



Hello!

Thank you very much for your interest in Didacton's Grief Support course and for requesting your free sample lesson. You will find the example lesson after this introduction. We believe you will find it both informative as well as engaging, and that you will want to become part of our impressive group of Didacton trained Grief Support experts. Whether you are working as a professional in the field of Grief or if you simply want to have the tools you need to help and support others at their time of loss, our comprehensive, innovative training program will enable you to guide the bereaved as they work to achieve healthy healing.

We offer students the opportunity to learn the best techniques for successful grief support work. Classes are available online, with options for self-tuition / independent study (a term that means you study on your own, without assistance of a teacher/instructor), or a course of study that includes access to instructor feedback. As a student, you have the freedom to choose the program that best meets your needs and you can study anywhere on your laptop, computer, tablet or mobile phone. You also have the possibility to print the course. Medical personnel, teachers, coaches, funeral home professionals, psychologists and others can benefit from our detailed 20-lesson course, which covers every aspect of grief and grieving, from the actual loss to the recovery process.

After exploring the elements of this sample lesson, we are certain you will want to become part of our widely respected Didacton-educated grief specialist community. With the knowledge you possess as a Didacton-trained grief support professional, your options for a career in this noble and critical area will be greatly enhanced. You will be prepared for a most important and crucial task - guiding those who are lost in the sorrow of grief through their journey to healthy healing and walking with them into the sunlight of recovery. We would like to help you achieve the skills you need to accomplish this for yourself, your loved ones and those you will help through your future work. See the course page for all the details.

We offer the possibility of taking an exam at the end of the course. When you pass this exam you show that you possess the ability to apply the knowledge from this course. For this you are rewarded with our Certificate of Achievement.



The Grief Support course consists of the following 20 lessons:

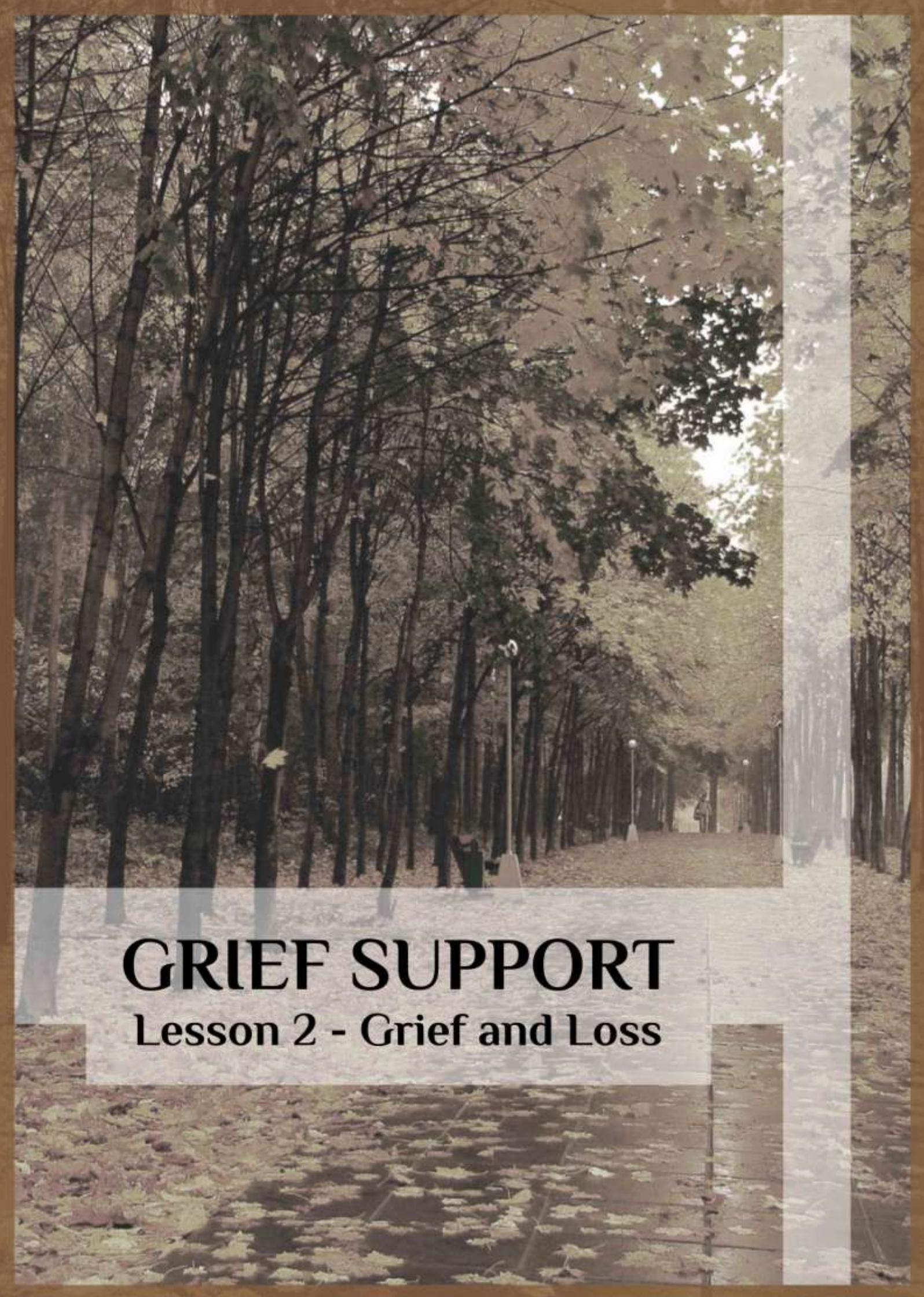
1	Attachment	11	Support groups and self help
2	Grief and loss (example lesson)	12	Grief and loss during childhood
3	Mourning	13	Grief and loss during adolescence
4	Uncomplicated and complicated grief	14	Grief in families
5	Coping with loss	15	Specific forms of loss
6	Emotions and resilience	16	Gender and grief
7	How to support someone who is grieving	17	Spirituality and grief
8	Grief counseling	18	Multicultural aspects of grief
9	Grief therapy	19	Ethics and grief
10	Group therapy	20	Grief of the helper

