

Healing Unresolved Grief

Embracing Your Journey

A SEVEN WEEK SUPPORT GROUP CURRICULUM
FOR EMPOWERING MOTHERS
WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED
A PREGNANCY LOSS,
A STILLBORN OR NEWBORN DEATH
OR THE SIDS DEATH OF A BABY
UNDER ONE YEAR OF AGE

*He who has a WHY to live
Can bear with almost any HOW.
- Nietzsche*

This curriculum is about
rediscovering that WHY...
and working as individuals
and as a community
to learn HOW.



Rita Paskowitz

In collaboration with
Douglas County Health Department
Omaha, Nebraska



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! cannot control
the world;

! can only control

how ! respond to it.



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The Cover Vocabulary

The words on the front and back cover of this curriculum may be used in a variety of ways. Here are but a few of the seemingly endless possibilities:

- The words can be put on the outside of a folder that participants are given at the first meeting and asked to bring with them at every session.
- The words can be put on the cover of a journal given to every participant at the first weekly gathering.
- Various words can be made into signs and put on the walls of the room in which the Support Group meets.
- Participants may choose a word to describe their feelings on a particular day.
- Participants may choose a word to describe something that has been affecting them during the past week.
- Participants may choose a word to describe a worry or fear they have about their future.
- Participants may choose a word to describe something that has surprised them—either positively or negatively. This could be a person, a feeling or an experience.
- Participants may choose three words—one each to describe how they see their past, their present and their future.
- Participants may choose words that have brought them comfort.
- Participants may choose whatever words are necessary to describe their sense of loss.
- Participants may choose a word as a prompt for journal-writing.
- Participants may choose a word as a prompt for any type of creative activity/project—be it visual art, music, dance, poetry, or writing.
- Facilitators may choose a word to spark an impromptu discussion.
- Facilitators may choose a word to lead a discussion in a new direction.
- Facilitators may choose a word to engage a particular individual into a conversation about a difficult subject in an indirect, non-threatening way.
- Facilitators may tell the day's Opening Story and ask participants to select what words the story brought to mind.
- Facilitators may ask participants to choose a word that brings a personal story to mind and to share it with the group.

If you have an idea of your own, try it. Remember: each word has a different story for each woman. Just be open and create an atmosphere of permission in which these stories can be told fearlessly and with love. In the HUGGS sessions a "Grief Work" book is given to each participant. Words are on the front of the workbook and also the HUGGS journal.

We can do anything we want to
if we stick to it long enough.

Helen Keller



Introduction

This is read during the first weekly session and a copy is placed in every folder.

Welcome to **HEALING UNRESOLVED GRIEF: EMBRACING OUR JOURNEY.**

If it takes a village to raise a child, it also takes a village to mourn one.

For the next seven weeks, this circle become such a village—a community of mothers who are mourning their own children and, by extension, mourning each other's. Every one of you is equally valuable and, by your being here this evening, you are making a commitment to keep the circle whole for all seven meetings. Your presence is required for what these women can offer you and for what you can offer them.

This is a Support Group—not a series of therapy sessions. Out of respect for others, sessions will begin and end on time, and unavoidable absences must be reported or called in prior to the meeting that will be missed.

We are the Facilitators. We are not here to:

- Dispense medication
- Give you advice
- Interrupt you
- Give you time-outs
- Fix you
- Diagnose you
- Boss you around
- Embarrass you
- Ground you

As Facilitators, we are here to give you permission to:

- Keep an open mind
- Be who you are, think what you think and feel what you feel
- Speak appropriately
- Feel secure in knowing that what is said in this space will stay in this space
- Ask questions when you don't understand something
- Be quiet when you need to be quiet
- Cry when you need to cry
- Laugh when you need to laugh—as long as it is not at the expense of others
- Disagree with something that is said in a way that will lead to discussion—not confrontation
- Know that your spiritual system of beliefs is respected—as are the spiritual systems of belief of others
- Use what works for you and discard what does not
- Whatever is said here, stays here.
- Please limit your cell phone use to emergency only. Please put your cell phone on “vibrate”

You are here because you have suffered a loss—the death of your baby. Your job is to experience and explore your grief—as an individual and as a community.

We are honored to be a part of your process of healing.



The Importance of "I"

This curriculum focuses on the "I."

- Its goal is to give each participant the opportunity to explore, engage and experience who she as an **I**ndividual is and to empower her to deal with her loss as only she as an **I**ndividual can.
- The tool the curriculum uses is **I**nteraction—through stories, guided activities, discussion and conversation—to create a safe community of permission, understanding and healing.
- Each weekly topic begins with the letter "**I**"
 - ◇ Week One: **I**nspiration
 - ◇ Week Two: **I**ntention
 - ◇ Week Three: **I**dentify
 - ◇ Week Four: **I**nterpretation
 - ◇ Week Five: **I**nformation
 - ◇ Week Six: **I**nvolvement
 - ◇ Week Seven: **I**llumination
- For both participants and Facilitators, the abiding truth of this curriculum is:

I cannot control the world; I can only control how I respond to it.
- Desired outcomes of this process include:
 - ◇ The ability of each participant to see herself as an **I**ndependent decision-maker.
 - ◇ Her realization that her **I**deas matter.
 - ◇ Her acceptance that what she says and does have **I**mpact not only on herself but on others.
 - ◇ Her belief that she is both **I**mportant and **I**rreplaceable.
- There is a difference between "**I cannot today**" and "**I cannot ever.**"
- The "**I**" of each Facilitator is to be found in her **I**ntelligence, her **I**ntuition, her **I**mpartiality and her **I**magination.
- The barriers to the success of this curriculum are **I**mpatience, **I**nsensitivity and **I**naction.

It takes courage to lead a life. Any life.

Erica Jong



How "I" Receive Support

We live in a society which, at best, finds grief uncomfortable. At worst, we see it as annoying, tiresome and just too hard to deal with—unless, of course, it is our own. When we suffer a personal loss, we suddenly need to be redefined, and we are never sure in which direction to turn or who should be creating our new definition.

When a woman loses an unborn child, however, there is even more uncertainty. What do we say to her; what do we call her? And even the loss of an infant stymies us—leaving us to mouth the old platitude, "You're still young—you can always have another child."

Healing Unresolved Grief cannot magically transform other people's responses to these devastating and unimaginable tragedies. What it CAN do is to offer the women experiencing these losses unparalleled support in the following ways:

- This is a seven-week program offered at no cost to participants.
- Each week consists of a healthful meal, a preconception/woman's wellness health tip—and a session filled with stories, discussions and activities designed to help attendees work through their grief process and move toward healing.
- The women involved in the program receive a personally-inscribed journal in which to record their thoughts, feelings and experiences concerning their grief.
- Each mother has a support buddy—her own "HUGGER"—who will provide her with a ride to and from the support group and follow-up between sessions with notes and phone calls.
- Participants have childcare available to them during each weekly session.
- Informative handouts are given to each woman, covering issues to support her physically, emotionally and socially.
- The group itself provides a community of peers for every woman in attendance, offering each the opportunity to both give and receive support.
- The vital importance of creating realistic, achievable goals is stressed and practiced each week.
- Women are encouraged to tell their stories, thereby validating their experiences and empowering them to make the changes necessary to promote healing.
- The weekly sessions are a safe haven for each woman to deal with emotions without fear of judgment or recrimination.

Healing Unresolved Grief can change the lives of everyone involved—from attendees to Facilitators to "Huggers." The only requirements are an open heart, an open mind and the recognition that in giving support, we are receiving it as well.

What do we live for if not to make life
less difficult for each other.

George Eliot



Definitions

BEREAVEMENT

The entire process of anticipation, death and adjustment following a significant loss.

EMPOWERMENT

The belief in one's right and abilities to make important decisions about one's life.

FACILITATOR

An individual trained to provide guidance, permission and boundaries to members of a support group.

GRIEF

The thoughts, feelings and behaviors following a significant loss.

MISCARRIAGE

Pregnancy loss before 20 weeks gestation, with no signs of life.

MOURNING

The outward expression of grief, as influenced by culture and customs.

NEONATAL DEATH

The loss of an infant within 28 days of birth.

PERINATAL DEATH

Encompasses many types of loss associated with fertility, including embryonic death, spontaneous abortion, missed abortion, fetal death and neonatal death.

PRECONCEPTION HEALTH

A woman's health before her first pregnancy and in between each pregnancy.

STILLBIRTH

The death of the fetus between the twentieth week of pregnancy and birth.

SUDDEN INFANT DEATH SYNDROME/SIDS

The sudden death of an infant under one year of age which remains unexplained after a thorough case investigation.

SUPPORT GROUP

A group of people working with the pain of a significant life change.

No life is so hard that you can't make it
easier by the way you take it.

Ellen Glasgow



Food for Thought: ! Care for Myself by...



Following the loss of a child—whether the death occurred during the pregnancy or after the baby's birth—the physical and emotional health of a mother is often diminished. Seeking to fill her empty arms, however, the woman often rushes into another pregnancy—never considering her actual readiness for a baby or understanding what behaviors may put her or her next pregnancy at risk.

This program encourages the participants to fully acknowledge their grief—to value the life that was lost and to cherish the life that remains—while promoting wholeness and self-empowerment.

Food for Thought: “! Care for Myself”

The Healing Unresolved Grief Group Support (HUGGS) process is unique as it offers an interactive dinner session—Food for Thought—prior to the group support meeting. Each weekly Food for Thought session consists of a 30 minute dinner with the delivery of an interactive education message regarding preconception health or women's wellness and family planning.

