

# Hope for Hurting Parents Facilitator Manual

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## MISSION STATEMENT

**Our Mission:** *To give support, encouragement and hope to hurting parents on their journey from surviving to thriving.*

Our Support Groups exist to love and comfort parents while offering them tools to gain strength, hope, encouragement and new perspectives.

- Experiencing Love and Comfort – you are not alone; you're safe
- Gaining Strength and Perspective – living each day with the big picture
- Building on Courage and Hope – if things don't resolve, God is still there
- We do this because: Parents often feel discouraged, hopeless, and isolated when dealing with a child/children that have gone "prodigal" from the family.

We want to reach any parent inside or outside the church walls who is dealing with a \*child:

- Who is abusing or addicted to drugs or alcohol (or any other addiction).
- Who has repeat offenses with the court and/or authority problems with the school system or is incarcerated.
- Who brings physical harm to themselves such as self-injury (cutting), suicide attempts, or eating disorders.
- Who defies parental boundaries by running away.
- Who engages in sexual behaviors, pornography, or has gender identity issues.
- Who has a mental illness and isn't coping well, making destructive decisions.

\*This child can be a teen or adult of any age.

## BEFORE STARTING YOUR GROUP

### Make the following decisions:

1. Decide when, where and how often you will meet. Weekly, bi-weekly, monthly. For example, we meet the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays of every month, from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in our home. Meet in a home if possible. It's the most comfortable environment and best for confidentiality. Meeting in a church is fine, too. There are pros and cons for each. You may want to try both and get feedback from the group.
2. Decide if your group will be open to people in the community or other churches. Make this known to the group each time you meet.
3. Decide if you want to offer a contact list. A notepad or sheet of paper is passed around at the beginning of each meeting. Group participants share their name and contact information for the purpose of connecting with each other between meeting times. Participants can take a picture of the list with their iPhone. This is a great way to expand their support system.
4. Decide if you will offer a lending library. You can offer a wide variety of books for parents to check out. Provide a sign-out sheet to record books they borrow. Your church or other interested persons may want to help purchase these books.
5. Decide if you want to offer information on resources in your community.
  - You can gradually collect these
  - Names and business cards of counselors, psychiatrists, etc.
  - Other support and recovery groups like Al-Anon, Nar-Anon, Celebrate Recovery, AA (Alcoholics Anonymous), NA (Narcotics Anonymous), NAMI (The National Alliance on Mental Illness), etc.
  - Treatment Centers or Rehab Programs
6. Decide if you will offer refreshments.
  - Keep it light and simple; people don't eat much at this kind of group. We offer water, coffee, and tea; pretzels, nuts, and cookies.
  - You could have a sign-up sheet for people to take turns bringing a snack.
7. If you meet in your home, you may want to put a "Come in!" sign on the front door. This will prevent being interrupted by a ringing door bell if you have late-comers.

## GROUP GUIDELINES

**Read the group guidelines every time you meet. We suggest you pass them around for participants to read for greater involvement.**

Disclaimer – We are not professional counselors, advisors or experts. We are parents, just like you going through a painful experience.

1. This group is not a Bible Study but we refer to scripture; it's not a prayer meeting but we will pray for you and your children and it's not a place to find out how to "fix" your child, but what you learn may aid their growth.
2. This group is for you, the parent. You are the focus. It's a place for you to process feelings, talk about the struggles you're having with your child, grow personally and be encouraged by others who share similar pain.
3. This group is a confidential and safe place. What's said here stays here and who you meet here stays here. However, you are welcome to share the content and principles you learn here. If you see someone from the group in a public setting, be careful to not make comments about their child's situation that could embarrass them or compromise their privacy.
4. This group is a judgment free zone. We offer unconditional acceptance to each other. We are not here to compare each other's situations or invalidate each other's pain by minimizing what they may be going through.
5. Our goal is to be the best listeners we can be. Please don't interrupt each other or offer *unsolicited* advice. If asked, you are welcome to offer your ideas or insights, otherwise talk with the person after the group.
6. You never need to share or talk in this group. Participate only as you desire. But please be "time conscious" when sharing, so everyone will have the opportunity to talk.
7. Come when you can. You don't need to tell us if you're coming or not.
8. All the content you hear may not always apply to you. We encourage you to take what you like and leave the rest. (Al-Anon)
9. Contact List: Each time we meet we'll pass around a sheet of paper for you to write down your name, phone number and/or email, so you can develop connections with each other and support one another outside the group time. So be sure and take some names and numbers with you, or simply take a picture of the list with your phone!
10. This is a flexible group open to anyone in the community. New people may join any time. (Omit this guideline if you decided to have a closed group).

