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BE NON-JUDGEMENTAL

This space for us group members to share about all parts of our lives, not just our grief, and we need to feel supported in doing so.

BE ADAPTABLE

Our lives do not fit neatly into a standardized curriculum. As group members, we would like input into the topics we discuss and the choice to change our minds if needed. We do not want to be under the impression that the group was not "successful" if we did not make it through the materials in the group manual.

SHARE COPING SKILLS

We are more than just our grief so please share coping strategies that we can use with/in other areas of our lives as well. Allow us opportunities to practice these different types of coping skills within the group.

ALLOW "INFORMAL" TIME TO BOND

As teen group members, we need time to communicate casually so we can build trust with one another on our terms. We may not feel comfortable jumping right into discussing our grief with folks we see as strangers. Also, offer/invite/create opportunities for peer-to-peer communication outside of the group that is not formally facilitated so we have peer support if we need/want it.

OFFER DIFFERENT WAYS TO EXPRESS OURSELVES

Include age-appropriate and interesting interactive activities during group as strictly using talk therapy is not effective and reads as 'clinical'. Consider incorporating music, have art tasks, writing prompts, etc. If someone does not want to paint, if that is the group activity, allow us to journal or write poetry instead.

SHARE MINDFULNESS STRATEGIES

Share things that we can do outside of group that we can use to align our minds and bodies (e.g., grounding activities) if needed.

INCLUDE "LIGHTER" ACTIVITIES

We may not want to start or end group by discussing heavy content that can take an emotional toll on us, so make sure to include activities and conversations that support why we are there but are not overly emotionally taxing.

GIVE US TIME

One day someone may be quiet and the next they may want to be social and share. We need time to figure out what our place is in the group.




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MAKE IT CLINICAL

We tend to close up when we feel we are being studied or observed and the only reason the facilitator is there is to help us get through the content and not to get to know us personally. Clinical can also look like: adults taking notes, only teaching the science about grief, diagnosing in group, or constantly bringing up diagnosis, when adults seem like they are just being paid to be there, asking "What would you do next time?" → "parenting" by proxy, always asking, "How do you feel?" and "Can you tell us more?"

CREATE A GROUP THAT THE GOAL IS TO GET THROUGH AND "COMPLETE"

Avoid chronological models that suggest a grief journey will be "over" in ten weeks. Grief is not linear, and our group should not make it seem like it is or will be.

FORCE VERBAL PARTICIPATION

Don't assume that quiet means that someone is not participating. My story is mine and I can share it how, when, and IF I am ready and want to.

ASSUME THE CAREGIVER IS "ALWAYS RIGHT"

Adults tend to align with other adults and the caregivers may not be interpreting what they are seeing the same way we are experiencing it.

MAKE IT A LECTURE

What is the purpose of this group? What are you saying when you think you need to tell a teen "How" to grieve correctly?

PUT GROUP MEMBERS ON THE SPOT WHEN TALKING ABOUT THE LOSS OR DEATH OF THEIR PERSON

Requiring that you must share who died, and maybe how, can put someone on the spot who is not ready to share this information. I will share about my person when I am ready, and I will share what information I feel supported in sharing.

TRY TO ACT LIKE A TEENAGER

Just be genuine and try to see through the teens' lens. We would rather have an adult who listens, supports, and believes us than one who tries to act young to connect with us.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR TEEN WORKGROUP MEMBERS:

This resource is important because many teens might be nervous, not know what to expect or have had a bad experience with grief support. We want you to use this list of what to do and what not to do to help you in your work with teens. It's been a while since you were a teenager and things have changed, so we want to show you what teens today want. We want to talk to someone who is personable and is there to learn about us. As an adult, if you are too clinical with us, we will pull back. We want you to know us as a whole person, not just our grief. Please use this list to make your work with teens as positive as possible.