During the initial time of loss and possibly for months to come, a woman may neglect her own health needs. As a part of HUGGS, women are encouraged to care for themselves physically, mentally and spiritually. This is also a key time for women to consider readiness for another baby—delaying pregnancy until they are achieving their optimum health or a state of “wholeness”.

Being at optimum health can improve a woman's chance for having a healthy pregnancy and birth outcome. Women who long for their missing baby may become pregnant too soon after the loss. Through this curriculum, women are empowered to take time to understand their personal needs as part of the grieving process within a whole health context. It is particularly important for women to understand health behaviors that may put them or their next pregnancy at risk.

During dinner, the “! Care for Myself” concept is introduced for the week. All dinner sessions focus on preconception health or women's wellness. Women's wellness is a vital part of recovery during the grief process.

Week One: ! Care for Myself by Embracing Wellness in the Midst of Brokenness

Week Two: ! Care for Myself by Developing One New Healthy Habit

Week Three: ! Care for Myself by Finding Strength Within

Week Four: ! Care for Myself by Being Active

Week Five: ! Care for Myself by Nourishing My Body

Week Six: ! Care for Myself by Choosing Caring Ways Now and Beyond



About the Opening Stories

After performing the Weekly Ritual, each session begins with a very short story. The purpose of these stories is to give the gathering a particular focus for that week. These stories lead to discussions and activities that give the participants insight to move them toward healing.

These stories are chosen for their inherent lessons **and** for their length. They are meant to be told—not READ. Reading from a paper or even a note card puts a barrier between the speaker and the listener. This program is about breaking down barriers and creating community. It is about connection. And connection is most easily achieved through eye contact—through **talking to not reading at**.

This does *not* mean that the Facilitator must **memorize the story word for word** and then **recite it verbatim**.

So how does she learn it?

Here is the best (read “easiest”) way:

- She takes the story somewhere out of earshot of the rest of the world.
- She reads the story out loud as many times as necessary to make sure she has the details straight.
- She shares the story with anybody willing to listen in order to get feedback and feel more secure in her telling.

A few things to keep in mind:

- While it is important to make a story her own, the teller may not add unnecessary details to complicate the story or confuse its meaning. The stories are simple and direct. That is why they are so powerful.
- Not every listener will hear the story exactly the same way. Facilitators may be surprised by the meaning some participants might find in the story. There is no single right meaning for any of these tales. The differences in interpretation can lead to insights about an individual’s feeling and/or situation while eliciting a fascinating and illuminating discussion.
- Opening each session by modeling good storytelling gives the participants an example to follow and helps to empower them to share stories of their own.

Remember: no one will have heard the story before so there is no need to be afraid of telling it wrong. A Facilitator need only to be true to the tale, and the tale will be true to her and to her listeners. At the end of each session, each participant will receive the opening story for the “Grief Work” book.

Begin what you want to be doing now.

Marie Beynon Ray



A Story for Facilitators

TELL IT TO THE WALLS

A Tamil Tale

A poor widow lived with her two sons and two daughters-in-law.
All four of them scolded and ill-treated her all day.
She had no one to whom she could turn and tell her woes.
As she kept her woes to herself...
She grew fatter and fatter.
Her sons and daughters-in-law now found *that* a matter for ridicule.
They mocked her for growing fatter by the day...
And asked her to eat less.

One day –
When everyone else had gone out somewhere –
She wandered away from home in sheer misery...
And found herself walking outside of town.
There she saw a deserted old house.
It was in ruins and had no roof.
She went in...
And suddenly felt lonelier and more miserable than ever –
She found she was unable to keep her miseries to herself any longer.
She had to tell someone.

So she told all her tales of grievance against the first son...
To the wall in front of her.
As she finished...
The wall collapsed under the weight of her woes...
And crashed to the ground in a heap.
Her body felt lighter as well.

Then she turned to the second wall...
And told it all her grievances against her first son's wife.
Down came that wall...
And she became lighter still.
She brought down the third wall with her tales against her second son...
And the remaining fourth wall, too...
With her complaints against her second daughter-in-law.

Standing in the ruins...
With bricks and rubble all around her...
She felt lighter in mood...
And lighter in body as well.
She looked at herself...
And found she had actually lost all the weight...
She had gained in her wretchedness,

Then she went home.

Misery is a communicable disease.

Martha Graham



Weekly Topics

Week One

INSPIRATION/Why am I here?

Week Two

INTENTION/Where am I?

Week Three

IDENTITY/Who am I?

Week Four

INTERPRETATION
How do I understand this?

Week Five

INFORMATION
What do I do with what I know?

Week Six

INVOLVEMENT
Where do I go from here?

Week Seven

ILLUMINATION/Empowerment
Family and Friends Sharing Session

There are no shortcuts to any place worth going.
Beverly Sills



Week One

INSPIRATION

SUPPLIES

- One pre-made nametag per member
- Stone Hearts in a bowl—there must be several as each participant may get a new one each week
- One candle per group member
 - ◊ A long-lasting pillar candle—still usable after the Support Group sessions end
 - ◊ Unscented in case anyone has allergies
 - ◊ Warm, neutral color—such as ivory
- Base or holder for each candle
- Writing implement that will adhere to candle-holder/base
- Matches/Lighter

NOTE: The completed candle-holders with their candles inside them will be used every week and be taken home after the final session

- One inscribed journal and pen per group member
- One folder per group member
- Freddie's Story DVD
- HUGGS Grief Workbook
- Grief Work handouts

ROOM SET-UP

- Chairs are arranged in a circle.
- In the center of the circle is a table with supplies for making one candle-holder (including candle) per participant.
- Folders and Journals are placed near a Facilitator.

FIRST WEEK WELCOME

- As participants walk in, each is warmly greeted by the Facilitators and is given her nametag and a small stone heart she can hold in her hand.
- Everyone sits in a chair in the circle.
- Facilitators welcome the entire group with the following statement (which is also found in each participant's folder).

Welcome to HEALING UNRESOLVED GRIEF: EMBRACING OUR JOURNEY.

If it takes a village to raise a child, it also takes a village to mourn one.

For the next seven weeks, this circle becomes such a village—a community of mothers who are mourning their own children and, by extension, mourning each other's. Every one of you is equally valuable and, by your being here this evening, you are making a commitment to keep the circle whole for all seven meetings. Your presence is required for what these women can offer you and for what you can offer them.

This is a Support Group—not a series of therapy sessions. Out of respect for others, sessions will begin and end on time and unavoidable absences must be reported/called in prior to the meeting that will be missed.

We are the Facilitators. We are not here to:



Week One

INSPIRATION

- Dispense medication
- Diagnose you
- Interrupt you
- Give you advice
- Boss you around
- Embarrass you
- Give you time-outs
- Ground you
- Fix you

As Facilitators, we are here to give you permission to:

- Keep an open mind
- Be who you are, think what you think and feel what you feel
- Speak appropriately
- Feel secure in knowing that what is said in this space will stay in this space
- Ask questions when you don't understand something
- Be quiet when you need to be quiet
- Cry when you need to cry
- Laugh when you need to laugh—as long as it is not at the expense of others
- Disagree with something that is said in a way that will lead to discussion—not confrontation
- Know that your spiritual system of belief is respected—as are the spiritual systems of belief of others
- Use what works for you and discard what does not

You are here because you have suffered a loss—the death of a baby. Your job is to experience and explore your grief—as an individual and as a community.

We are honored to be a part of your process of healing.

FIRST WEEK WELCOME CONTINUES

- Facilitator explains that each weekly session will begin with the telling of the Opening Story.
- SILENCE AND LONGING is told as below.

TELLING OF THIS WEEK'S OPENING STORY

SILENCE AND LONGING by Rita Paskowitz

There was once a place of silence and longing—
An entire village sharing the loss of one villager...
Without ever giving that loss a name.

It was as though the sun...
Had permanently set behind a mountain...
And left its shadow to the town...
Until there were children who had grown into adults...
Without ever seeing anyone smile.



Week One

INSPIRATION

People walked with their eyes to the ground...
Passing without any recognition of others...
Or of themselves.

And the only sound that was heard...
Was the sighing of the wind...
As it shaped that loss into words...
Understood only by the trees...
Because the villagers did not believe...
They could be spoken.

But one day...
Sitting beneath an ancient oak...
An old woman -
Childless...
Alone...
And lost in the murmuring of her mind -
Heard her secret rustling through the leaves.

"Mother..."
Said the voice of the infant ...
That had died within her womb.
"I know, Mother...
And I love you, too."

OPENING STORY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What does that story say to you?
- With what/whom in the story do you identify?
- What is the importance of saying things out loud?
- What in your life needs to be said out loud—by you and/or by others?

ACTIVITY ONE: BREAKING THE SILENCE/NAMING

- There is a moment of silence.
- Each woman is given a candle, a candle-holder and a writing implement.
- The Facilitator invites each participant to write the name of her child on one side of the candle-holder as simply or as ornately as she wishes—and her own name on the other side.
- After everyone has completed the task, the Facilitator explains that each participant will be able to introduce herself first by her own name and then as the mother of the child whose name she has written on her candle holder as she lights her candle.
- One by one, each woman lights her candle and allows it to burn throughout the session.
- If appropriate, Facilitator asks participants if anyone has a story she would like to share about her baby's name.



Week One

INSPIRATION

ACTIVITY TWO: FREDDIE'S STORY (DVD)

- What does Freddie's story say to you?
- With what/whom in the story do you identify?
- What have you learned about her life's journey that can help you with your journey now?

