

OPTIONAL MODULE: GRIEF AND ACCEPTANCE: USING ACT SKILLS

*Make sure you take time to acquaint yourself with this curriculum, so you can be as engaged, energetic, and confident as possible when working with the kids! Be mindful of age groups and brain injury levels; coping and deficits will vary.

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. It also includes information on acceptance of the injury and living a meaningful life despite the individual's challenges. 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 2 or 3 of the group.

Grief is most often associated with death. However, death is not the only cause of grief. There are other losses in life that are life-changing and will elicit the same grief responses as death. Grief resulting from a disease such as Alzheimer's or a catastrophic injury such as a brain injury is profound. Individuals and their families and friends grieve the loss of the person that existed before the injury. 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, and participants must be given a space to explore their feelings on this subject.

Since receiving the brain injury diagnosis and becoming involved in the criminal justice system, participants may be feeling intimidated, overwhelmed, and powerless. Accepting the injury and their new reality is important for individuals to create a meaningful life after the injury. Experiences with grief and acceptance can differ depending on when the injury occurred in the individual's life. Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) has some easy-to-understand themes that focus on empowering the individual. ACT is focused on accepting the injury and its permanence, deciding what is important to the individual in life, and working to realistically incorporate those values into their life. Commitment to these ideals is another core concept of the intervention. This module will help participants understand that their lives can still be meaningful even after the injury.

Here are some videos to give a little background information:

- ❑ <https://www.brainline.org/blog/adam-ease/denial-versus-accepting-reality-after-brain-injury-significant-difference>
- ❑ <https://www.brainline.org/video/acceptance-post-injured-self-kindly-gradually-slowly>

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

- ❑ Have a better understand grief in the context of brain injury
- ❑ Learn how grieving is an on-going process
- ❑ Provide strategies for addressing grief
- ❑ Empower the individuals to live a life meaningful to them
- ❑ Strategies for acceptance

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>



MATERIALS

- Colored pencils/pens/crayons
- Plain piece of paper for each participant
- Snacks (check for allergies, dietary restrictions)
- Scribes/ readers if necessary
- Take-Home Impressions Form



WRITE

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

- Structure and topic
- Homework review
- Grieving & TBI
- Break
- Group Activity (Empowerment and Acceptance)
- Homework/Reflection



WRITE

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

- 1. Confidentiality:** The information we discuss in this group is private, and members are expected to keep it that way.

2. Respect: Give your attention and consideration to participants, and they will do the same for you.

Examples include:

- a. No talking over each other
- b. Pay attention to the person talking (listen, don't just wait for your turn to talk)
- c. Encourage each other, etc.

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. 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.*

GRIEVING AND TBI

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES



ESTABLISH GROUP RULES

2-5 MINUTES

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

1. Confidentiality
2. Respect
3. Participation

I am going to go over the rules for this group. If you have any questions about any of the group rules, please ask, and I can help to explain what that rule means.

There are 3 main rules:

The first is:

- 1. Confidentiality:** This means that what we discuss today stays in this room and is not shared with others.

That brings us to our second rule:

- 2. Respect:** Please be kind to one another, by...
 - Listening when someone else is speaking,
 - Not talking over each other,
 - And encouraging one another

The last rule is:

- 3. Participation:** We ask that you take part in the discussion. Your ideas are important to the group. At times, I may need to cut discussion short. I will tell the group when discussion time is over.

Note: As a reminder, rules only need to be reviewed in depth if there are new members who have not participated in previous weeks. Rules are discussed at the start of each group and only a brief reminder should be utilized for groups with no new members.



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.

- If you could pick up a new skill in an instant what would it be and why?



REVIEW TAKE-HOME IMPRESSIONS FORM

5-10 MINUTES

During the past week, have you done anything differently because of what you learned in previous groups? If so, please describe what you did.



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 grief and acceptance.

- We will also talk about different strategies you can use to help you move forward.
- Lastly, we will do an activity centered on acceptance and the future.
- **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?

GRIEVING AND TBI CONTENT



CURRENT UNDERSTANDING OF GRIEVING AND TBI

5-10 MINUTES

When you think about grieving what are some of the symptom/changes that come to mind? How does this apply to your experience with TBI? Right after the injury and now?

Try to rephrase things into easy to understand language rather than using clinical/medical terms.

What are a few ways to move through the grieving process? Can you think of any activities that can make you feel better?



DISCUSSION: HOW BRAIN INJURY IS CONNECTED TO GRIEVING

5-10 MINUTES

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 focus on school, complete chores, plan their days, and do things alone. This loss of independence leads to frustration and sadness. They may also lose confidence in themselves.

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

Give participants a piece of paper and various coloring/drawing utensils. Have them write Brain Injury or Concussion at the top and draw/write the following on the paper throughout the discussion. Encourage them to decorate the page however they want to, using only one side.

- How has the expression of who you are now changed since the injury?
Comparison of before and after
- 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

BREAK (W/SNACKS?)

5 MINUTES

Participants can continue coloring on the first side of the paper, if they choose.

GRIEVING AND TBI GROUP ACTIVITY



15 MINUTES

Now I want everyone to take their piece of paper and hold it tightly directly in front of your face. How do you feel trying to have a group discussion with your Brain Injury paper in front of you like this? Do you feel engaged in the discussion, can you see what is happening in the room?

Pause for answers.

So, while you're so focused on the brain injury, you get disconnected from what is happening around you. If I asked you to do a math problem like this or to type on a computer, would you be able to?

Pause for answers.

While you are focused on the paper, it makes it difficult for you to stay connected to what is happening in your life and for you to do the things that you need to during the day.

And if I asked you to hold the paper like this for the rest of the day, how do you think you would be feeling? Probably pretty tired, right? So now, just take the paper and lay it on the table in front of you. You can still see it; you know that it is there. Do you feel more connected to the group discussion now? Would you be able to type on your computer like this?

Pause for answers.

Having the Brain Injury on the desk in front of you is still not the most comfortable, but this way you can do the things that you need to do. Even though you have this brain injury, you can still do the things that you want to do in your life. Now we are going to talk about some things that will let you put the Brain Injury on the desk instead of keeping it in front of your face so that you will be able to go about your life without having to focus on the Injury.



VALUES ACTIVITY

10 MINUTES

On the back of your paper, I want everyone to write a list of values that they have. These can be anything that you think is important, like honesty or kindness.

Ask for a few suggestions to write on the board.

How can we live by these values in a realistic way? What are some things that we can do?

Write suggestions on the board. For Kindness, maybe write "say something nice to someone every day."

Things like these that we have on the board can help you make meaning in your lives. You have to remember that you are still important and in control of the way that you choose to live your life. Doing simple activities like these can help you to remember that.



WRAP-UP

5 MINUTES

What are things that went well? What are things we could change for next time? What are some things that you will take away from the group today? Do you have any questions?

If time allows, consider the following:

Think about how they can still live meaningful lives even after injury.

Talk about the thoughts that they may have holding them back and awareness of the fact that you have to cope all the time w/ brain injury. Acceptance is acknowledging what is different, what's the same and how to blend those to form new identity.

OPTIONAL MODULE HANDOUTS

TAKE-HOME IMPRESSIONS

TAKE-HOME IMPRESSIONS FORM

You are encouraged to fill out this handout after attending each meeting. 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:

Today I learned:

I will share this with: _____, because:

I still have questions about:

This strategy will help me:

I will use this strategy when:
