

An interactive support group designed to help with the grieving process by using visual and thought-provoking tools. During these four sessions, the participants share their story, build memorials, compose letters, write in journals and develop goals with milestones. Designed for all types of losses, individuals and family members.



Facing the Mourning

Participant Manual

HeartLight
Center

What attendees are saying about *Facing the Mourning!*

"Facing the Mourning was the perfect name for the group sessions that I attended. Through effective instruction including specific assignments, I was challenged to face the overwhelming emotions that resulted from the loss of my precious wife. A very meaningful part of my experience was the compassion and support provided by other group members that had experienced similar losses. Overall, the instruction and support gave me hope that I could get through my personal despair."

Doug

"I wish I had taken this class two years earlier. It helped me to realize that most of the things I was feeling were normal for people trying to survive their grief, and it helped me find ways to work through some of my most difficult issues. I felt that I had great support from the facilitator as well as the other people taking the class. I would highly recommend Facing the Mourning to anyone who struggles with working through their bereavement whether it has been a few months, or a few years, as it did help me."

Joyce

"At first, I was debating of what letter to write to my husband; one of love, missing him, or anger. I thought about it and thought about it and so the strongest feeling that came out was the anger. Writing the letter to Chris brought out all the anger that I have built-up inside me. The exercise of writing the letter and to express myself among other widows definitely took a load off my chest."

Colleen

"Facing the Mourning went beyond book reading in helping me deal with my grief. It was a hands-on process of looking at my grief from so many different angles. It made me think, gave me something to do – it was a most helpful and unique experience."

June

"I attended the Face the Mourning class just a few months after my wife Carla's sudden, unexpected passing. I was a lost soul, feeling adrift at sea and not knowing where to go and what to do. I had so many unknown thoughts coming at me, it was quite frightening. I thought the class was "out of the box" for me, I wanted to attend it. I found it to be very difficult at times. I also found it to be incredibly important and special to me. The things I learned helped get me through that horrible storm. Some of the things I did in the class became Christmas presents for my family, things we'll cherish forever I have three (so far) memorials planned for my wife this year, thanks to the class I would highly recommend Face the Mourning to anyone trying to cope with the loss of a special loved one."

Wayne

Facing the Mourning©

A four-week hands-on grief support group, offering unique projects to help grievers cope with the loss of a loved one

Participant Manual

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FACING THE MOURNING OVERVIEW

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Facing the Mourning is an interactive support group for all ages, types of deaths, and length of grieving. The group is designed to help individuals with their personal grief journey by using visual and thought-provoking tools and examples. The facilitator will help the attendees by presenting different ideas, methods, and creative projects to help individuals and griever express their feelings. The attendees will have weekly assignments to support the concepts introduced in each session.

The four sessions:

- **Week 1 -- Keeping Your Memories Alive** -- Learn how to honor your loved one by building memorials. The group will discuss memorial ideas, share memorials that have already been created, and develop new ideas through group interaction.
- **Week 2 -- Letter Writing** -- Each attendee will write at least one letter to the person of their choice. It could be to your loved one, a family member to share more about the person you have lost, a religious figure, the medical staff, or whomever else. We will share the letters in our third group meeting.
- **Week 3 -- Journaling Your Thoughts** -- Learn how to journal your thoughts to recognize and emphasize progress through your grief journey.
- **Week 4 -- Goal Setting with Milestones** -- Learn how to set goals with milestones to track progress, the significance of milestones is to feel progress has been made towards the goal.

PROGRAM HISTORY

HeartLight Center opened in January of 2003, offering grief support groups and educational programs for griever and caregivers. After facilitating numerous programs, we surveyed our clients and the community for feedback and learned traditional support groups were helpful, but griever were looking for a “different” program to help them cope with their loss.

Facing the Mourning was developed and regularly updated using feedback from the attendees and the facilitators. In 2005, the material was first published, tested, and presented to numerous groups. After four years of presenting, receiving feedback and collecting examples, we updated the program to include new memorial examples, personal letters, and other material. The true measure of success has been the transformation of the attendees from the first session through the four weeks as they walk their own journey through grief.

GROUP FRAMEWORK

The group meets for four consecutive weeks for 1.5 hours followed by time for the attendees to interact casually with each other. It is recommended that the format be a “closed group”, as adding people after the first session interrupts the bonding and momentum causing the new attendee to feel displaced. The telling of the stories the first week sets the stage for the next three weeks.

The configuration of the group can be defined by type of death, or a combination of those who have lost a spouse/partner, parent, child, sibling, friend, co-worker, or any other loss. Those who are experiencing an anticipated loss will find the program very helpful in capturing the life of the one who is ill. The discussions, openness of the attendees, and results of the projects will inspire those who attend. Our experience has shown that groups bond well despite the variety of different kinds of losses experienced.

GROUP STRUCTURE

Who should attend?	What the attendee should expect?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An individual or family who has lost a loved one• An individual or family experiencing anticipatory death• A workgroup experiencing the loss of a co-worker• Caregivers who would like to facilitate the program or would like to learn new techniques for facilitating a grief group• A griever who has been grieving for more than 3 months or feels comfortable enough to engage with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A safe environment to share their story• Positive experience (although it will be emotionally difficult at times)• An opportunity to bond with others and build new friendships• An hour and a half of group interaction and approximately 30 minutes of casual interaction• Portions of sessions are challenging but part of the grief journey• A feeling of accomplishment