ACTIVITY THREE: INTRODUCTION TO JOURNALS, JOURNALING AND THE HUGGS GRIEF WORKBOOK

Note: Journals will have the "Cover Words" on the outside. Each journal will have the following personalized inscription:

These are the private words and thoughts of

(Participant's Name)

Mother of

(Baby's Name)

- Facilitator: Each of you is being given your own personally-inscribed journal (and special pen/pencil) to keep as your very own. It is for your use and is not meant to be shared with others unless you choose to do so. You may use it to jot down your thoughts and feelings about your loss or what happens in this group or anything else that seems important to you during this time of grieving and healing. If you are not comfortable with writing, please feel free to use this journal as a place to draw, to doodle or to paste images, articles and/or important papers and keepsakes that hold meaning for you on your journey toward wholeness and self-acceptance. The words on the cover of your journal and placed throughout its pages are there to provide you with inspiration for your writing, for group discussion and for just knowing that you are not alone.
- Facilitator: Using the words on the cover of your journal, find whatever word/words that best describes/describe how you feel about being here today and share your response—in story form if possible—with the group.

WEEK ONE CLOSING RITUAL

- At the end of the session, Facilitator invites each woman to stand before her candle and, either aloud or silently, make a wish for her child or tell her/him how much she/he is missed and loved or even say a prayer for the child—whatever would serve as both connection and closure for this first group session. When this interaction is completed, each participant blows out the candle and, perhaps, wishes her child goodnight.

TAKE HOME WORK

- Pass out HUGGS "Grief Work" book handouts.

If you're never scared or embarrassed or hurt,
it means you never take any chances.

Julia Sorel



Week Two

INTENTION

SUPPLIES

- Nametags
- Stone hearts
- Tissues & wastebaskets
- Markers
- Large pad of paper on stand
- HUGGS Grief Work book handouts
- Post-it Notes/Pens
- Candle-holders & matches
- Camera
- Target of **I**ntention

ROOM SET-UP

- Chairs are arranged in a circle.
- A large pad of paper on a stand is set up near a Facilitator's chair.
- There is a table with the candle-holders made by each participant.

WEEKLY OPENING RITUAL

- As participants walk in, each is warmly greeted by a Facilitator and is given her nametag and a small stone heart she can hold in her hand.
- After everyone has arrived and joined the circle, each woman stands before her candle.
- While lighting it, she introduces herself first by her own name and then as the mother of the child to whom the candle is dedicated.

TELLING OF THIS WEEK'S OPENING STORY

A Traditional Tale

While riding through his kingdom, the king noticed an odd sight. On every barn he passed he saw a target with an arrow sticking straight out of the bull's-eye.

"I must learn this great archer's secret," he told his squire. "Find the man and bring him to me at once!"

To the king's amazement, his squire returned with a young boy in tow.

"There must be some mistake!" said the King. "How could this child hit the bull's-eye every time?"

"It's simple," replied the youngster as he shot an arrow into a blank wall and then painted the target around it.

OPENING STORY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What does this story say to you?
- With what/whom in the story do you identify?
- Who is creating YOUR Bull's **I**?
- What would your Bull's **I** be?

ACTIVITY ONE: WHAT IS OUR BULL'S **I**?

- Using a large pad of paper on stand, a Facilitator asks the participants to help her create a Target of **I**ntention for this support group with the ultimate goal being healing and empowerment.



Week Two

I NTENTION

DISCUSSION: WHAT IS BLOCKING THE BULL'S I?

Note: Facilitator will be jotting down what is being said on large pad to use as reference points in this discussion.

- What are the things that are getting in the way of our reaching this Bull's I?
- Which ones are caused by others—meaning people, society, belief system, etc.?
- Which ones are self-imposed?
- As an individual, what can you realistically do RIGHT NOW that will move you closer to the Bull's I?
- As a group, what can we realistically do RIGHT NOW that will move us closer to the Bull's I?
- What tools do you need to help you get there?
- Ask participants to write one or two personal goals on a sticky note and place it in the Target of I ntention.

DISCUSSION: HOW ELSE CAN WE USE THE BULL'S I?

- To set up workshop goals.
- To recognize one's proximity to achieving this goal.
- To see where others are in achieving their goal.
- To acknowledge the possibility of change/progress.
- To participate in an actual goal-setting activity.

ACTIVITY TWO: JOURNALING OUR GOALS

- Each participant is asked to write/draw in her journal one goal that she can achieve before our next meeting. This need not be a large goal—it simply must be SOMETHING she can do that will move her closer toward healing/empowerment—like eating a good breakfast each day or calling a friend if she's feeling low or allowing herself the freedom to cry instead of holding her pain in.
- She can include a list of any of the “tools” suggested by the group.

NOTE: This journaling activity should be done weekly—making sure that the progress is addressed at the next session and another goal is set.

WEEKLY CLOSING RITUAL

- At the end of the session, Facilitator invites each woman to stand before her candle and, either aloud or silently, make a wish for her child or tell her/him how much she/he is missed and loved or even say a prayer for the child—whatever would serve as both connection and closure for this group session. When this interaction is completed, each participant blows out the candle and, perhaps, wishes her child goodnight.



Week Two

I[!]NTENTION

WEEKLY BULL'S I[!] ACTIVITY

- Prior to exiting the room, each participant moves her name to the appropriate spot on our Target of I[!]ntention—to show any changes in her progress.
- Upon entering the room each week, each participant moves her name to the appropriate spot on our Target of I[!]ntention—to show any changes in her progress.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT SESSION:

Each participant is asked to bring something of her baby's to share with the group at the next meeting. This could be a photograph, an article of clothing, a toy or a story—whatever would be appropriate to validate her experience of being the child's mother.

TAKE HOME WORK

- Pass out HUGGS "Grief Work" book handout.
- Use the Bull's I[!] activity for personal goal setting.
- Encourage each participant to draw a bull's eye in her journal to track her weekly group progress.

One of the sources of pride of being a human being is the ability to bear present frustrations in the interests of longer purposes.

Helen Merrell Lynd



Week Three

SUPPLIES

- Nametags
- Stone hearts
- Tissues & wastebaskets
- Target of **I**ntention
- Candle-holders & matches
- Large sheets of blank paper
- Colored markers
- Tape
- Flat surface for taping up drawings
- Camera
- HUGGS Grief Work book handouts

ROOM SET-UP

- Chairs are arranged in a circle.
- A large blank pad and markers are near a Facilitator's chair.
- There is a table with the candle-holders made by each participant.
- There is a flat surface upon which each participant may draw.

WEEKLY OPENING RITUAL

- As participants walk in, each is warmly greeted by a Facilitator and is given her nametag and a small stone heart she can hold in her hand.
- Each participant moves her name to the appropriate spot on our Target of **I**ntention prior to joining the circle—to show progress or setback.
- After everyone has arrived and joined the circle, each woman stands before her candle.
- While lighting it, she introduces herself first by her own name and then as the mother of the child to whom the candle is dedicated.

TELLING OF THIS WEEK'S OPENING STORY

A Traditional Tale

A man found an eagle's egg and put it into the nest of a backyard hen. The eaglet hatched with the brood of chicks and grew up with them.

All his life, the eagle did what the backyard chickens did, thinking he was a backyard chicken. He scratched the earth for worms and insects. He clucked and cackled. And he would thrash his wings and fly a few feet into the air.

Years passed and the eagle grew very old. One day, he saw a magnificent bird far above him in the cloudless sky. It glided in graceful majesty among the powerful wind currents with scarcely a beat of its strong golden wings.

The old eagle looked up in awe. "Who's that?" he asked.

"That's the eagle, the king of the birds," said his neighbor. "He belongs to the sky. We belong to the earth – we're chickens."

So the eagle lived and died a chicken, for that's what he thought he was.



Week Three

I DENTITY

OPENING STORY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What does this story say to you?
- With what/whom in the story do you identify?
- Who decides who you really are – for others?
- Who decides who you really are – for you?
- What can you do to “glide in graceful majesty” instead of just “thrashing” your wings and flying “a few feet into the air?”

ACTIVITY ONE/DISCUSSION: FOR WHOM ARE WE GRIEVING?

- Facilitator reviews last week’s assignment:
Each participant is asked to bring something of her baby’s to share with the group at the next meeting. This could be a photograph, an article of clothing, a toy or a story—whatever would be appropriate to validate her experience of being the child’s mother.
- Everyone is invited to respond to the assignment to the best of her ability, sharing whatever she has brought in whatever form.
- Facilitator—referring to this week’s opening story and the sharing that has just taken place—invites discussion to underscore each woman’s right to decide and define who she and the child for whom she is grieving truly are.

ACTIVITY TWO/DISCUSSION: GOAL-SETTING AND GOAL-ACHIEVING

- Participants are asked to report on their progress toward achieving the goals set at last week’s session—sharing what worked and what didn’t.
- New goals are set in journals for next week’s meeting.

WEEKLY CLOSING RITUAL

- At the end of the session, Facilitator invites each woman to stand before her candle and, either aloud or silently, make a wish for her child or tell her/him how much she/he is missed and loved or even say a prayer for the child—whatever would serve as both connection and closure for this group session. When this interaction is completed, each participant blows out the candle and, perhaps, wishes her child goodnight.
- Prior to exiting the room, each participant moves her name to the appropriate spot on our Target of **I**ntention—to show any changes in her progress.
- Participants are encouraged to bring any songs on a CD they would like to add to the HUGGS CD: “HUGGS Music to **I**nspire and **I**lluminate Your Spirit.” They will receive the HUGGS CD at the seventh session.

