

Preparation for M103 – When a Member Has Died

Someone in your group has died. This is probably the most painful experience you will ever share as a group. This session attempts to create a space in which you can share what this loss means to you personally and to the group. It's not intended as a memorial for the member who has died. (That's the purpose of the official funeral or memorial service.) However, there will be a short section in which you can offer reflections about the member who has died.

Given the closeness that many small groups experience, this loss may be very difficult. If you are experiencing very strong or confusing emotions and would like support, please call one of the ministers for a counseling session.

Please keep in mind that just as each of you may think, live, love, and believe differently, so may you grieve differently. And there are different stages of grief, as this Preparation explains. You may all be in different places in the grieving process, but you can still love and support each other in this difficult time.

You may not wish to do any preparation for this session. However, in the spirit of helpfulness, we've provided some material about grieving and a few questions that might help you with your sharing.

What Are The Stages of Grief?

Many people have tried to explain what grief is; some have even identified certain stages of grief. Probably the most well-known is from *Elizabeth Kubler-Ross'* book, "On Death and Dying." In it, she identified five stages that a dying patient experiences when informed of their terminal prognosis. Many people believe that these stages of grief are also experienced by others when they have lost a loved one.

The stages Kubler-Ross identified are:

- Denial (this isn't *happening* to me!)
- Anger (why is this happening to *me*?)
- Bargaining (I promise I'll be a better person *if*...)
- Depression (I don't *care* anymore)
- Acceptance (*I'm ready* for whatever comes)

Some say that these definitions are more descriptive of emotional behaviors rather than stages, per se. And while this list might be a helpful framework, there is probably no script for grief. Like so many other things in our complex lives, grief can't be reduced to a list with absolute definitions, timelines, strategies, goals, and completion dates. Grief is as individual as those of us who feel it, and as varied as the circumstances of death which occur.

Questions to Consider

1. Where are you in your experience of this loss? Can you identify a specific stage or describe specific feelings?
2. What might this loss mean in your life?
3. What might this loss mean to your group?
4. How did this person touch your life? What is your favorite memory of him or her?
5. How can your group help each other heal from this wound?
6. Can or should you or your group help this member's family or other friends?
7. Should your group do anything to honor the memory of this member?