what you did.
- Were you able to use your new strategies/skills in any way? Please describe your experience.



## EXPLAIN THE NATURE AND PACING OF THE GROUP

2-5 MINUTES

- Because we only have an hour and a half for each group meeting, it is important that we cover everything that is necessary.
- Today, I will guide you through talking about emotions and how traumatic brain injuries may affect your ability to manage your mood.
- We will also talk about different strategies you can use to manage your moods.
- Lastly, we will do an activity centered on recognizing emotions in others.

- I will ask you to track your own mood as a homework assignment.
- **Remember:** To get through all the material, I will be keeping us on point by giving reminders when that section's time is almost up. If we are off-topic, I will redirect you to the relevant topic. If you would like to continue to discuss the topic that I redirected you from, please let me know after group so that we can discuss it at greater length. If necessary, we'll use the signal we agreed upon earlier to wrap up discussions. Do you have any questions before we begin?



## HOMWORK REVIEW

5-10 MINUTES

*If facilitating this module group as group three, use the following homework:*  
During the previous week, you were asked to develop at least one S.M.A.R.T. goal using the SMART Goal Log and share it with a member of your support person. By sharing this goal with them, they will be able to assist you and hold you accountable for maintaining progress toward your specific goal.

- How did it go?
- What are some of the goals you shared?
- What were some challenges?
- Do you feel you were successful in meeting or working toward your goal?

*If facilitating this module group as group four, use the following homework:*  
During the previous week, you were asked to use the "Mood Log" (found in handouts section, below) worksheet to chart your mood.

- How did it go?
- What were some challenges?
- Do you feel you were successful?

**Note:** *If participants have not completed the previously assigned homework, please ask the following question:*

- *What led to your decision to not complete the assignment?*
- *What do you need to do for yourself this week to help you be able to complete the homework assignment?*

# GRIEVING AND TBI CONTENT



## CURRENT UNDERSTANDING OF GRIEVING AND TBI

5-10 MINUTES

### **Discussion: How brain injury is connected to grieving.**

Brain injury often brings about drastic life changes for individuals as well as their families and friends. Individuals with TBI often find that they are less able to carry out responsibilities and daily activities. Activities that were once accomplished easily, often require a good deal more effort. Many individuals find themselves unable to work, drive, live alone, manage their finances, and do things alone. This loss of independence leads to frustration and sadness. They may also lose confidence in themselves.

Family members may notice that their responsibilities have changed too. They may have to take on responsibilities that belonged to the individuals with a TBI or other family members. Changes in responsibilities may affect family members' ability to work like before or do things they enjoy. Some family members reduce their work hours or resign from their jobs to help care for the survivor.

Financial difficulties and worries about the future tend to be difficult for all family members. Because of the losses and changes, many people have a mixture of feelings including sadness, fear, hopelessness, and frustration.

Grieving brain injury is different than grieving as it relates to death and dying. A primary factor in grieving after brain injury is related to a change in our "self-concept".

- Self-concept: how we perceive ourselves based on our beliefs, feelings, and values

After brain injury individuals evaluate their self-concept:

- Compares who they are now to who they were after the injury

- Doubts self-efficacy: our own beliefs about our abilities
- Disruption of beliefs, assumptions, values, and expectations
- Frustration increases with cognitive problems and loss of skills



## ICE BREAKER

5-10 MINUTES

*Write the following bolded phrases on the white board to facilitate ease of discussion with the participants. The following section provides information regarding these common signs of grieving related to brain injury and coping strategies.*

- Longing for what has been lost
- Sadness for what has been lost
- Wishing for what has been lost
- Upset when reminded about what has been lost
- Angry or anxious about what has been lost
- Needing to talk about what has been lost



## DISCUSSION PROMPT

- What signs of grieving have you noticed in your life? When was the last time that you experienced this?
- Have family members, friends, staff, etc., told you that you exhibit signs of grieving?
- What strategies have you used in the past to address grieving?
- What can you see using in the future?



## BREAK

5 MINUTES

Now we are going to take a five-minute break. During this break, we will be doing stretches. Stretching helps to relieve tension in the muscles and can help alleviate stress.

- Begin different muscle stretches (e.g., arms, shoulders, head, neck). These stretches can be based on the personal preferences of the group facilitator. Group participants may also be encouraged to walk around the room or do brief contained cardio exercises such as jumping jacks to “shake out” any tension or pent-up energy they may be feeling.

# GRIEVING AND TBI GROUP ACTIVITY



## COPING STRATEGIES

10-15 MINUTES

*Facilitator should hand out the “Grieving and TBI Recognition and Strategies” handout (found in the handouts section for this week).*

- Now that we have discussed the signs of grieving, we are going to work through the grieving and TBI Recognition and Coping Strategies handout. Check off any of the items that you have or are experiencing.
- Now check any of the coping strategies you can see yourself trying.
- Have the Group share what they checked.