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The example lesson is next. Enjoy reading it. Whenever you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Regards,

The Didacton Team

A photograph of a tree-lined path in autumn. The path is paved and covered with fallen leaves. The trees are tall and thin, with some green and some yellowing leaves. A semi-transparent white box is overlaid on the bottom half of the image, containing the text.

GRIEF SUPPORT

Lesson 2 - Grief and Loss



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In this lesson we will discuss what grief, bereavement, and mourning are, as well as possible behavioral characteristics.

2.1 What is loss?

Many people may first think of grief and loss as it pertains to death, but loss can be much more than death, or even physical losses. Grief and loss can stem from a divorce, the end of a friendship, adoption, abortion, or a lifelong disability or condition. While those losses are related to people, loss and grief can even be experienced through moving, losing a job, or the loss of a pet. This list is not exhaustive and there are many other examples that could be included, as grief and loss are very personal experiences. Throughout these lessons, though, we will be looking at grief and loss through a very broad lens.

2.2 Grief, bereavement and mourning

Before we go any further let us first differentiate between grief, bereavement, and mourning. Grief is an emotional, physical, social, behavioral, and spiritual response to loss, most commonly associated with the loss of some form of attachment.

Bereavement is the period or state of loss. It encompasses the normal range of time in which one experiences grief related responses to any number or types of losses.

Mourning then encompasses the behavioral changes related to loss. Mourning is associated with the customs related to grief and loss. For example, in some cultures there is a specified number of days for certain activities. Other cultures may have certain religious practices or styles of dress when mourning.

It is important to note that normal is used in a very loose manner as grief, bereavement, and mourning are all highly dependent on personality, age, gender, family, spirituality, and culture. We will address those aspects of grief in later lessons.

In summary, grief is the reaction to the loss, bereavement is the period of loss, and mourning is represented by changes or actions after a loss.

2.3 What does grief look like?

There is not standard for what is normal or abnormal in grief as every person expresses feelings differently depending on many of the cultural factors mentioned earlier. Grief can be accompanied by a very quick and sudden deep sadness. It can be a low-level, continuous pain that seems endless. It can be very unexpected and rapid or it can be very subtle and dreadful. It is able to hit us all at once or come in waves, knocking us over when we think we have overcome it. Grief can be an ever



changing beast that is difficult to identify and to overcome. For some it can seem like nothing, for others it can seem life-ending, and for others, everything in between.

2.4 The dimensions of grief

Some researchers have stated that there are four dimensions to grief:

- Emotions
- Thoughts
- Behaviors
- Physical sensations

Emotional responses to grief can include sadness, anger, remorse, shame, loneliness, anxiety, shock, longing, lethargy, hopelessness, release, detachment, and helplessness.

A person's thought pattern can be disrupted through perseveration, delusions, hallucinations, confusion, mistrust, and doubt.