TAKE HOME WORK

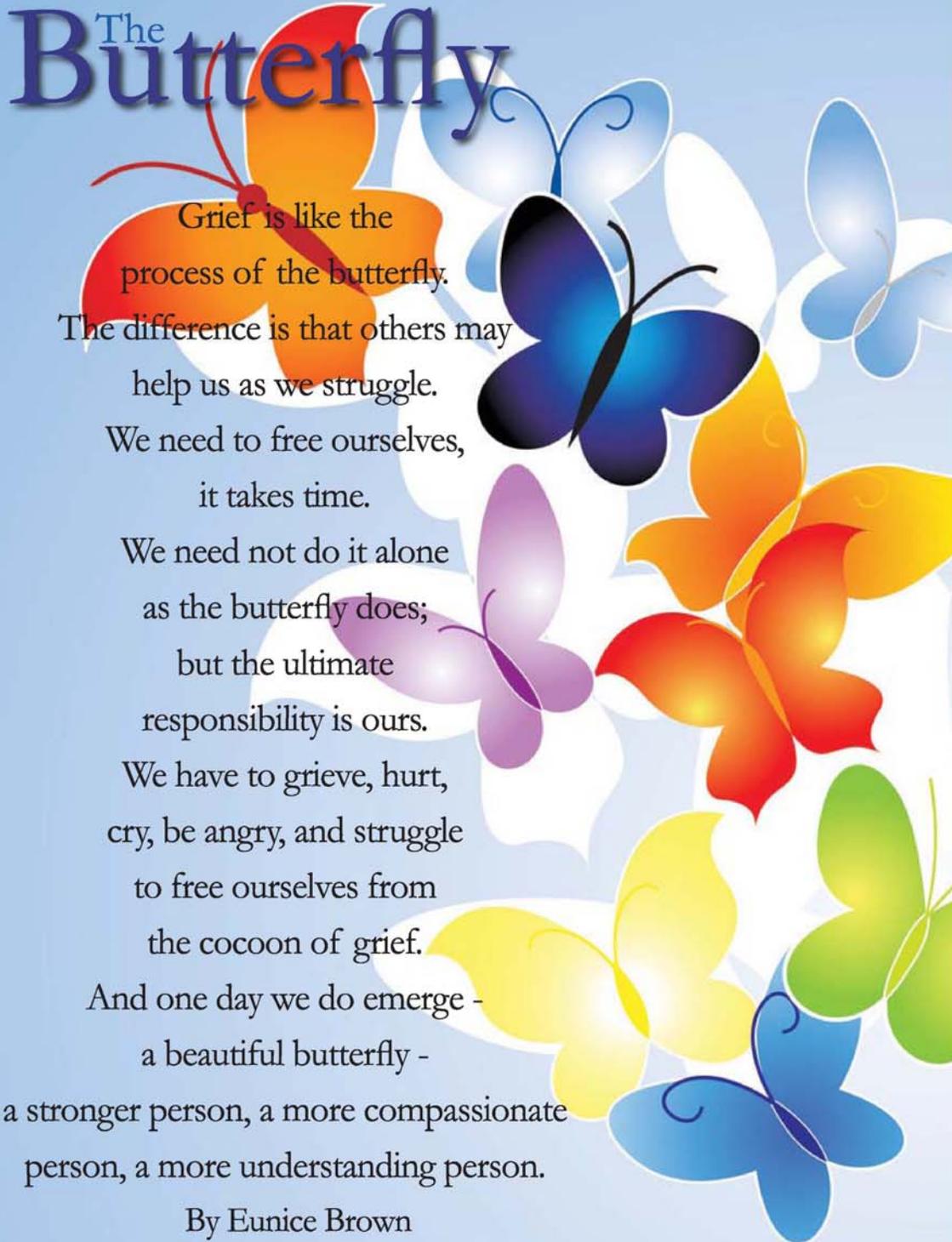
- Pass out HUGGS “Grief Work” book handout. Give each participant the Butterfly poem.

When we can't dream any longer, we die.

Emma Goldman



The Butterfly



Grief is like the
process of the butterfly.
The difference is that others may
help us as we struggle.
We need to free ourselves,
it takes time.
We need not do it alone
as the butterfly does;
but the ultimate
responsibility is ours.
We have to grieve, hurt,
cry, be angry, and struggle
to free ourselves from
the cocoon of grief.
And one day we do emerge -
a beautiful butterfly -
a stronger person, a more compassionate
person, a more understanding person.

By Eunice Brown

Week Four

INTERPRETATION

SUPPLIES

- Nametags
- Stone hearts
- Tissues & wastebaskets
- Target of **I**ntention
- Candle-holders & matches
- Large pad on stand & markers
- Camera
- HUGGS Grief Work book handouts

ROOM SET-UP

- Chairs are arranged in a circle.
- The Target of **I**ntention is accessible.
- There is a table with the candle-holders made by each participant.
- A large pad of paper on a stand is set up near a Facilitators' chair.

WEEKLY OPENING RITUAL

- As participants walk in, each is warmly greeted by a Facilitator and is given her nametag and a small stone heart she can hold in her hand.
- Each participant moves her name to the appropriate spot on our Target of **I**ntention prior to joining the circle—to show progress or setback.
- After everyone has arrived and joined the circle, each woman stands before her candle.

TELLING OF THIS WEEK'S OPENING STORY

Origin Unknown

Once a there was a man who was successful in everything he tried. He had a loving wife and family, and work for which he was famous. And yet, he just was not happy.

"I want to know Truth," he said to his wife.

"Then you should seek her," she replied. "Right after you put everything in my name, of course."

And so he did.

On his quest for Truth, he looked everywhere—up hills and down in valleys; in small villages and large towns; along the coast of the great wide sea and into dark, grim wastes and meadows lush with flowers. He looked for days and for weeks and for months.

And then one day, high atop a mountain, in a small cave, he found her.

Truth was an ancient old woman with but a single tooth left in her head. Her hair hung down her shoulders in three greasy strands. The skin on her face was the brown of old parchment and as dry, stretched thinly over prominent bones.

But when she signaled to him with a hand crabbed with age, her voice was low and lyrical and pure, and it was then he knew he had found Truth.

He stayed a year and a day with her, and he learned all that she had to teach. And when the year and a day was up, he stood at the mouth of the cave



Week Four

I NTERPRETATION

ready to leave for home.

My Lady Truth," he said, "you have taught me so much—I must do something for you before I leave for home."

Truth put her head to one side and considered. Then she raised an ancient finger.

OPENING STORY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What does this story say to you?
- With which character do you most-closely associate?
- What un-beautiful truths are you having to deal with regarding your loss?

ACTIVITY ONE: LETTER-WRITING

Facilitator will act as "Scribe" to jot down participants' suggestions on the large pad of paper.

PART ONE

- Participants work together as a group to compose a letter to people who don't understand the un-beautiful truths about their loss.
- Cover Words can be used to spark ideas.

PART TWO

- Participants work together to compose a letter to other women facing similar losses, offering suggestions about coping with those un-beautiful truths.
- NOTE: This activity can also be done individually, having each woman create her own letter and then sharing it with the group.

ACTIVITY TWO DISCUSSION: GOAL-SETTING AND GOAL-ACHIEVING

- Participants are asked to report on their progress toward achieving the goals set at last week's session—sharing what worked and what didn't.
- New goals are set in journals for next week's meeting.
- What tools have you acquired to reach the goal of wellness/wholeness?

WEEKLY CLOSING RITUAL

- At the end of the session, Facilitator invites each woman to stand before her candle and, either aloud or silently, make a wish for her child or tell her/him how much she/he is missed and loved or even say a prayer for the child—whatever would serve as both connection and closure for this group session. When this interaction is completed, each participant blows out the candle and, perhaps, wishes her child goodnight.
- Prior to exiting the room, each participant moves her name to the appropriate spot on our Target of *I*ntention—to show any changes in her progress.

TAKE HOME WORK

- Pass out HUGGS "Grief Work" book handout.

No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.

Eleanor Roosevelt



Week Five

INFORMATION

SUPPLIES

- Nametags
- Stone Hearts
- Tissues & Wastebaskets
- Target of *I*ntention
- Large pad on stand & markers
- Candle-holders & matches
- Paper, pencils & erasers
- Camera
- HUGGS Grief Workbook handouts

ROOM SET-UP

- Chairs are arranged in a circle.
- The Target of *I*ntention is accessible.
- There is a table with the candle-holders made by each participant.
- A large pad of paper on a stand is set up near a Facilitators' chair.
- There is a flat surface on which each participant can create her Loss Timeline.

WEEKLY OPENING RITUAL

- As participants walk in, each is warmly greeted by a Facilitator and is given a completed nametag that will be worn during each session and a small stone heart she can hold in her hand.
- Each participant moves her name to the appropriate spot on our Target of *I*ntention prior to joining the circle—to show progress or setback.
- After everyone has arrived and joined the circle, each woman stands before her candle.

TELLING THIS WEEK'S OPENING STORY

A Buddhist Tale

Long ago in India a young woman gave birth to a child. She loved the baby as dearly as life itself and yet the child sickened and eventually died. The mother refused to accept its death and begged all the healers in her village to give her a potion, a spell or a tonic—something to bring her child back to life.

At last she came, weeping, to the Buddha. He looked at the dead child and then nodded at the mother. "Yes," he said, "I can make you a potion to bring this child back to life, but the ingredient required is very hard to find."

"Don't worry," she promised. "I will find it".

"Bring me a mustard seed," he said.

"A mustard seed," she interrupted. "That will be easy!"

