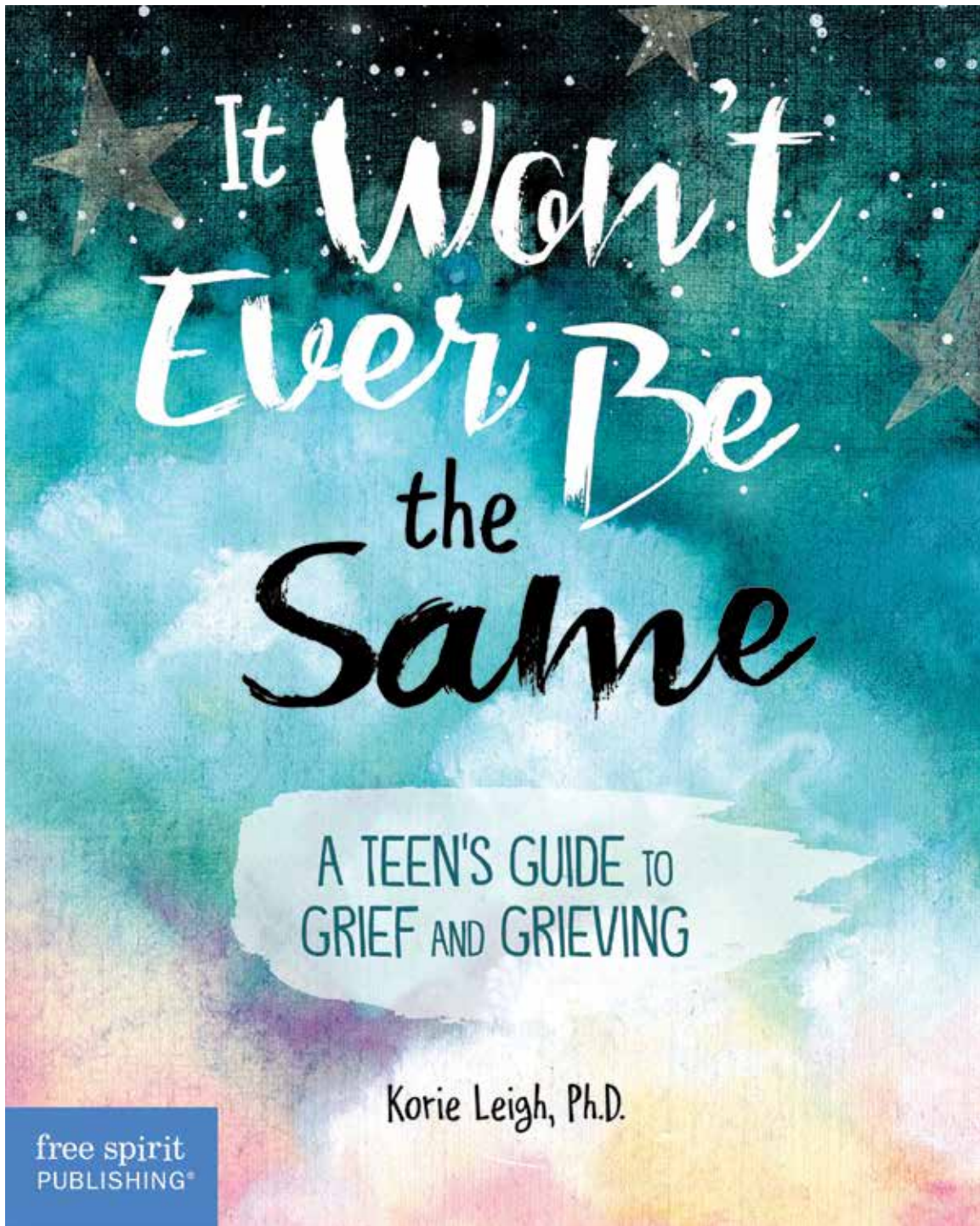
