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Introduction

Grief is one of the most human experiences we ever face. When someone we love dies, the world changes, sometimes suddenly, sometimes slowly, sometimes in ways we never expected. Whether you were a partner, a family member, a friend, a neighbour, or someone who cared deeply in any capacity, loss reshapes your identity, your routines, your relationships and your sense of self.

This course is designed to support you through that landscape.

It is not about 'getting over it' or 'moving on'. Grief is a natural response to love, and it changes us. What we can do is learn to move forward *with* our grief with compassion, with honesty, and with the support of others. Grief is not about letting go of the person you love, it is about finding new ways to stay connected while also finding your way forward.

Many people feel unsure how to talk about loss. Friends may worry about saying the wrong thing. You may worry about burdening others. Conversations can feel awkward, especially after the funeral when the world seems to move on, but your inner world has not. This silence can be painful. One of the aims of this workbook is to gently encourage conversation - with yourself, with others, and with the memory of the person you've lost. You are not a burden. You are not alone. This course aims to make space for those conversations, gently, safely, and without judgement.

Across six sessions, we will explore:

- how to cultivate self-compassion
- how to live with 'Option B' when life has changed
- how to reconnect with yourself
- how to communicate your needs and feelings
- how to face change and make plans
- how to imagine a future that still holds meaning

You will not be asked to 'be positive' or 'look on the bright side'. Instead, you will be invited to notice what helps, what hurts, what supports your pain, and what increases your suffering. You will be encouraged to take things at your

own pace, to honour your relationship with the person you have lost, and to explore what it means to reclaim your life in a way that feels authentic and possible.

Grief is deeply personal, but it is also a shared human experience. This course offers a space to reflect, to breathe, to connect, and to begin finding your way forward - with kindness, with courage, and with the knowledge that love continues in many forms.

A Note Before You Begin

This workbook was born from personal experience. Whilst my time in a caring role was brief, it had a profound impact on me. It had taken over my life, and then suddenly that role was gone, along with the person I loved. I found myself navigating not only grief, but the loss of purpose, structure and connection that had defined my days. I created this resource to support others who are living with loss, in whatever form it takes, and at whatever stage they find themselves.

You might read this workbook in order, or dip in and out. You might revisit a session months later and find something new in it. You might skip parts that don't feel relevant right now. That's okay. This is a companion, not a prescription. Your journey is personal, and there is no timetable.

Grief can be isolating. People often don't know what to say. You may feel awkward bringing up your loss, and others may feel awkward asking. This silence can be painful. One of the aims of this workbook is to gently encourage conversation - with yourself, with others, with the memory of the person you've lost. You are not a burden. You are not alone.

Take your time. Be kind to yourself. Let this be a space where your grief is welcome, your voice is heard, and your path forward is shaped by compassion.

Sue Funge

Session One: Cultivating Self-Compassion

If your compassion does not include yourself, it is incomplete.

Jack Kornfield

Grief touches every part of who we are. It affects our emotions, our thoughts, our routines, our relationships and our sense of identity. Whether your loss was sudden or expected, whether you were a carer or not, whether you feel overwhelmed or strangely numb, this session is about beginning with kindness, not towards the situation, but towards yourself.

When someone we love dies, we often feel disoriented and unsure how to go on. We may feel guilt, anger, sadness, confusion, exhaustion or a sense of being lost. We may feel as though we have been dropped into a world that no longer makes sense. And we may find it difficult to talk about any of it, not wanting to burden others, not knowing what to say, or fearing awkwardness.

Grief is not something we fix. It's something we live with, carry, and tend to. Whether your loss was sudden or expected, recent or long ago, whether you were a carer, a partner, a sibling, a friend or someone deeply connected in another way.

Self-compassion is the foundation for everything that follows in this workbook. It is not about 'feeling positive' or 'thinking differently'. It is about meeting yourself with the same care you would offer someone you love.