"A mustard seed from the house that has not known death," he continued.

The woman hurried off to the nearest household. She asked for mustard seed and they ran for their mustard seed supply. As they were about to hand her the tiny seed, she remembered to ask, "Your household has not suffered death, has it?"



Week Five

INFORMATION

"Oh yes, we lost both of our parents in the last three years" was their reply.

The woman hurried on to the next house, but the response was the same. "Yes, I lost my husband last year."

At every home the answer was repeated—people had lost children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives. There was not one household that had not known death.

Finally the woman stopped and looked at her child. Her baby was dead, like the other people who had been lost in her village. The tears welled up in her eyes, but now she could let them fall.—because she knew that losing and suffering are as common to people as mustard seed is to cooking.

Then, as we all must do, she returned home and began her grieving.

OPENING STORY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What does this story say to you?
- With what character do you identify?
- If you identify with the woman, at what point in the story do you see yourself?

ACTIVITY ONE: RECREATING A LOSS TIMELINE

- Chairs are moved around a table so everyone has a flat writing surface. Facilitator passes out one blank sheet of paper to each participant and a sharpened pencil with an eraser.
- Facilitator: Make a line horizontally across the page, about 2/3 from the top. On one end mark BIRTH, and on the opposite end mark CURRENT YEAR. Identify your most painful loss. Find its appropriate date point on your Loss Timeline and draw a vertical line from it up to the top of the page. Make a brief notation—one to three words—of what the loss was. Then go back to your earliest memories and begin marking down and briefly notating other losses, using the length of the vertical line for each loss to identify its degree of intensity.

ACTIVITY DISCUSSION POINTS:

Use whichever format would best suit the dynamic of the group to answer the following questions:

- What is your most painful loss? How have you handled your grief for that loss?
- What about the other losses you have identified—what pattern do you see to them/ how you grieved them?

FORMAT ONE

- Break group up in pairs to answer the questions, using story-form whenever possible:
- Share results with the larger group.

FORMAT TWO

- Work through the questions as a group, going around the circle for responses.

ACTIVITY TWO/DISCUSSION: GOAL-SETTING AND GOAL-ACHIEVING

Participant are asked to report on their progress toward achieving the goals set



Week Five

INFORMATION

- at last week's session—sharing what worked and what didn't.
- New goals are set in journals for next week's meeting.

WEEKLY CLOSING RITUAL

- At the end of the session, Facilitator invites each woman to stand before her candle and, either aloud or silently, make a wish for her child or tell her/him how much she/he is missed and loved or even say a prayer for the child—whatever would serve as both connection and closure for this group session. When this interaction is completed, each participant blows out the candle and, perhaps, wishes her child goodnight.
- Prior to exiting the room, each participant moves her name to the appropriate spot on our Target of **I**ntention—to show any changes in her progress.

TAKE HOME WORK

- Pass out HUGGS "Grief Work" book handout.



Living in the past is a dull and lonely business;
looking back strains the neck muscles,
causing you to bump into people not going your way.

Edna Ferber



Week Six

I INVOLVEMENT

SUPPLIES

- Nametags
- Stone hearts
- Tissues & wastebaskets
- Target of **I**ntention
- Candle-holders & matches
- Large writing pad on stand
- Colored markers
- Balloons
- Poster: "**I** Care for Myself by..."
- "**I** HOPE..." pages, pens/pencils
- Parting gifts
- Camera

ROOM SET-UP

- Chairs are arranged in a circle.
- The Target of **I**ntention is accessible.
- There is a table with the candle-holders made by each participant.
- A large pad of paper on a stand is set up near a Facilitators' chair.

WEEKLY OPENING RITUAL

- As participants walk in, each is warmly greeted by a Facilitator and is given a completed nametag that will be worn during each session and a small stone heart she can hold in her hand.
- Each participant moves her name to the appropriate spot on our Target of Intention prior to joining the circle—to show progress or setback..
- After everyone has arrived and joined the circle, each woman stands before her candle.
- While lighting it, she introduces herself first by her own name and then as the mother of the child to whom the candle is dedicated.

TELLING THIS WEEK'S OPENING STORY

A Tale from China

One day an elephant saw a hummingbird lying flat on its back on the ground. "What on earth are you doing, Hummingbird?" asked the elephant.

The hummingbird replied, "I heard that the sky might fall today. I am ready to do my best to hold it up."

The elephant laughed and mocked the tiny bird. "Do you think THOSE little feet could hold up the SKY?"

"Not alone," admitted the hummingbird. "But each of us must do what he can. And this is what I can do."

OPENING STORY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What does this story say to you?
- With which character do you identify?
- What are the things you are holding up like the hummingbird?



Week Six

INVOLVEMENT

ACTIVITY ONE: WHAT WE ARE HOLDING UP

- Facilitator writes down all the suggestions of things the women are holding up.
- Balloons are passed out and, working as a team, the women put those things they have listed on balloons—one suggestion per balloon.
- The balloons are inflated.
- Someone volunteers to be the juggler and goes to the center of the circle.
- Participants hand/toss her balloons in the order of importance until it is impossible for her to keep them all in the air.
- Participants begin to remove the balloons in the order of their LEAST importance.
- Option: Juggler can ask for those on the side to help her—giving to whomever she calls out the name of a real person in her life.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What particular balloons have you been juggling that you absolutely cannot handle?
- To whom can you toss those unmanageable balloons?
- How can you ask for help in a way that makes you seem overwhelmed rather than incompetent?
- How can the members of this support group help each other?
- What kind of support system do you currently have in place—and how can it be improved?
- What can you do in your life to eliminate unnecessary balloons?
- How can you use what you've learned here to make better choices?

ACTIVITY TWO: PRIORITIZING THOSE BALLOONS

- Facilitator asks participants for the order in which they would arrange the things they juggle on a regular basis and writes this list on the pad.
- Looking at the “**I Care for Myself by....**” **Concept Poster**, participants are asked to incorporate the weekly concepts into this list, NOT as things to make their lives harder but as tools to **make** them easier—in both the short-term and long-term.

FINAL ACTIVITY THREE/DISCUSSION: GOAL-SETTING AND GOAL-ACHIEVING

- Participants are asked to report on their progress toward achieving the goals set at last week's session—sharing what worked and what didn't.
- One by one, each woman tells how she will continue to make goal setting a part of her life.

TAKE HOME WORK

- Pass out HUGGS “Grief Work” book handout.

FINAL CLOSING RITUAL

- Before lighting the candles for one last time, each woman is given the **I HOPE...** page that contains the following sentence starters:



Week Six

I INVOLVEMENT

For today, I hope _____.

For today, I feel _____.

For today, I believe _____.

For today, I know _____.

For today, I can _____.

For today, I am _____.

- Each woman fills in each of the blanks, thereby completing the sentences.
- At the end of the session, Facilitator invites each woman to stand before her candle and read her completed list aloud—and then, as always, she makes a wish for her child or tells her/him how much she/he is missed and loved or even says a prayer for the child, but this time it must be said aloud—thereby serving as both connection and closure for this activity. When this interaction is completed, each participant blows out the candle and wishes her child goodnight.
- Each participant then moves her name to the appropriate spot on our Target of Intention for one last time—to show where she is at this juncture in her journey of healing.
- Finally, the women then are asked to stand in a circle, holding hands. Each woman then thanks the group in her own way for the support she has received. Facilitator points out one significant sign of growth/progress the participant has made and congratulates her on fulfilling her obligation to this group.



When I look at the future,
it's so bright, it burns my eyes.

Oprah Winfrey



For today, I hope

For today, I feel



For today, I believe

For today, I know

For today, I can

For today, I am



Week Seven

ILLUMINATION

Special Sharing with Family/Friends Session

SUPPLIES

- Nametags
- Stone hearts
- Tissues & wastebaskets
- Target of *I*ntention
- Candle-holders & matches
- Strawberries and napkins
- Slinkies
- Evaluation forms and envelopes
- HUGGS Monthly Topics Schedule
- HUGGS CD and player

ROOM SET-UP

- Chairs are arranged in a circle.
- The Target of *I*ntention is set up near a Facilitator's chair.
- In the center of the circle is a table with one candle per participant.

SPECIAL OPENING RITUAL TO INCLUDE GUESTS

- Participants and guests walk in and are warmly greeted by a Facilitator. Each participant is given a completed nametag, and she, in turn, creates one for each of her guests.
- Participants introduce guests to the group.
- Interaction is encouraged between all in attendance during dinner—with the unspoken goal of creating a healing community.
- In the background, the HUGGS CD is softly played. (15-20 minutes)

TELLING THIS WEEK'S OPENING STORY

A Zen Tale

Buddha tells a parable about a man traveling across a field who encountered a tiger. He fled the tiger after him. Coming to a cliff, he caught hold of the root of a wild vine and swung himself down over the edge. The tiger sniffed at him from above. Trembling, the man looked down to where, far below, another tiger was waiting to eat him. Only the vine sustained him.

Two mice, one white and one black, little by little started to gnaw away the vine. The man saw a luscious strawberry near him. Grasping the vine with one hand, he plucked the strawberry with the other.

How sweet it tasted!

OPENING STORY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What does this story say to you?
- With what/whom in the story do you identify? How and when have you been EVERY character at different times? At the same time? Compare this to the many emotions you experience in grief..
- How is your journey of grief like this story?



Week Seven

ILLUMINATION

Special Sharing with Family/Friends Session

- What/Who is YOUR strawberry—the one thing in your life at this moment that offers you sweetness?
- What about this story empowers you? Illuminates you?