## HOPE FOR HURTING PARENTS SAMPLE TIMELINE

(Adapt this to your preferences)

7:00-7:15 Gathering - Name Tags, Refreshments, Socialize

7:15-7:35 Welcome, Guidelines, Icebreaker, Updates

7:35-8:10 Content and Discussion

8:10-8:15 Bathroom Break, Refreshments

8:15-8:30 Prayer - Break into Small Groups for Prayer (all men together most of the time and women into groups of 2-3)

8:30 Dismiss – Leaders say goodbye to those who need to leave. Others are welcome to stay longer. (Adapt time after dismissal to Facilitator's or Host's needs)

### 1. Welcome, Guidelines etc.

A. Open each session with reviewing the guidelines.

B. New Comers – To make new people feel welcome **returning** parents say their first name and what their situation is (my name is \_\_\_\_\_, I am here because my \_\_\_ yr. old daughter has problems with \_\_\_\_\_.) Then ask new people to share. No pressure to share. Watch the time closely here.

C. Group sharing – climate check

- Ask how they are doing (if someone has a significant need, the whole time may be spent allowing them to talk and then offering comfort, support and prayer)
- Updates on their child (optional – first timers may be reluctant or too emotional); **keep this very brief**. This can tend to go long so we don't always include it, unless there is something very important or significant someone wants to share.
- Ice Breaker: General non-threatening time to encourage people to begin opening up. (Example) "On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being not well at all & 10 that you are doing really well) how are **you** doing tonight and why?" Or, "Where are you in your grieving process?" The question may tie in with your content.

### 2. Content and Discussion

A. Topic – Introduce the topic for the session.

B. Discuss and interact on the topic; be careful not to do all the talking; ask good questions to encourage group discussion. Don't read everything yourself. Get the group involved by asking volunteers to take turns reading material.

We prepare an outline and give everyone a copy, but this is optional.

### 3. Prayer

A. Here are some suggestions (We like to be sure each child is prayed for by name)

- As a group altogether, if not too large
- Break into smaller groups – keep men and women separate
- Groups of 2 or 3 – we like smaller, more time to share and pray
- One on one
- If you divide into smaller groups you can come back together for closing group prayer, or tell them they are free to leave when finished praying. We dismiss the group at the appointed time.

\*Experiment and choose what you like best; or vary it each time you meet

## What Others Are Saying

### PARTICIPANTS

- "I really needed this tonight. Being with others who understand and don't judge me is so freeing. My heart feels so much lighter. I really needed the topic of detachment, too. I have a lot to work on, but now I feel like I can do it!"
- "About 4 years ago, I felt very alone with my situation experiencing much chaos in my life with my son living in the house addicted to drugs and alcohol. I felt like I was beginning to slip into a pattern of internalizing everything that was happening feeling very angry, sad, depressed and hopeless that things would never change. I decided I would try a group and keep an open mind - if it didn't work or it was too awkward, I wouldn't go again.

It was so helpful I decided I would keep going as much as I could and looked forward to the next meeting. The topics were relevant and interactive. It was very healing to discuss my situation and feelings. I liked hearing from other moms who were experiencing pain with their teens or adult children."

