



# **Group to support bereavement in BMSZKI Szabolcs Temporary Hostel**

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In the interpretation of the psychology, **grief** is an emotional state resulting from an unusual life event or accompanying it.

## **Grief is a reaction precipitated from emotional loss**

According to **Polc Alaine**, who was an expert in thanatology:

*"If we don't mourn after a loss, we don't do the grieving work, the loss can affect not only our entire life journey, our further fate, but also the fate of several generations."*

# What is grief exactly?

- When a close relative dies?
- If we lose our jobs?
- If our living environment changes?
- Divorce?
- Losing a child?

**The common experience is the feeling of chagrin.**

# The type of grief

## Phases of the normal grieving process/Ross-1988/

- State of shock, denial
- Desperation, splitting emotions, depression
- Absorption, moving on

## Complicated grieving process /Parkes-1978/

- Inhibited grief - the individual denies or suppresses grief.
- Prolonged grief- when the feeling of loss and grief remains active for years.



**In a normal grieving process**, people usually are supported by their relatives or friends. Many people want to be alone with their grief and write a diary or blog. Introspection and self-discovery are common content of this.

**Other coping strategies:**

Relaxation and meditation, alcohol and other drugs, books related to grief, online psychological assistance

Pathological grief requires therapy, either individually or in a group setting.



# **What does influence whether and how we ask for help?**

- What sort of support sources exist
  - Preconceptions
  - Previous experiences
  - Available information
- 



**It is more difficult if you  
are alone**



# **Groups supporting bereavement**

The members form an emotional community and can adopt coping strategies from each other.

Because of their similar experiences, they support each other and gradually become more and more open and confident.

The aim of the bereavement groups that operate in the **Hospice House** is to give the possibility to the members to support each other.

The first hospice service, named **Sun Eclipse Association** was established by Polc Alain. The method they invented is commonly used in other bereavement groups throughout the country.

In the grieving process, the extreme emotions are considered to be normal and the individual can perceive this through the other members of the group.



## Feelings connected to grief

- Fear
- Vulnerability;
- Solitude
- Loneliness
- Agression
- Negative tempers
- Sorrow
- Anger
- Remorse



## Possible consequences



- Isolation
- Unstable emotional state
- Common coexistence problems
- Provocative behaviour toward relatives and carers
- Apathy
- Indifference
- Eating disorders/abnormal eating or drinking
- Psychosomatic disorders
- Self-esteem crisis
- Fear of death

**The helping power of the group is**



**the common experience.**



## **Types of bereavement groups**

based on the study of Pilling János: „Structural techniques in a bereavement self-help group”

**Open** /common in churches, thematically driven, invited  
invited quest speakers/

**Closed** /It is closed after the second or third occasion.  
Cohesion and love is formed.

**Combined** /It starts as a closed group but opens after a  
while.

**Club** /The attendances are no longer grieving intensely  
but connect to the mourners. It can play an important  
role in the meaningful use of free time.





## **A bereavement self-help group can be**

**Homogeneous**, The members are at the same age or they have the same nature of loss. This is especially justified in the case of special types of loss: suicide, death of your child, etc.

**Heterogeneous**, e.g. the joint participation of parents, spouses, adults who have lost a sibling, relatives of those who died of natural causes or accidents.



The group represents normality, a place of understanding, acceptance, and open communication of feelings.

Presently we run a combined heterogeneous group in the hostel.

**The group size**

6-8 people, weekly operating

**Gender distribution**

3 men, 6 women.

**Age**

60-90 years

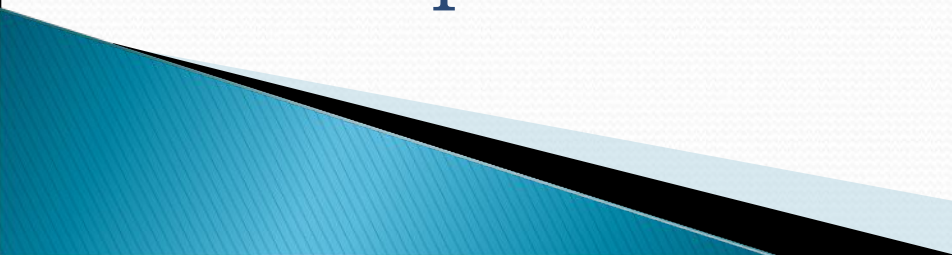




**The group leader** facilitates the members to experience and express emotions.

**Structural techniques in  
the practice  
/Pilling/**



- Driving the group process, preventing discussions that do not relate to the aim of the group
  - Making the way to live the experience deeper
  - Joint activities strengthen the community experience
  - Some exercises have a stress-relieving and pleasurable effect
- 

# Opening

Colour selection that links to the mood of the particular person

Selection of postcard

Joy-sorrow scale

Metamorphosis / color, object, weather



## **Practical tools can be used in group sessions**

**What is my main strength?** The aim is to get to know each other and enhance confidence

**Social atom drawing.** The goal is to review and raise awareness of current relationships.

**Sentence completions:** e.g.: Grief is like... The aim is to enable a structured conversation.

**Thematic discussions.** e.g.: Who is the anger directed at... The aim is to enhance normality and the feeling of belonging to the group.

**Photos and keepsakes.** e.g.: from the loved one who has passed away. The aim is to strengthen the relationship.





**His/her main qualities...** Naming 5 characteristics of the loved one who passed away. The aim is to introduce the loved one to the other group members.