# GRIEVING AND TBI REFLECTION/ HOMEWORK



10 MINUTES

As we come to the end of group today, I would like us all to take a minute to reflect on the topics we have discussed today.

- What things helped you today? What things would you like to explore more?
- For a homework assignment, I would like you to keep an emotional journal.

Provide participants with the Developing a New Self-Concept handout (found in handout section for this week, see below).

- For homework this week, I would like you to complete the New Self-Concept handout. Bring the completed handout back next week.
- Facilitator should pass out the Take-Home Impressions handout. I would also like you to take with you this Take-Home Impressions Handout and complete it, asking your Support Person for help completing it if necessary. Please use it to help you reflect on what you learned in group today and to help you identify any questions you might still have. Please bring this sheet back with you to the next meeting of this group.



## DISCUSSION PROMPT

Do you have any questions?

# GRIEVING AND TBI HANDOUTS

GRIEVING AND TBI RECOGNITION AND COPING STRATEGIES

DEVELOPING A NEW SELF-CONCEPT

TAKE-HOME IMPRESSIONS

# GRIEVING AND TBI RECOGNITION AND STRATEGIES

Without question, dealing with loss and change after brain injury can take a toll on survivors, family members, and their friends. Think about this question for a moment: How have you reacted to the life changes or losses?

Check off the items below that describe you:

- Feeling down, blue, or hopeless
- Having crying spells
- Feeling irritable
- Feeling irritable
- Feeling guilty or worthless
- Wondering whether or not life is worth living
- Having difficulty falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much
- Experiencing low energy, getting tired easily
- Eating a lot more or a lot less
- Keeping to yourself
- Not enjoying things like before
- Feeling restless, having difficulty sitting still
- Can't stop worrying about problems or the future
- Having difficulty making decisions, concentrating, or remembering things

Look over the items you've checked. The more items you check, the greater your distress and the more likely you need help. Talk with trusted family, friends, and professionals about the items you've checked.

Most people want to feel better and learn to cope with life changes, but don't know how. Here are a few strategies that have worked for other people. Check off which ones you think will work for you:

- Realize that your feelings are a common, normal response to a difficult situation.
- Be kind to yourself. Give yourself and others time to adjust.
- Think about the future you want and the best ways to get there.
- Appreciate the value of patience and persistence in reaching your goals.
- Take one step at a time, set goals for each day.
- Avoid thinking about and making comparisons to how things were.
- Recognize there is a natural human tendency to worry and focus on the negative.
- Learn to focus on your successes, strengths, and resources.
- Recognize the good things in your life and changes for the better.
- Focus on what you can do instead of what you can't.

- Be hopeful. Say positive things to yourself and others (e.g., "We will make it through this," or "We've come so far.")
- Make a list of things you are thankful for and qualities you like about yourself. Refer to the list often.
- Talk to and spend time with people who care about you.
- Join a support group. Talk to others for support.
- Build new relationships and improve old relationships.
- Remember that others face similar challenges. Ask others how they deal with losses and changes.
- Give up some old responsibilities when you take on new ones.
- Allow yourself to ask others for help and support.
- Remain active, try to do things you enjoy.
- Distract yourself with music, a book, a movie, television, or another activity you enjoy.
- Try to find new interests and activities.
- Give yourself breaks and try to be patient with yourself.
- Learn about treatments, resources, and recovery.

Remember, you must take care of yourself to effectively deal with the losses and changes you are facing. But, sometimes coping with losses and changes may be too difficult for one person to handle on his or her own. Research and experience have told us that depression is a common reaction to brain injury. If you have concerns or questions about how you are feeling, talk with a mental health professional or church about ways to get help.

# DEVELOPING A NEW SELF-CONCEPT

Answer the following questions and bring to the next session:

**1. WHAT ARE YOUR STRENGTHS?** *List a minimum of three things you do well.*

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**2. WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT YOURSELF?** *List a minimum of three things you do well.*

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**3. WHAT FUTURE DO YOU WANT FOR YOURSELF?**

*List a minimum of one goal you have for your future.*

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**4. WHAT STEPS DO YOU NEED TO TAKE TO REACH YOUR GOAL?**

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# TAKE-HOME IMPRESSIONS

You are encouraged to fill out this handout after attending each meeting of this group. Doing this is optional, but it is designed to help you retain as much of what you learned in today's session as possible. In your own words, please answer the following prompts:

## 1. SOMETHING I LEARNED ABOUT TBI TODAY THAT I DID NOT KNOW BEFORE IS:

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## 2. SOMETHING I LEARNED TODAY THAT I WANT TO SHARE WITH SOMEONE IN MY LIFE IS:

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I will share this with: \_\_\_\_\_

because: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 3. I STILL HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT:

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## 4. ONE STRATEGY I LEARNED TODAY THAT I BELIEVE WILL HELP ME IS:

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## 5. THESE ARE THREE SITUATIONS WHERE I CAN SEE MYSELF USING THAT STRATEGY/SKILL:

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_