- "I really appreciated the topic being printed and handed out. I had something tangible I could hang on to and look at again and again during times of crisis, offering scripture and hope. Most of all, the group supported me with their prayers, which helped me to regain my focus on Gods' strength instead of my own. I now realize that my son's situation is not hopeless."
- "We cannot thank you enough for your ministry. Over the past year, as we worked through the various stages of facing our son's choices, you have been there alongside us. Your ministry and group have been a real safe haven for us to catch our breaths.
- Opening your home and offering warm hospitality, non-judgmental input, real-life empathy and shoulders to cry on, has been a real blessing for us (and I do not throw that word around lightly). And we know this is true for the many others who have stepped across your threshold. Your transparency with your own personal story has been courageous and humbling. You have encouraged us in numerous ways and we feel a strong bond of suffering with you both that we don't (can't) share with anyone else in our lives."
- "It was such a pleasure to be in the group. It is very comforting to know you're not alone. I was encouraged and found the handout helpful. I am thankful to be in a group where people share openly, and don't feel judged. It's been a long road, and I'm so encouraged after the meeting yesterday. I am truly glad and feel so much more at peace knowing that I have a safe place with others who share the same types of struggles.

### GROUP FACILITATORS

- "Thank you for your ministry. Our group is going well. The manual is a God send. Please continue this work."

- “The content is very rich and filled with wisdom. We have all felt that the material is very insightful and useful for us in our journey. There are many times we have shared how ‘right on’ the material is in helping us navigate this uncharted territory.”
- “The topics are so relevant in your manual. I think every parent experiencing these types of situations can relate to the topics at some point in their journey with their adult child. Leading a Hope for Hurting Parents group is very meaningful to me. God keeps leading me to others who are hurting. God used my situation to give me more compassion and encourage others in similar situations.

One woman in my group commented, ‘Everyone needs a group like Hope for Hurting Parents.’ She is right. I have talked to women in other states and other parts of Florida who have never heard it and are interested in having one. There is a need for groups like these to love, support, pray, and encourage one another through our struggles.”

## **CHURCH AND MINISTRY LEADERS**

- "A Hope for Hurting Parents group provides immeasurable support, guidance, hope, and care to those who attend. I have watched and witnessed the profound affect a Hope for Hurting Parents group provides to the hurting parents of our church community."  
Berry Johnston - Pastor C.A.R.E. Ministries Discover Church, Orlando, FL
- “The beauty of what happens in a Hope for Hurting Parents support group has been so inspiring to us at Village View Church. The group is a safe place for participants to take their hurt, let it out, then leave with the hope they need to make it through another day with the strength of Jesus Christ guiding every step.”  
Deb Williams – Former Recovery and Support Ministries Village View Community Church Summerfield, FL
- "Tom and Dena Yohe have lived through the ups and downs, and hurts and joys of life with a prodigal. All they have learned is now helping so many others through their wonderful ministry Hope for Hurting Parents. They not only have wise encouragement, but also powerful prayers."  
Judy Douglass - Writer, Speaker, Encourager, Founder Prayer for Prodigals  
Campus Crusade for Christ, International (Cru)
- I would like to recommend Tom and Dena Yohe’s ministry, Hope for Hurting Parents. In the words of one of the parents attending Tom and Dena’s small group, “I just love these two people. They have helped me so much to understand my role as a parent. I felt like I was really helped. It really is important that I attend the sessions.”  
Pastor Marty Shea - Senior Pastor Village View Community Church Summerfield, FL

## **MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS**

- “Tom and Dena are passionate and devoted to their cause and can personally identify with parents that have struggled raising and dealing difficult children. They also help

those families with adult children that are still problematic as well. I love what they are doing and want to continue to see their ministry grow so they can help as many families possible that are hurting.”

Debbie Houghton - *Licensed Mental Health Counselor* Orlando Counseling Services

# GRIEF AND LOSS

## FACILITATOR NOTES

### GRIEF AND LOSS

#### **Session Aim:**

Parents will recognize they are grieving, identify what they've lost, understand how it may be affecting them and learn how to grieve in a healthy way.

#### **Key Principles:**

Grief is a normal reaction to having a rebellious child. Whatever you're feeling is okay. Talk about it and reach out to others who understand for help.

#### **Scripture:**

Psalm 34:18

"The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in Spirit."

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves received from God."

Proverbs 17:22

"A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones."

