

Challenging Unhelpful Thoughts Arising from Grief

The grieving process can lead to unhelpful thoughts that cause powerful negative emotions, destructive behavior, and harm other relationships.

Remember, especially early in the grieving process, to be kind to yourself and expect difficult thoughts and emotions to arrive. However, when ready, or if they are causing harmful behavior, the following worksheet can help.

The steps below provide a Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) based approach for replacing negative thoughts with more positive ones (Morris, 2018).

Complete the following table using the answers from the following steps:

A – Situation or trigger during bereavement	B – Unhelpful thoughts	C – Feelings / behavior	D – Helpful thoughts	E – New feelings / new behavior

Step One – Write down the situation or trigger (A) during bereavement

Step Two – Write down how you are left feeling and any unhelpful behaviors (C)

Step Three – Write down what thoughts and beliefs are behind this feeling (B)

Step Four – Challenge these thoughts and feelings (in B) by asking yourself:

What evidence is there for them?

What alternative thinking could you adopt?

How is this thinking likely to affect you?

What advice would you give a friend?

What would my loved one tell me to do if they were here now?

Step Five – Re-write your thoughts and beliefs based on answering the above questions (D).

Step Six – Identify your new feelings (and potential for new behavior) based on the new thoughts and beliefs (E).

Remember that grieving takes time – be compassionate to yourself as you work through each of the steps. You may not find answers or implement changes straight away; it will take perseverance.

References

- Morris, S. (2018). *Overcoming grief: A self-help guide using cognitive behavioural techniques*. London: Robinson.

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