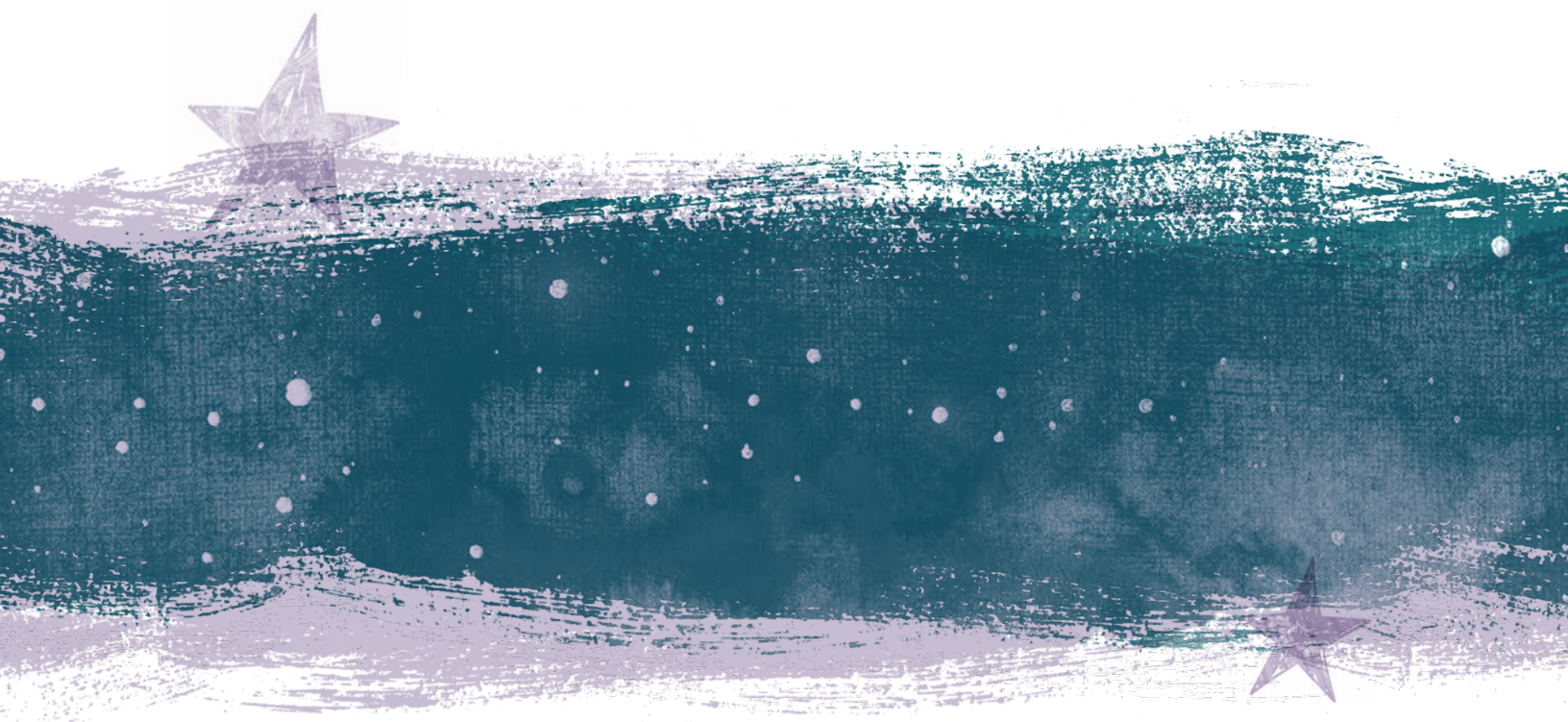