ACTIVITY ONE: EATING THE STRAWBERRY

Facilitator passes around strawberries and napkins.

- You have been on a journey of empowerment, leading to our “I” word for this week: Illumination. Think of it as the center of the Bull’s I. Your path toward it does not stop when our meetings end. Your quest for health, healing and wholeness goes on with the support of the family and friends you have with you tonight. As you look at these special people, you just might be seeing the strawberry that the man in our story saw as he clung to the vine. While the tigers above and below him continued to growl hungrily, he tasted the sweetness of what was before him at that moment. These people who are before you at this moment just might be YOUR sweetness. They are here to see that you keep hanging on.
- Thank you, families and friends, for your support and for coming tonight to taste a little of what this group has meant to the women who have participated in it. Everyone—please enjoy the strawberries and all the sweetness that is before you.

ACTIVITY TWO: THE YES-IT’S-NORMAL “SLINKINESS” OF GRIEF

Facilitator holds out a slinky for all to see and asks the following questions:

- If the man on the vine in tonight’s story was a slinky, how would he look?
- How do the emotions of grief compare to the stretching and recoiling of a slinky?
- Facilitator passes out slinkies and asks these questions:
- How do men and women handle grief differently?
- Using our slinkies to help us explain—how do stretching and recoiling feel for a woman?
- Using our slinkies to help us explain—how do stretching and recoiling feel for a man?
- So how do men and women coexist in grief, knowing they process their emotions and healing in different ways?

ACTIVITY THREE: CREATING A LEGACY OF HEALING

- Facilitator: The work you have done here has not just been for those participating in our Support Group. The lessons and the discoveries—the smiles and the tears—all of them have a value for those who will follow you as well. In our HUGGS Scrapbook, you have an opportunity to leave an encouraging, caring message to mothers just like you who will enter this program. Just like you, they will be sad, scared and confused—and in need of connection. Please take a moment to jot down a few words, a poem, a picture or whatever you wish to share that might offer them consolation on their journey toward empowerment and Illumination. Letting these grieving women know what this group has meant to you could mean the world to them. We thank you in advance for making a difference in their lives.

- NOTE: Passing the scrapbook around can be an ongoing activity



Week Seven

ILLUMINATION

Special Sharing with Family/Friends Session

throughout the evening or fifteen minutes can be set aside to complete the task.

ACTIVITY FOUR: REMEMBER THE CARING MESSAGES

Facilitator offers the following:

- Remember “**TIME**” contains the words **I** and **ME**.—“**I** take time to care for **me**.”
- Remember the **I Words** from each week as you continue your grief journey.
- Remember your **Food for Thought—I Care** messages to help you reach wellness, wholeness and healing.
- Remember to regularly ask yourself: “Am **I** getting closer to the goal of **Illumination** or empowerment? “
- And finally, remember our **Target of Intention/Bull’s I**. Make any changes on your progress toward your goal before we close.

CLOSING CEREMONY

- At the end of this final session, Facilitator invites each woman to stand before her candle one last time and, either aloud or silently, make a wish for her child or tell her/him how much she/he is missed and loved or even say a prayer for the child—whatever would serve as both connection and closure for this final gathering. When this interaction is completed, each participant blows out the candle and, perhaps, wishes her child goodnight.

Facilitator closes the session with the following:

- Please take your candles to remind you that love burns as brightly as its flame—but you have the power to light it. Take your stone hearts to remind you that small things can have great meaning. And your butterflies—take them to remind you that you, too, have wings of delicacy and beauty. Use them to fly toward healing and hope.
- *(While handing out the HUGGS Monthly Topics Schedule)* We would love to see you at the HUGGS Monthly Topics throughout the year. It will be a great opportunity to check in and reconnect with each other and with yourselves.
- *(While handing out the Evaluation Forms with self-addressed, stamped envelopes)* Please take these Evaluation Forms home with you, please fill them out and please send them back. Your honest responses will help us reach our goal—to provide the best possible environment in which a group of grieving strangers can become a community of healing friends.
- *(While giving each mom her parting Caring Gift CD: “HUGGS Music To Inspire and Illuminate Your Spirit”)* Music stirs our hearts, our minds and our spirits. It gets us to dance, to sing and to fly. When you listen to this CD of “Our Greatest Hits,” may you soar as high as your most precious dream—and may your dream come true. It can—if you choose to make it happen.

Love the moment and the energy of the moment
will spread beyond all boundaries.

Corita Kent



Food for Thought:
Care for Myself by...



Artist: Connie Lehman, Douglas County Health Department

The Food for Thought Section was created by the Douglas County Health Department of Omaha, Nebraska. Though the sharing of a nourishing meal filled with healthy food and healthful tips, a safe environment is established for the participants. Seeds of trust are planted that will later blossom into improved self-care, better life-choices, and a true opportunity for preconception health, hope and healing.

Appendix



I Care for Myself by...

Embracing Wellness in the Midst of Brokenness

Week One

SUPPLIES

- CD Music/ CD player
- Body puzzle
- Bottle of glue
- 4 TIME cards
- 4 sets of letters spelling “TIME”
- 4 “I” cards
- **I care for myself** card
- A watch with a second hand

CARING GIFT FOR EACH PARTICIPANT

- Gift bag
- Stress balls
- Bubbles
- A variety of clay hearts for display on the dining and HUGGS table

ROOM SET-UP

Choose a dinner theme for a healthy evening meal and use music and décor to create a warm and inviting atmosphere conducive to a woman’s self discovery.

FIRST WEEK WELCOMING RITUAL

- Participants are warmly greeted at door and asked to double check the accuracy of their personal information: name, mailing address and preferred phone number. Each participant is then asked to fill out a name tag for herself.
- Dinner is served buffet-style after check-in. Participants gather with their food at the “Food for Thought” dining table. After dinner participants will gather in the HUGGS meeting room for the group support session.
- Facilitator: Welcome to HUGGS (Healing Unresolved Grief Group Support). We come here tonight as part of a caring community—to walk with you in your grief on a healing journey. We have attempted to create a special space, a little “Room to Breathe”, where Moms can slow down, relax a bit and feel free to talk openly in a safe and comfortable place. This is your time—time to receive a little pampering and support as you meet with others that have had similar experiences of loss. Each week we will be serving you dinner as well as a few fun activities to learn more about ourselves and each other.

INTRODUCING THE WEEKLY I CARE CONCEPT

Facilitator:

- Tonight’s focus is **I Care for Myself by Embracing Wellness in the Midst of Brokenness**. In times of grief and loss, stress can play a major role. Life can easily get overwhelming, making it difficult to take time for YOU—yet there are many little ways to care for yourself that can make a big difference. What does it mean “to embrace wellness?” Define wellness as “caring for your whole self, the physical, mental and spiritual aspects of yourself”. All are interconnected and depend on each other to create a sense of wholeness or wellness.
- What does wellness look like? *(Use the Body Puzzle as a visual of wellness)* It is easy to see our physical body—we are most familiar with that aspect of ourselves. But where is the mind located on this body puzzle? What we



**I Care for Myself by...
Embracing Wellness
in the Midst of Brokenness**



Week One

believe to be true in our mind is a powerful influence located in every cell of our bodies. While we cannot always control what happens in our lives, we can control how we think and respond. And what about the spirit? Consider it as what gives us life—as the glue (*hold up glue bottle*) that holds everything together. When our spirit is broken, we lose some of our glue and we begin to fall apart (*open the body puzzle to demo how the parts fall apart*). So, what can a person do to embrace wellness during this time of brokenness?

- “Time heals all wounds” - “Time works wonders” - “Time is on your side.” These phrases can be hard to hear when you are grieving. (*Show the time word card*) Think of now as being your time— time for you to experience support and learn from one another.

ACTIVITY ONE: TIME



Duration: 5 minutes

- Facilitator tells the participants that the word “TIME” contains two other words. She asks them to work with a partner to find these words. The first two people who find “I” and “ME” get a prize.
- Facilitator then asks the partners to add one or two words of their own to make a sentence using all three of these words: “TIME,” “I” and “ME.” The first two people to make such a sentence get a prize. All the sentences created by the partners are then shared.
- Facilitator tells the participants “I take time for me” if not already mentioned.
- Note: Group sentences are saved by Facilitator to use in making decorative journal-size bookmarks as a gift for participants at next meeting.

ACTIVITY TWO: MUSICAL “I”

Duration: 5 minutes

- Participants are divided into groups of three or four. The Facilitator hands an **I card** to one member of each group. As the music plays, the **I card** is passed from person to person. When the music stops—every four to seven seconds—the one holding the **I card** completes the sentence out loud, “**I care for myself by taking time to**” This is continued until several “**I**” statements have been shared.
- Facilitator: All the ideas mentioned here are important ways of caring for your whole self. It is helpful to understand how our choices affect our physical, mental and spiritual health, especially in the midst of grief. Think about the daily choices you make, both now and beyond.

WEEKLY TRANSITION RITUAL

- Women are invited to stand, stretch, and move away from the “Food for Thought” dining table. They are then encouraged to take what they need to be comfortable as they gather together in the HUGGS meeting space for the group support session.



I Care for Myself by...

Developing One New Healthy Habit

Week Two

SUPPLIES

- Music/ CD player
- Poster :“I can not control the world ; I can only control how I respond to it”
- Flipchart
- Markers
- Grief Work book binder
- Grief Work handout
- I Care for Myself card
- Light bulb sheets
- Flashlight and extra batteries

CARING GIFT

- Sand pail and shovel with HUGGS logo
- Body lotion
- Bath salts
- Hand sanitizer
- Journal bookmarks from previous week
- Quote tag for sand pail: “You can not reach new lands without first losing sight of the shore for a very long time.”