**An instructive memory.** Sharing a memory related to the deceased. The aim is to promote the development of the internal memory.

**My spiritual heritage.** The spiritual heritage received from the loved one. It promotes strengthening internal memory.

**Positive gossip.** The aim to get positive experiences and strengthen the self.

**Watching and discussing films and film excerpts.**

Recommended films: Let it go, Our little angel... Purpose, help in expressing emotions.

**Making a list about the losses.** Life path map with losses marked. The aim is to strengthen the coping.



## Rites

Repetitive actions with symbolic meaning

**Lighting a candle** at the beginning of each group.

**Guarding the flame.** Involving the group members in lighting the candle.

A **song or quote** that is important to me.

**Handshaking** with the group members.





## **Closing the group process**

- Symbolic gifts
- What this group means to me
- Symbolic representation of future plans
- Diagram of the group
- Memories about the group
- Common handshake
- Acknowledgment

## The positive effects of the mental health support

- Enhancing the well-being of the service users
- Strengthening of coping skills – reduction of the accumulated stresses that cannot be reduced alone
- Normalisation of mental defense techniques, settling of the sense of reality
- Enhancing the coping and adaptation skills and better cooperation with the support workers
- Occurrence of immune-boosting and favorable psychological changes
- In case of need, it can form awareness in the particular person to ask for help from a psychologist or a psychiatrist



# Bereavement group

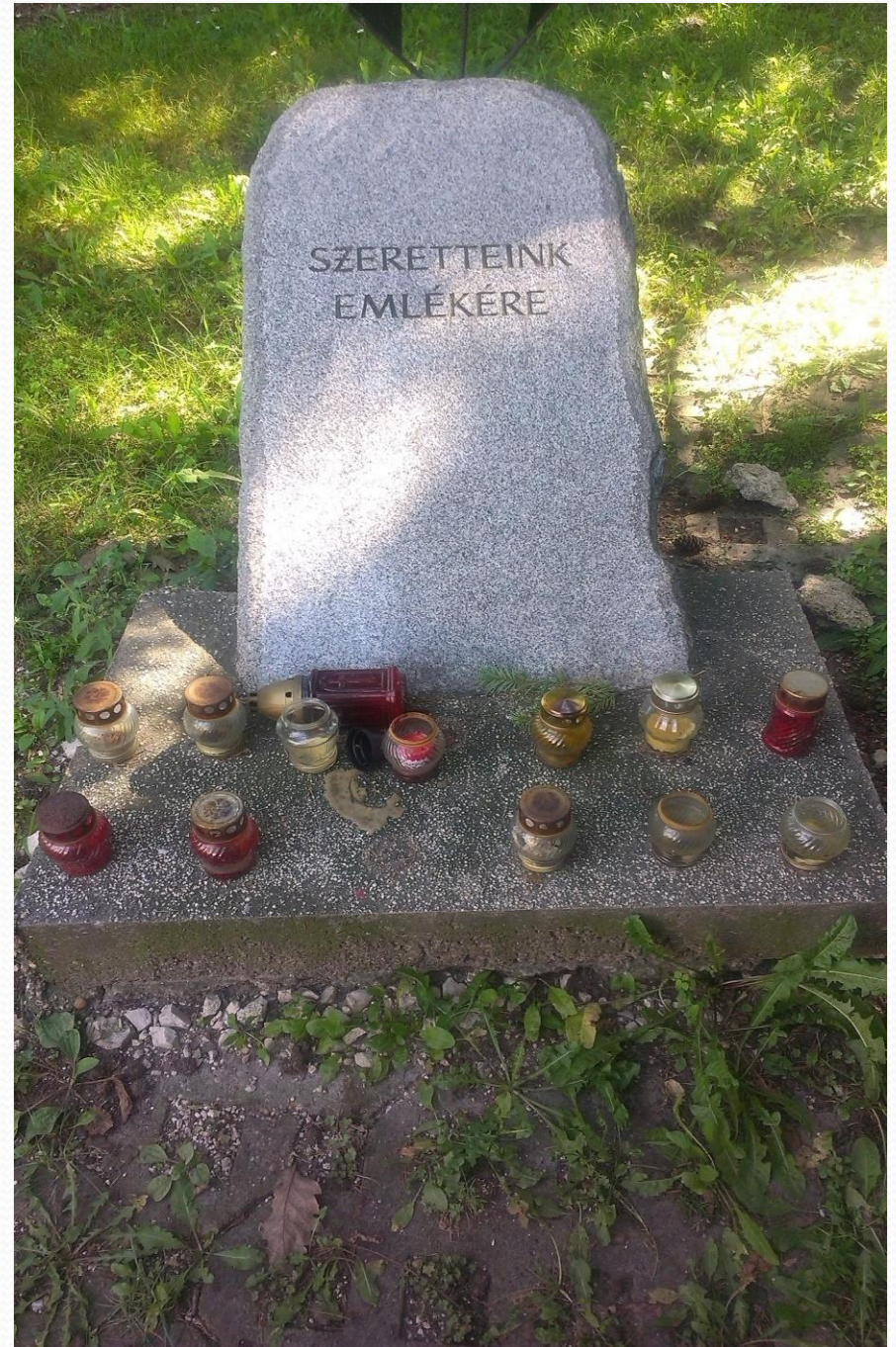






*„We stand  
strongest on  
crumbling  
ground”*

*Hemingway*





Thank you  
for your  
attention!