Revelation 21:4

"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

#### **Needed Supplies:**

Provide one index card for each person.

#### **Resources:**

Grief Share [www.griefshare.org](http://www.griefshare.org)

Brendon O'Rourke and DeEtte Sauer, *Hope of a Homecoming* (NavPress, 2003), Chapter 8

William Coleman, *Parents with Broken Hearts* (BMH Books 2007), Chapter 3

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (Scribner, 1996)

George A. Bonanno, *The Other Side of Sadness: What the New Science of Bereavement Tells Us About Life After Loss* (Basic Books 2009) Chapters 3, 4,6,12

## Session: GRIEF AND LOSS

\*Note to Facilitator: Another study on bereavement by George A. Bonanno is explained in his book, *The Other Side of Sadness*. While not written from a Christian worldview, it is insightful because of a surprising element - **laughter**. It may sound irreverent. However, if you reflect on your own personal experiences with grief and loss, it may resonate. When you remember the good times and think about lighter moments with your loved one, smiles and even laughter can come. It's like coming up for air, catching your breath during a difficult time. This not only helps those who are grieving, it also helps those wanting to offer comfort to the bereaved individual, since it disarms some of the awkwardness in painful situations.

In the midst of our support group discussions, we often experience spontaneous laughter. Even in great pain we've found ourselves laughing together. At times we laughed so hard it brought tears to our eyes. It felt so good.

### **Introduction**

Say, "In today's session we're going to discuss grief and loss. We'll begin by defining grief and looking at its stages. Then we'll use three questions to help us process our grief. What have we lost? What do we have left? And how can we cope?"

### **Definition of Grief**

Ask, "How would you define grief?" *Wait for their answers. Then ask someone to read the dictionary definition below.*

Dictionary definition: A normal, healthy emotional response to significant loss; not only from death – loss of health (diabetes, cancer, etc.), loss of job, miscarriage, divorce. An intensely personal process of emotional and life adjustment to a major loss; processed differently for each person (personality, past experiences, etc.)

*Read the following paragraphs to the group.*

Hurting parents experience grief and loss, too; not necessarily from death, but from the loss of relationship, the loss of dreams and hopes they had for their son or daughter. People experience a wide range of feelings and symptoms.

### **Five Stages of Grief**

Say, "Psychiatrist, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, author of *On Death and Dying*, popularized a five stage model of grieving." *Ask a volunteer to read the stages.*

1. Shock (I can't believe this is happening)
2. Denial (My child wouldn't do that), Bargaining (God, I'll do \_\_\_\_ if you'll do \_\_\_\_)
3. Anger (Why is this happening to me? What did we do wrong?)
4. Depression (I'm too sad to go to work. Will I ever laugh again?)
5. Acceptance (I'm at peace with what has happened or whatever is going to happen.)

Grief is a process that takes time.

It's possible to skip around and revisit these stages. At times you may feel: numb, guilty, anxious, fearful, unable to focus or concentrate, a desire to withdraw, irritable, more forgetful, extreme fatigue, restless, health problems worsen or develop new ones.

Possible physical symptoms: dizziness, rapid heartbeat, a lump or tightness in your throat, pressure on your chest, headaches, sleeplessness, loss of appetite or increased appetite.

Ask, "Which of these have you felt?"

*Optional Question:* Where are you on your grief journey?

### **Three Questions to Help Process Grief**

*Give each person an index card. Ask questions one and two, one at a time.*

#### **1. What have you lost?**

*Ask the question allowing a few minutes to think and write down their responses on one side of the index card. Let those who want to share losses they identified. After several have shared ask a volunteer to read the list of examples.*

Possible answers: Hopes and dreams you had for your child; what might have been, graduate from high school or college; have a good job; get married; grandchildren; a loving, close relationship; financial resources (counseling, rehab, doctors, lawyers, fees, etc.); possessions (things get "borrowed", disappear and end up in a pawn shop); time from work; sleep; your health; some friendships; peace of mind; your marriage; relationships with other children; your reputation. If you aren't careful you can even lose your faith.