This session is about meeting yourself with kindness.

Why Self-Compassion Matters in Grief

Grief often brings harsh self-judgement. You may find yourself thinking:

- *I should be coping better.*
- *I should have done more.*
- *I shouldn't still feel like this.*
- *I'm too emotional.*
- *I'm not emotional enough.*

If someone you cared about said these things, you would respond with warmth, reassurance and understanding. Self-compassion means offering yourself the same kindness.

Dr Kristin Neff describes self-compassion as having three parts:

- **Self-kindness:** being gentle with yourself instead of critical
- **Common humanity:** recognising that suffering is part of being human
- **Mindfulness:** noticing what you feel without being overwhelmed by it

These practices don't remove pain. They help you carry it.

A Note on Connection and Support

Grief can make us withdraw, not because we want to be alone, but because we don't want to burden others. Friends may avoid mentioning your loss, worried about saying the wrong thing. You may avoid mentioning it too, worried about upsetting them. This silence can feel painful and isolating.

Self-compassion includes allowing yourself to receive support, to let others in, even gently, even briefly. You deserve care from yourself and from the people around you.

You might try saying:

I'd like to talk about them — is that okay?

I'm not sure what I need, but I'd like some company.

It helps when people say their name.

You are not a burden. You are grieving.

Exercise: Reframing Self-Criticism

Think of a trait or feeling you often criticise yourself for, for example, *'I'm too emotional', 'I'm not coping', 'I'm angry all the time', 'I should be stronger'*.

Now explore the following questions:

- What circumstances might have shaped this feeling or behaviour?
- Is this really who I am, or something I'm experiencing because of grief?
- What if I reframe it as: *'Sometimes, in certain situations, I feel...?'*

Use the space below to reflect:

What I currently criticise myself for:

How I can reframe this statement:

Notice whether this creates even a small sense of space or relief.

Mindfulness and Self-Compassion

Mindfulness helps us notice what we're feeling without trying to fix or avoid it. It's not about emptying the mind, it is about being present with what's here. Try this simple practice:

- Sit comfortably and breathe slowly.
- Notice each thought, feeling or sensation.
- If your mind wanders, gently say 'thinking' and return to noticing.
- You don't need to change anything. Just observe.

This can help you respond to your pain with care rather than judgement.

Permission to Be Where You Are

Grief has no timetable. There is no 'right way' to feel, no correct pace, no emotional milestones you must reach.

You have permission to:

- feel what you feel
- rest when you need to
- ask for support
- take things slowly
- revisit this session as often as you need
- skip parts that don't feel relevant right now
- come back to them later

Your grief is valid. Your pace is valid. Your way of grieving is valid.

Grief, Silence and Connection

Many people find that after the funeral, conversations about their loss become rare. Friends may avoid the topic, unsure what to say. You may avoid it too, not wanting to upset others. This silence can feel isolating.

You are allowed to talk about your person. You are allowed to name your grief. You are allowed to ask for support.

You might try:

- *I'd love to talk about them - is that okay?*
- *I'm not sure what I need, but I'd like some company.*
- *I know it's hard to know what to say. Just being here helps.*

You don't have to do this alone. If any part of this session feels too much right now, you can return to it later. Grief often asks us to take things slowly, and there is no expectation that you complete everything at once.

Reflection Prompts

Use these questions to explore your experience:

- What does self-compassion mean to me right now?
- What helps me feel safe, calm or supported?
- What makes it harder to be kind to myself?
- Who feels safe to talk to?

- What would I like others to understand about my grief?

A Gentle Reminder

There is no timetable for grief. You may revisit this session many times. You may skip it and come back later. That's okay. This is your journey, and you are allowed to take it at your own pace.

As you move into Session Two, you will explore what it means to live with 'Option B', not as a replacement for what you have lost, but as a way of honouring your grief while slowly rediscovering your strength. There is no rush. Take this journey at your own pace.