Many people may have significant changes in their normal behavior patterns. They may sleep more or less than normal, eat more or less than normal, seem hyperactive and distracted, cry often and randomly, have vivid dreams, avoid reminders of the loss, or becoming attached to places or things that remind the person of the loss. More severe and worrisome behaviors can be linked to drug and alcohol abuse, sexual risk-taking, and suicide.

Physical sensations may include emptiness, weakness, lack of energy, tension, increased sensitivity to light and sound, heart palpitations, and changes in breathing. People who are grieving may also get sick more often due to the weakened immune system caused by stress.

Others have stated that grief is more than just those four dimensions and also includes philosophical, religious, and social aspects.

Philosophical changes can include searching for a new meaning to life.

Religious aspects may include questioning one's belief in the current religion due to pain and suffering. Some people may accept some aspects of the religion and reject others in order to adapt the religion to fit into the new view of life the person has after the loss.

Social changes may include adding, altering, or losing relationships or types of relationships. Intimate relationships may change, friendships can end, or family relationships can become strained after some kind of loss. People can become easily attached to others, overly attached to others, or dismissive of others.



It is safe to say that loss of any kind can and usually does affect all aspects of a person's life.

2.5 Factors influencing grief

There are many factors that can influence how long people grieve and how they grieve. Some are internal factors while others are external factors. One factor is a person's normal disposition or personality. Some people are naturally calmer, while others are naturally more anxious. Grief, like other forms of stress reactions, is coped with in various ways based on someone's disposition. Other factors more specific to the loss are the relationship with the person or thing involved in the loss, whether the loss was expected or unexpected, whether the loss was experienced by the person or just heard about from another person, how the person received information about the loss, past experience with loss, culture, beliefs, and available supports.

2.6 Stages of grief

For many years it has been widely accepted that grief follows a particular path according to a stage model. Kübler-Ross is credited with creating the most well-known and widely used stage model for grief. She stated that people are going through five stages:

1. Denial
2. Anger
3. Bargaining
4. Depression
5. Acceptance

The stages may not be linear and they may be repeated many times, but it is thought that everyone goes through these five stages during the grief process.

In the first stage, denial, the person may deny that they encountered a loss or that there are any associated thoughts or feelings. Usually this step is viewed as a way to survive a very difficult situation. The person in this stage may feel numb and in shock, just trying to make it through each day.

After denial begins to fade and the person begins to start to accept feelings they may pass into the second stage, anger. In this stage, the person may be angry at the loss, him/herself, a high power, or anyone or anything that may be associated with the loss. Anger is often associated with the pain of the loss.

After anger starts to dissipate, a person enters a state of bargaining. The person may be caught in a series of what if questions about things that could have been done differently. The person may try to think of ways the loss can be reversed or may make a commitment to a high power or to oneself in order for the loss to be reversed.



In this stage, the person is seen to be stuck in the past, trying to figure out a way to change the outcome.

After a person has come to the realization that there is no bargain, they may enter the fourth stage, depression. In this stage the person accepts the reality of the situation and may begin to feel sad and/or lonely.

The last step in the process is acceptance. Acceptance is not necessarily being happy with the loss, but just being aware and accepting of the changes that loss has brought to the person's life. The person begins to make adjustments to life and live under a new normal.

2.6.1 Pros and cons of the stage model

For many years this model has been the accepted model for grief. Recently though this model has been questioned as some researchers have questioned whether this model encompasses all the complexities of grief as it relates to individual differences related to culture, age, attachment, and other aspects of life. For many it is viewed as so widely accepted because it gives people a sense of order and control at a time when life seems so out of control. It may feel better to think of grief as having stages to ease the anxiety of death and to have an endpoint in mind.

There are other stages models, such as one developed by Bowlby and Parkes, in which the person goes through four stages:

1. Shock
2. Searching
3. Disorientation
4. Resolution

Most stage models have similar stages, showing that there may be some validity to the commonness of some of the stages of grief.

This may lead to problems though as some who are grieving may feel like they have to go through those stages, in that order, and not go back. They may feel they are not grieving correctly if they do not follow the steps in that order and may force themselves into grieving in a way that seems unnatural to them.

While there are commonalities between people and how they grieve it is unwise to assume that all people grieve in stages or in a set format. In a stage model it is thought that when the final stage is reached, grief is over and everything is back to what it once was. But some feel that people may never fully recover from grief as future grief can activate previous losses.

While a stage model may have its merits, it is up to the individual to determine how he or she wishes to view grief and how it progresses.



2.7 Grief in adulthood

As in childhood and adolescence, which will be discussed in later lessons, the stage in adult development when loss takes place can affect its impact on a person's life. While most grief models were based on how adults grieve, even the models cannot capture all the complexities of adult grief.

