

Appendix C

Small Group Care Plan for the Whole Journey

Caring for a friend facing a significant loss is something that we (as friends and church members) often start well. We bring meals and try to make sure the mundane burdens (like mowing the grass) are handled. But too often this ends after a couple of weeks, and when the care ends the grieving individual often feels like it is no longer acceptable to speak of their loss. The length of our care often becomes the unspoken time table for how long grief is socially acceptable to talk about.

Our care can be an immense blessing when we care well for the duration of the grieving process. The purpose of this appendix is to equip a small group to care for its members after a significant loss in a way that facilitates healthy grieving and demonstrates the present, patient love of Christ through His body, the church. Our goal would be to ensure that when their season of grief comes, every member of a small group would be able to echo this testimony:

“Reading back through journal entries made a decade earlier... I realized I had faced my greatest fear in life—to love and then to lose someone—with my faith intact. My wife’s death confirmed rather than threatened my faith because everything that followed conformed to what I had been taught to expect. My church family rallied to my aid, swamping me with love and care; my co-workers expressed deep sympathy and shouldered my responsibilities until I could return to work, and above all God made His presence and His comfort known in special ways (p. 14).”
Joseph Lehmann in “Believing in Hope” from *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* (Winter 1998).

A Standard Beginning

During the first couple of weeks the goal is simply to be a compassionate presence and to serve your friend by providing the mental-emotional space to process all the changes in his/her life. Your involvement at this stage is very practical, but with the awareness that practical involvement will likely create the opportunity to listen to where your friend is in that moment.

As a small group you will want to:

- Create a plan for who can bring meals for the first 1-2 weeks.
- Find out if there are household chores or lawn work that can be alleviated.
- Attend funeral
- Be aware of appointments (medical, legal, etc...) and provide support for these as needed.

Recording Important Dates

A significant loss has more than one significant date. For instance, in caring for someone who lost their spouse you would need to be aware of more than the date he/she died. You would also want to know birthday, anniversary, when they may have been planning a special get away, Father’s/Mother’s Day, etc... During the first year there will be more of these dates and special form of contact should be added on these dates to the care plan below.

In the second and third year, several of these dates will be points that you will want to let your friend know you remember the occasion. The tone of these interactions do not have to be somber. It often encouraging and freeing for someone to know that their loved one is not forgotten (there is a great of burden that comes with being someone’s sole-rememberer).

Someone in the small group will want to get the dates for the following occasions and share them with the group as needed or appropriate. Making a note or two about what your friend remembers or liked best about these dates with their loved one can be an effective way to care more meaningfully in the future.



- Birthday of Deceased: _____
- Due date for the unborn: _____
- Date of Death: _____
- Anniversary: _____
- Relevant or Favorite Holidays: _____
- Planned or Annual Trips / Events: _____
- Special Time to Loved One (i.e., Start of Hunting Season): _____
- Important Life Marker for Loved One (i.e., Start of School): _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

Advice for Grief Journey Companion:

The care plan below discusses someone serving as a “Grief Journey Companion” (GJC). This is a member of the group who will take the time to study through this “*Taking the Journey of Grief with Hope*” seminar with their friend. The GJC does not need to see themselves as a counselor, but as companion who ensures their friend does not have to travel this difficult terrain alone.

It is recommended the grieving friend and GJC meet every other week during the first five to six months of grief. In between meetings each person would watch the videos and study the material in this notebook. Between meetings the GJC would send their grieving friend messages of encouragement or prayers regarding the material being studied.

In addition the GJC would:

- Be available for phone calls when grief is particularly intense.
- Help the individual decide what to share with the small group during prayer times.
- Communicate needs to the small group.

Building a 12 Month Care Plan

The concept and some points of this care plan were adapted from Paul Tautges’ book *Comfort Those Who Grieve*.

Be sure to add to this care plan interaction on the special dates recorded above. While completing a chart like this may seem a bit formal, without it grief care tends only to last for a relatively short time or becomes the responsibility of only one person within the group.