ROOM SET-UP

Choose a dinner theme for a healthy evening meal and use music and décor to create a warm and inviting atmosphere conducive to a woman’s self-discovery.

WELCOMING RITUAL

Each participant is warmly greeted and asked to fill out a name tag for herself. Dinner is served buffet-style after check-in. Participants gather with their food at the “Food for Thought” dining table.

INTRODUCING THE WEEKLY I CARE CONCEPT

- Facilitator: Tonight’s focus is **I Care for Myself by Developing One New Healthy Habit**.
- Facilitator gives out and reviews the “I take time for me” journal bookmark that was created by participants at the last session.
- Facilitator shows the “I can not control the world; I can only control how I respond to it” poster as a reminder that—while life events are often out of our control—we do have control over our choices.

ACTIVITY ONE/DISCUSSION: CHOICES FOR BABY AND ME

Duration: 5 minutes

Facilitator asks the following question and records comments on the flipchart:

- “When you were pregnant, what were some of your healthy choices?”

After list is completed, Facilitator asks:

- Are any of these health choices or behaviors helpful for you Now and Beyond this time of grief?

ACTIVITY TWO: “COPING” CHOICES, DISCOVERING BURIED TREASURE

Duration: 5 minutes

- Facilitator: In times of stress or grief, some of these healthy ways of caring for



Care for Myself by... Developing One New Healthy Habit

Week Two

- ourselves may have disappeared. A grieving person may start smoking or drinking or over-eating as a way to cope with the pain and heartache.
- Facilitator asks the following questions and records comments on flipchart paper.
 - What were some of your coping behaviors or choices right after you lost your baby?
 - Are they still coping behaviors for you now?
 - Facilitator: Part of this healing journey is to identify a realistic goal for you—one healthful behavior that you could do for the next five weeks. We would like you to record your goal in your workbook as we will ask about your progress each week.
 - Facilitator suggests some simple examples of realistic goals, like taking a shower each morning or getting to the HUGGS group session each week.
 - Facilitator: Think of your goal as a behavior that could be helpful *Now and Beyond*.
 - Achieving a goal is like discovering buried treasure.
 - Facilitator: Think of the tools you need to achieve a goal.
 - What do you need to dig for buried treasure? (*Show tonight's caring gift.*)

ACTIVITY THREE: MUSICAL I #2

Duration: 5 minutes

- As in last week's game, participants are divided into groups of three or four. Music is played as the **I cards** are passed around in each group. The music stops every four to seven seconds. When it does, the persons with the **I cards** hold them up and complete this sentence for everyone to hear: "**I Care for Myself by Setting a Goal of...**" This activity is continued until several women have shared their completed sentences and the entire group has a greater sense of the potential goals an individual may set for herself.
- Facilitator: Once again you have come up with some terrific ideas for self-care. Picking goals and accomplishing them allow you to live in a world where things become possible and you are empowered to believe in yourself—*Now and Beyond*.

TRANSITION RITUAL

Women are invited to stand, stretch, and move away from the "Food for Thought" dining table. They are then encouraged to take what they need to be comfortable as they gather together in the HUGGS meeting space and light their candles to begin the group support session.



I Care for Myself by... Finding Strength Within



Week Three

SUPPLIES

- Box containing a different pair of silly glasses for each participant (Groucho Marx glasses, sunglasses, star, clown, alien, etc.)
- Flipchart paper and markers
- Positive affirmations handout
- CD player and HUGGS music
- Poster: Butterfly poem

CARING GIFTS

- Tea bags with HUGGS caring message
- Compact mirror
- Fortune cookies with positive affirmation messages
- Scrolls with HIDDEN DIVINITY
- Chopsticks
- Gift bag

ROOM SET-UP

Choose a dinner theme for a healthy evening meal and use music and décor to create a warm and inviting atmosphere conducive to a woman's self discovery.

WELCOMING RITUAL



Each participant is warmly greeted and asked to fill out a name tag for herself. Dinner is served buffet-style after check-in. Participants gather with their food at the "Food for Thought" dining table.

INTRODUCING THE WEEKLY I CARE CONCEPT

- Facilitator: The weekly focus is: **I care for myself by finding strength within.** When we suffer a loss, it affects how we see ourselves. It can be a very lonely time because the comfortable or familiar way we think about ourselves has changed. It can drastically affect our self esteem as well as the choices we make for ourselves.

ACTIVITY ONE: LOOKING WITHIN

Duration: 5 min

- Facilitator tells the following story:

HIDDEN DIVINITY

A Legend from India

They say there was once a time when all humans were gods. But those humans abused these rights so much... That Brahma decided to take their divinity from them. All of the gods discussed this matter. They must hide the human's divinity in a place... Where the humans would never find it. Some suggested the depths of the sea. But they knew humans would dive to the very bottom of the sea... And find it.



Care for Myself by... Finding Strength Within



Week Three

Some suggested the tops of the highest mountains.
Others were sure they would climb even there.
Perhaps in the heart of the earth?
Some suggested the tops of the highest mountains.
Others were sure they would climb even there.
Perhaps in the heart of the earth?
Humans were apt to burrow down and discover it there, too.
At last Brahma came up with a brilliant plan.
“We will place human divinity deep inside each human.
They will never think of looking there.”
The plan worked perfectly.
Humans climb mountains...
Dive into the ocean...
Burrow into the earth.
The race about from continent to continent...
Ever searching.
But few think to stand still...
And search deep within themselves.



OPENING STORY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- After the story, participants are asked to open a compact mirror and take some time to look closely at themselves—to look beyond the obvious
- Facilitator asks, “What do you see?” and records the comments on chart paper.
- Facilitator then challenges the women to look again—to notice themselves this time without judging if they look good or bad—to simply notice and accept wherever they might be at this time—to just be “Curious Georgette” instead of “Judge Judy.”

ACTIVITY TWO: FACES OF CHANGE

Duration: 5 minutes

- Facilitator: In times of grief, much changes in your life, and all you really know for sure is that you are also changing.
- Facilitator selects a pair of silly glasses from the box, puts them on and explains why she chose them. She then passes the box of glasses around the table and asks each woman to select a pair and explain her reason for choosing them.
- Facilitator invites participants to look closely at themselves again in the mirror, asking each woman the following questions:
 - What do you see now?
 - Do you see anything new that you did not notice the first time?
- Facilitator: Noticing the way we see and talk to ourselves helps us to better understand what thoughts we hold in our mind about “self.” Do your daily thoughts nurture or harm you?

ACTIVITY THREE: POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS

Duration: 5 minutes

- Facilitator: When recovering from grief, it is easy to find fault with ourselves and get disconnected from the real source of strength from within. It is



I Care for Myself by... Finding Strength Within

Week Three

important to reconnect by using positive self-talk. Here's an easy way to bring it into your life: Each of you has a Chinese fortune cookie. Please open it and look at the slip of paper inside. Taking turns, I would like each of you to look in the mirror while reading the self-affirmation message aloud. The next step is to take your message with you and put it up in a place where you can see it daily—either at home or at work. Every time it catches your eye, repeat the message out loud as a reminder of the importance of speaking to yourself in a positive, respectful way.

- Facilitator summarizes the main message: Repeat after me—I care for myself by finding strength from deep within. *(Everyone repeats the phrase together.)* And finally—take care not to underestimate the strength hidden inside each and every one of you.

TRANSITION RITUAL

Women are invited to stand, stretch, and move away from the “Food for Thought” dining table, They are then encouraged to get what they need before they gather together in the HUGGS meeting space and light their candles to begin the group support session.



I Care for Myself by...

Being Active

Week Four

SUPPLIES

- Active music for exercise/ CD player
 - Stretchy exercise bands
 - Juggling scarves
 - Jumping ropes
 - BMI Wall chart for display
- Handouts:
 - A physical activity booklet demonstrating how to exercise with stretch bands
 - List of physical activity ideas from the Now and Beyond program
 - “Are you a healthy weight?” chart from the Now and Beyond program

CARING GIFT

- Pedometer
 - Activity journal
 - Whistle safety necklace
- Gift bag
 - Jump rope or stretchy exercise band with exercise book or both

ROOM SET-UP

Choose a dinner theme for a healthy evening meal and use music and décor to create a warm and inviting atmosphere conducive to a woman’s self discovery.

WELCOMING RITUAL

Each participant is warmly greeted and asked to fill out a name tag for herself. Dinner is served buffet-style after check-in. Participants gather with their food at the “Food for Thought” dining table.

INTRODUCING THE WEEKLY I CARE CONCEPT

- Facilitator: Since tonight’s focus is “**I care**” for myself by being active,” we will be exploring a few fun ways to get exercise.
- Facilitator asks each participant if she already has an exercise plan or does a daily physical activity. Ask why they do or do not currently participate in a regular physical activity program. Relate physical activity to a caring way to help reduce stress and depression.

ACTIVITY ONE: JUGGLING SCARVES

Duration: 5 minutes

- Facilitator plays active music.
- Participants select scarves for juggling.
- Facilitator demonstrates how to juggle the scarves and everyone else joins in.
- Facilitator offers this activity as a fun and simple way for adults and children of all ages to be active together.

ACTIVITY TWO: EXERCISE BANDS

Duration: 5 minutes

- Each participant receives an exercise band and handout.
- Facilitator goes over several exercises on the handout which can be done



 Care for Myself by...
Being Active

Week Four

with the bands at home.