Many adults have grief reactions that are the same across the lifespan, such as guilt, anger and confusion. These may come in cycles for years to come. What is more unique to the adult is that an adult usually has a better ability to self-reflect. Adults may review the loss and the relationship they had to what was lost. They may compare it to other losses or other times in life. This is more unique to adults but may also be seen in later adolescence. While children may be indirectly impacted by finances, adults may have to directly contend with changes in finances, depending on the kind of loss. At times of loss, adults may have to offer support to others and may neglect their own ways of grieving. Some adults may have children or other kinds of dependents that rely on them to continue on in the face of loss. In terms of loss, gender is an important factor. We will discuss this in later lessons, but it is important to note that gender norms and roles are more and more established as people get older. Adults may also have to cope with multiple losses at one time. For example, an adult may have to cope with a health issue, a change in job, different finances, differences in relationships, as well as other relatives getting older, sometimes all at the same time. They may react differently to a loss depending on what others kinds of losses they are currently struggling with.

2.8 Adult developmental stages and grief

2.8.1 Young adulthood – age 20 to 45

During this stage many people are dealing with intimacy and forming adult relationships, sometimes in relation to marriage and children. Another focus in this stage is professional and career development. Death may come more as a shock as many times, death is only expected in terms of older adults. Some kinds of specific loss during this time may be related to pregnancy or young children, such as abortion, miscarriage, and SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome). Some losses in this period may be losses unrelated to death such as changes in relationships due to relocation or changing jobs. People have to adjust to multiple partners before marriage or long term cohabitation. Losses may also be related to the change from child-adult relationships to adult-adult relationships with people who have been known from childhood into adulthood.



2.8.2 Middle adulthood – age 46 to 60

During this stage people focus on staying productive and supporting others (parents, children, grandchildren, and mentees). Usually at this stage people are forced to cope with the loss of their parents, if not to death than to a very significant medical issue that may change the nature of the relationship. They may also be struggling with issues of children getting older, resulting in a change in the relationship. Near the end of this time, people may start to focus on retirement and the subsequent losses related to no longer being employed.

2.8.3 Late adulthood - age 61 and above

In this stage adults are focused on the integration of their history, hopefully entering into a state of wholeness as they enter into very late adulthood. Many people in this stage have to cope with the losses of diminished health, mobility, and cognitive abilities. Many may also cope with the loss of a partner or other loved ones such as siblings or close friends.

2.9 Case example

Simona has recently started seeing her grief support worker, Emi. Simona has started to speak with Emi due to the loss of her home in a fire. Simona does not seem to understand what is happening to her. Emi tells Simona that what she is feeling is normal as many people are in shock when they first experience a loss. Emi explains to Simona that some people go through a process that starts with shock, denial, then anger, sadness, and acceptance. She explains that that is not always the order and that the process takes time but that some people are helped by knowing a process. Emi asks Simona about how she has been processing the loss and explains to her the differences between grief, bereavement, and mourning to help her begin to organize and understand the process and complexity of grief.

2.10 Summary

In this lesson you learned that grief is a normal and natural response to loss. It is an individual process that usually comes in waves and may take years to fully be at peace with. It is not a disorder or disease. It is not a sign of weakness. You also learned about the stage models of grief as well as grief responses in adulthood.

2.11 Self-reflection questions

2.11.1 What kinds of losses have you had in your life?

2.11.2 How do you think they impacted you?

2.11.3 Are there any losses you feel you have not resolved?



2.12 Content questions

True or false?

2.12.1 The dimensions of grief are emotions, thoughts, behaviors, physical sensations, and mental health.

2.12.2 The grief process is not linear.

Multiple choice questions

2.12.3 Criticisms of stages models include all of the following except:

- A. They do not take culture into consideration.
- B. It creates a false endpoint.
- C. They help people avoid thoughts of death.
- D. They make people feel they must grieve in a certain way.

2.12.4 In this stage people may have losses related to many transitions and not being stable in career or intimate relationships.

- A. All of adulthood
- B. Young adulthood
- C. Middle adulthood
- D. Late adulthood

The correct answers to the content questions are:

2.12.1 False

2.12.2 True

2.12.3 C

2.12.4 B

2.13 Personal assignment

Create a list of as many things as you consider to be losses.

2.14 Case Assignment

Paula's brother has died two weeks ago. She is coming to you for some help understanding grief. How would you describe grief, mourning, and bereavement to her in your own words? How would you describe the stages of grief?

Please hand in the case assignment for grading.