#### **2. What do you have left?**

*Ask the question allowing a few minutes to think and write down their responses on the other side of the index card. Let those who want to share what they have left. After several have shared ask a volunteer to read the list of examples.*

Possible answers: Your other relationships—spouse, other children, friends; your relationship with God; your work and hobbies; your life—you do still have one. You have purpose, how can you use this for good?

*After discussion, read this statement to the group: "Don't let your child become the sole focus of your world. You have to get on with living your life with joy and peace again."*

#### **3. How can you cope?**

Read, “Here are three steps to help you grieve in a healthy way.” Ask volunteers to take turns reading the following content:

- Learn to accept that your loss is real and you are grieving.
  - You have lost something significant and important.
  - You can’t get it back; your life has changed forever; you will never be the same.
  - Take time to remember good memories from the past; it wasn’t all bad.
  
- Give yourself permission to feel the pain.
  - It’s emotional and physical; you can’t avoid it; don’t stuff it or deny it. Let yourself feel the pain and get it out. Denying can make you sick or prolong the grieving process.
  - It’s okay to distract yourself, but not for too long – working longer hours, staying busy, eating more
  - Don’t minimize it or seek to escape it – sleeping more or self medicating
  - Talk to a trusted friend, keep a journal if you like to write, express yourself in creative ways if you have this talent.
  
- Adjust to your new normal.
  - Shift your focus to other people and healthy activities.
  - Try to keep doing your normal, daily tasks as much as you can.
  - Give yourself permission to cry, be angry, feel whatever you’re feeling. It’s okay.
  - Talk about how you feel; don’t let others tell you how you should feel
  - Take care of yourself - exercise, take naps if needed, eat healthy, get adequate rest.
  - Ask for help if you need it - see a counselor or your pastor; see your doctor for a checkup, you may need medication temporarily.

George Bonanno states in his book *The Other Side of Sadness*, “Grieving is not static but involves a regular oscillation.” These are periods or cycles when you fluctuate in and out of laughter, even joy, in the midst of the waves of sadness. Positive emotions and smiling bring some relief. While it sounds contradictory, his research found that those who have this capacity will grieve in a healthier way and be more resilient.

Read, “It’s important we learn to grieve well because it’s critical to our survival and finding joy in hard times. Otherwise we will live in defeat and lose our joy.”

### **Scripture**

Ask volunteers to read these verses.

Psalm 34:18

“The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves received from God.”

Proverbs 17:22

“A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.”

Revelation 21:4

“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

**Reflection**

*Ask*, “What stood out the most for you from our discussion?”

**Prayer**

GRIEF AND LOSS  
PARTICIPANT NOTES

## PARTICIPANT NOTES

### GRIEF AND LOSS

#### **Definition of Grief**

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People experience a wide range of feelings and symptoms.

#### **Five Stages of Grief** (By Elisabeth Kubler-Ross)

1. Shock (I can't believe this is happening)
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Possible physical symptoms: dizziness, rapid heartbeat, a lump or tightness in your throat, pressure on your chest, headaches, sleeplessness, loss of appetite or increased appetite.

Which of these have you felt? They are signals you are grieving.

#### **Three Questions to Help Process Grief**

1. What have you lost?

Possible answers: Hopes and dreams we had for your child; what might have been and what their lives would have been like; graduation from high school or college; to have a good job; get married; grandchildren; a loving, close relationship; financial resources (counseling, rehab, doctors, lawyers, legal fees, etc.); possessions (things get "borrowed", disappear and end up in a pawn shop); time from work; sleep; your health; some friendships; peace of mind; your marriage; relationships with other children; your reputation; if we aren't careful you can even lose your faith.

2. What do you have left?

Possible answers: Your other relationships; spouse, other children, friends, God, your work and hobbies, your life – you do still have one. You have a purpose. How can you use this for good? Don't let your child become the sole focus of your world. You have to get on with living your life with joy and peace again.

3. How can you cope? Here are three steps to help you grieve in a healthy way.

- Learn to accept that your loss is real and you are grieving.
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  - Ask for help if you need it - see a counselor or your pastor; see your doctor for a checkup, you may need medication temporarily.

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