- Everyone can try different stretches using the bands.

ACTIVITY THREE: JUMP ROPE

Duration: 3minutes

- Each participant is asked to pick a jump rope and to jump—if possible—for the length of one active song. Facilitator asks participants for other ideas of simple ways to keep active when life is chaotic.
- Facilitator summarizes the overall message: Favorite physical activities vary with each individual. They should be fun and become a part of your daily life. Exercise doesn't have to cost a lot of money. You don't necessarily need to go to a fancy gym. In fact, each of you may pick one or two props that would be a good fit for the kind of activity you most enjoy to take home with you. Now, repeat together: **"I care for myself by being active."** Great—and like the advertisement says: Just do it!

TRANSITION RITUAL



Women are invited to stand, stretch, and take some deep breaths before they move away from the "Food for Thought" dining table. They are then encouraged to get what they need before they gather together in the HUGGS meeting space and light their candles to begin the group support session.



I Care for Myself by... Nourishing My Body



Week Five

SUPPLIES

- Handouts:
 - Reading labels for folic acid from the Now and Beyond program
 - Reading food label wall poster
- Food pyramid made into place mat
- Food models high in folic acid (i.e., nuts, enriched cereal, etc.)
- Bottle of wheat germ to try as a topping
- Ingredients to make several fruit smoothies for tasting
- Blender
- Ice
- Small cups

CARING GIFT

- Gift bag
- Recipe cards for smoothies
- Vitamins with folic acid

ROOM SET-UP

Choose a dinner theme for a healthy evening meal and use music and décor to create a warm and inviting atmosphere conducive to a woman's self discovery.

WELCOMING RITUAL

Each participant is warmly greeted and asked to fill out a name tag for themselves. Dinner is served buffet-style after check-in. Participants gather with their food at the "Food for Thought" dining table.

INTRODUCING THE WEEKLY **I** CARE CONCEPT

- Facilitator: Tonight's focus is "**I care for myself by nourishing my body.**" For each dinner session we have offered healthy food choices. We have tried to include foods rich in folic acid, like leafy greens, fruit, dried beans, or peas. Folic acid is an important B vitamin for Mom and baby as it helps to make new cells. It is especially important before and during pregnancy as it can prevent major birth defects of the brain and spine. Does anyone know how much folic acid is recommended daily? (400 mcg).
- Facilitator asks participants to note food pyramid placemats and check how their own food choices stack up..

ACTIVITY ONE: REFLECTION

Duration: 2 minutes

- Facilitator asks women to reflect on how they are eating now compared to when pregnant, what is different and what is the same.
- Answers are recorded on the flipchart.

ACTIVITY TWO: NUTRITION GAME

Duration: 10 minutes

Each participant will receive a slip of paper with an "**I care about myself by**" statement written on it. Each person will take a turn reading what is on her slip.



I Care for Myself by... Nourishing My Body



Week Five

- When a slip of paper is read, everyone who agrees with that statement stands up and says “I do too”. After each statement is read, the facilitator also briefly discusses or states a quick nutritional fact. (Note: Nutritional facts are in italics.)

“I CARE” STATEMENTS:

- **I care for myself by eating breakfast everyday.**
**Breakfast is really the most important meal of the day. It starts your day out right.*
- **I care for myself by taking a multivitamin everyday.**
**This is important because many of us do not receive all the nutrients our bodies need through the foods we eat. Women in their child-bearing years should also be taking a B vitamin with 400 mcg of folic acid (also seen as folate). This is the best source for folic acid. Look on the bottle to make sure your vitamins contain 400 mcg of folate. In fact, taking a vitamin with folate is easier for your body to absorb than getting it from your food. You will notice many foods now have added folate so remember to check labels. Folic acid is good for prevention of heart disease, stroke and colon cancer.*
- **I care for myself by drinking at least 4 glasses of water a day.**
**Drinking more water is best, but at minimum drink at least four eight-ounce glasses a day and work towards more. By the time you are thirsty, your body is already too dry. Headache is a common sign of dehydration.*
- **I care for myself by eating 100% whole wheat or whole grain bread.**
**100% whole wheat or whole grain provides more nutrients to your body. It also takes the body longer to break down so you feel full longer!*
- **I care for myself by trying not to drink caffeinated beverages.**
**Many of us drink too much caffeine. Try reducing caffeine by switching slowly to decaf products by going half regular/half decaf until you are caffeine-free.*
- **I care for myself by eating yogurt as a source of calcium.**
**Yogurt is an excellent source of calcium and is available in a number of low-fat varieties.*
- **I care for myself by eating dark green and orange vegetables.**
**Dark green and brightly colored vegetables tend to contain more nutrients. For example, choose spinach over iceberg lettuce.*
- **I care for myself by eating foods that have iron including lean red meat, dried fruit and iron-fortified cereal.**
**These are all excellent sources of iron. Your body needs iron to make blood. This is especially important during pregnancy because it helps your baby grow.*
- **I care for myself by making sure I eat the right portion size, eating only as many calories as I need.**
**This is important in maintaining or achieving a healthy weight. This is also especially true during pregnancy. Many think they are “eating for two” but that is not healthy for you or for a baby.*



Care for Myself by... Nourishing My Body



Week Five

Care for myself by eating fruit everyday.

**It is important to eat a variety of fresh fruit, limiting fruit juices. They do not fill you up and usually contain added sugars unless you buy 100% juice.*

ACTIVITY THREE: SELF-HELP TIPS

Duration: 3 minutes

- Facilitator asks women to share personal tips with each other about what helped them to make healthy food choices during times of exhaustion, stress or depression.
- Overall message: Eating healthy helps to lessen our stress as our body is able to function better. Folic acid is an especially important nutrient for women of child bearing age. The best way to get enough folic acid is to take a multivitamin with 400 mcg every day.

TRANSITION RITUAL

Women are invited to stand, stretch, and move away from the "Food for Thought" dining table. They are then encouraged to get what they need to be comfortable as they gather together in the HUGGS meeting space and light their candles to begin the group support session.



I Care for Myself by... **Choosing Caring Ways Now and Beyond**

Week Six

SUPPLIES

- Flipchart
- 8 pieces of construction paper folded in half; one card per answer with one of the 8 Universal Caring Ways printed inside each folded paper; paper answers taped on flipchart
- Markers
- Journals
- Music CD “We Fall Down” and player
- Watch with second hand
- Hand buzzer
- 12 Prizes for first and second place team members: Chicken Soup for the Soul books and key chains
- Handout: Now and Beyond checklist
- Now and Beyond table display

CARING GIFT

- MOD brochure: “Are You Ready for a Baby”
- Inspirational book
- Gift bag
- HUGGS key rings
- Congratulations balloon tied to gift bag

ROOM SET-UP

Choose a dinner theme for a healthy evening meal and use music and décor to create a warm and inviting atmosphere conducive to a woman’s self discovery.

WELCOMING RITUAL

Each participant is warmly greeted and asked to fill out a name tag for themselves. Dinner is served buffet style after check in. Participants gather with their food at the “Food for Thought” dining table.

INTRODUCING THE WEEKLY I CARE CONCEPT

- Facilitator: Tonight the focus is **I Care for Myself by Choosing Caring Ways Now and Beyond.** “Now and Beyond” is an education project with tools to help women plan for health prior to their next pregnancy. We have been using “Now and Beyond” throughout our Food for Thought series to help you to think about ways of achieving your best health before trying to get pregnant again.”

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY: FREDDIE’S STORY

Duration: 10 minutes

Facilitator introduces Freddie Gray as a special guest, featured in the DVD from the first night. Joining our group for the dinner session; Freddie will speak about her past as well as her present choices in life, for *Now and Beyond*.

ACTIVITY: “I CARE FOR MYSELF” WOMEN’S FEUD (LIKE FAMILY FEUD)

Duration: 10-20 minutes (Length will depend upon whether or not Freddie is in attendance.)

LONGER VERSION

- Group is divided into two teams.



- Each team selects a team name as well as one member to represent the team.
- A hand buzzer is placed in between the two team representatives.
- Facilitator: When 100 people around the world were surveyed about universal ways people care for their health, the top eight answers were.....?
- First person to hit the buzzer gets to start the round.
- Teams compete to identify *8 Universal Healthy Ways of Caring*.

8 Universal Healthy Ways of Caring

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diet• Music• Humor• Love | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Environment• Creative Purpose• Belief in Power beyond self• Exercise |
|---|---|

- Using an egg timer, players have one minute to respond with an answer. Each correct answer earns a card.
- If a team doesn't know or gives an incorrect answer at the end of the first minute, the other team can steal the card by choosing a correct answer in the next minute.
- Teams compete until all eight cards are awarded.
- Take home gifts are given to first and second place winners—but everyone is a winner simply by choosing to come to the HUGGS group.

SHORTER VERSION

- The game described above is played with one large group.
- An ending time is chosen.
- Participants shout out guesses, and must try to guess all eight within the time frame to win.

Facilitator summarizes “**I care for myself by making healthy choices *Now and Beyond*”**— Remember: You cannot possibly control everything that happens in your life. You DO have choices, however, and you can use those choices to plan for health for you and for your future family members.

TRANSITION RITUAL

Participants stand and stretch before they gather together in the HUGGS meeting space and light their candle to begin the group support session. They are asked to bring a pot luck dinner for all to share next week as support persons and family will be invited to join the final HUGGS session. The group is thanked for six weeks of participation and reminded of the value of their input. Freddie Gray is thanked for sharing her courage and wisdom as the final weekly Food for Thought concludes.