Write the date of loss _____ / _____ / _____

When?	Date	What?	Who?
Week 1	Week of _____ / _____	Bring Meals Help with household chores Attend Funeral	Many Small Group Members
Week 2	Week of _____ / _____	Bring Meals Help with household chores	Many Small Group Members

Week 3	Week of ____ / ____	Two phone calls with specific questions* about grief.	_____
Week 4	Week of ____ / ____	Lunch or Dinner Offer to study through “ <i>Taking the Journey of Grief with Hope</i> ” together	Grief Journey Companion (GJC): commits to bi-monthly interaction for the next 6 months. _____
Week 5	Week of ____ / ____	Two e-mails containing prayers or words of encouragement	_____
Weeks 6	Week of ____ / ____	Discuss Step 1 material over visit or phone call.	GJC
Week 7	Week of ____ / ____	One phone call with specific questions* about grief.	_____
Week 8	Week of ____ / ____	Discuss Step 2 material over visit or phone call.	GJC
Week 9	Week of ____ / ____	Send a list of encouraging Scripture and a prayer.	Small Group Leader
Week 10	Week of ____ / ____	Discuss Step 3 material over visit or phone call.	GJC
Week 12	Week of ____ / ____	Discuss Step 4 material over visit or phone call.	GJC
Week 14	Week of ____ / ____	Discuss Step 5 material over visit or phone call.	GJC
Week 16	Week of ____ / ____	Discuss Step 6 material over visit or phone call.	GJC
Week 18	Week of ____ / ____	Discuss Step 7 material over visit or phone call.	GJC
Week 20	Week of ____ / ____	Discuss Step 8 material over visit or phone call.	GJC
Week 22	Week of ____ / ____	Discuss Step 9 material over visit or phone call.	GJC
Week 24	Week of ____ / ____	Phone call letting them know the small group wants to pray for them on the 6 month anniversary of their loss.	Small Group Leader
Week 26	Week of ____ / ____	During group prayer time ask for report on how the last 6 months have been and pray specifically for them.	Group as Whole
Month 7	_____	One point of person-to-person or voice-to-voice contact in which at least two specific questions* are asked about grieving process.	_____
Month 8	_____	One point of person-to-person or voice-to-voice contact in which at least two specific questions* are asked about grieving process.	_____

Month 9	_____	One point of person-to-person or voice-to-voice contact in which at least two specific questions* are asked about grieving process.	_____
Month 10	_____	One point of person-to-person or voice-to-voice contact in which at least two specific questions* are asked about grieving process.	_____
Month 11	_____	One point of person-to-person or voice-to-voice contact in which at least two specific questions* are asked about grieving process.	_____
Month 12	___/___/___	During group prayer time ask for report on how the last 1 year has been and pray specifically for them. The small group leader should talk to the person prior to this evening.	Group as Whole
After	When Applicable	The group should continue to keep up with key dates (i.e., birthday, anniversary, etc...) related to the loss in the second and third year after the loss. A card or phone call on these dates can remind the person they are not alone.	Group as Whole

* **Specific Questions:** Throughout the care plan it mentions periodic phone calls with “specific questions” about how your friend is doing in the grieving process. It is important to ask questions which give your friend the freedom to speak of his/her grief. Otherwise, they may feel awkward with answering a generic “how have you been doing?” with a reflection on their grief. If they simply say fine, you do not have press for a more involved response but it is good to follow up with, “I want you to know that if you have a rough day, you have someone to talk to.”

The following questions could be asked during these interactions:

- I know it has been [amount of time] since [name] passed, how are you doing? How is it different from where you expected to be at this point?
- Has there been anything that has reminded you of name [name] recently? How do you handle it when things like that arise?
- Last time we talked about your grief you asked me to pray for [blank], how is that going? Is there anything different I should be praying for now?
- Have you thought of any stories about [name] that you’ve wanted to share with someone lately? What kind of things have caused you to think of him/her most lately?
- What emotions has your grief expressed itself in lately? What do you attribute that to?
- I know [name] really enjoyed [blank] this time of year and they’ve been on my mind lately. How about you?