A COUNSELOR'S SUPPORT GROUP READING GUIDE FOR





Contents

A Note for School Counselors and Therapists	1
Support Group Session Structure and Sample Group Agreements.....	2
Sample Six-Week Outline.....	3
Grief-Focused Activities.....	4
My Grief Is Like . . . Therapeutic Game.....	4
Anger Target Activity.....	6
Getting REAL About Grief Activity	8



A Note for School Counselors and Therapists

While *It Won't Ever Be the Same* can be used by teens on their own, it can also be used by counselors and therapists in schools and private practice who are working with teens grieving a loss. The activities, suggestions, and questions throughout can be good tools to get teens thinking and talking about their grief and can provide you insight into their grief experiences.

If you are looking for a grief group curriculum, *It Won't Ever Be the Same* works for a group counseling setting as well. Choose which sections are most relevant to your group, and create your own support group activities by using or adapting the Reflect, Intention, Feel, and Give It a Try ideas.

The following pages share a sample structure and agreements for a grief support group using *It Won't Ever Be the Same* as a guide, a simple six-week outline, and a few additional ideas for grief-focused group games and activities.





Support Group Session Structure and Sample Group Agreements

When leading support groups, it's important to start by creating a meeting structure and group agreements. These help the group establish an environment of safety and trust. To create structure for a grief counseling group, it is generally helpful to have each meeting follow a similar flow. Here is an example of a meeting structure for a grief counseling group for tweens and teens:

- 1. Opening:** You may wish to open each session by discussing one of the prompts on pages 4–5 of this guide. You might have a different group member open each session by sharing a poem, song, quote, or meme to establish a starting point. Or, you may simply have everyone share one word to describe their grief right now. However you choose to open your meetings, make sure it is consistent from week to week.
- 2. Weekly Topic Reading:** Your group can read a section of the book together during group before discussing it, or you can assign the section to be read prior to group, then discuss during your meeting.
- 3. Activity:** Choose an activity from the book that aligns with your weekly topic and have each member in the group complete it individually. Alternatively, you may want to try one of the grief-focused group activities on pages 4–8 of this guide.
- 4. Group or Pair Sharing:** After the activity, invite group members to share their experiences or creations with a partner or the full group.
- 5. Closing:** You may close your groups by asking members to reflect on the day's session or share one word, image, color, song, or body movement to describes how they are feeling after the session. As with openings, be sure to make closings consistent from week to week.

The first meeting is a good time to work as a group to draft your group agreements. You may choose to do this as part of your opening or as your activity for the week. Your group's agreements might include things like this:

- It's okay to pass; you don't have to talk.
- Be respectful of others' grief.
- Don't give advice unless someone asks for it.
- Use "I" statements.



Sample Six-Week Outline

This sample six-week outline provides ideas for how to pace your support group when using *It Won't Ever Be the Same*. Page numbers in the outline refer to pages in the book. Each week's meeting should follow the same structure, with a consistent closing and opening and time for sharing in addition to your reading, discussion, and activity.

- Week 1—Death & Grief
 - Read: pages 11–19
 - Discuss: The Grief Wheel (pages 14–16) and the Reflect moment on page 19
 - Activity: Loss Lines (page 20–21)
- Week 2—Describing Grief & Navigating Grief Bursts
 - Read: pages 23–29
 - Discuss: Intention moment found on page 28
 - Activity: What Does Your Grief Look Like? (pages 30–31)
- Week 3—Grief in the Body & Grief Brain
 - Read: pages 38–41, 45–49, and 51–52
 - Discuss: Try 4/2/6 breathing as a group and discuss how it changes the way the body feels.
 - Activity: Body Mapping (page 50)
- Week 4—Navigating School & Friends
 - Read: pages 83–87
 - Discuss: Make a list of the most helpful and least helpful things people have said. Talk as a group about what is helpful to say to someone grieving a loss.
 - Activity: Support Bracelets (page 88)
- Week 5—Celebrating Special Days
 - Read: page 103–106
 - Discuss: Questions on pages 105–106
 - Activity: Magic Paper Letters (pages 107–108)
- Week 6—Creating Rituals & Continuing the Relationship
 - Read: pages 63–66 and 117–119
 - Discuss: Questions and prompts on pages 64–65
 - Activity: Sand Memories (pages 113–115)



Grief-Focused Activities

My Grief Is Like . . . Therapeutic Game

A therapeutic Jenga game can be a good way to open your grief groups or an option for the week's activity. You can use the prompts below or create your own that are appropriate for and specific to your group.

Materials:

- Jenga® game set
- printed prompts or markers to write prompts

Instructions:

1. Print and tape the sample prompts below to Jenga blocks or write them directly on the blocks. You can leave some blocks blank or write “your choice” and have group members fill in their own prompts when they pull those blocks.
2. Place the group into two teams. Teams take turns removing blocks from the tower, with a different team member pulling a block each time their team is up. Essentially, the full group is playing the standard Jenga game, with the added step of asking and answering the prompts along the way.
3. As each block is removed, the person who removes it answers the prompt and then invites other group members to answer as well.
4. Continue to play the game until the tower falls and one team “wins.”

Sample prompts:

- The thing I miss most about my loved one is . . .
- I want my parents to know . . .
- I want my friends to know . . .
- I want my teachers to know . . .
- Grief in my body feels like . . .
- Grief in my thoughts feels like . . .
- Grief in my emotions feels like . . .
- My friends help me by . . .
- Things people say that are not helpful are . . .
- Things people say that are helpful are . . .
- Things people do that are helpful are . . .
- Things people do that are not helpful are . . .

- A questions I still have about their death is . . .
- Something I don't understand about their death is . . .
- Ways in which I have changed since their death include . . .
- The person I was and the person I am are different because . . .
- Their favorite song was . . .
- Their favorite meal was . . .
- Their favorite place was . . .
- To feel close to them, I visit . . .
- The first time I understood what death meant, I . . .
- I wish other people understood _____ about grief.
- The hardest part about grief is . . .
- The most surprising thing about grief is . . .
- I wish I could have said _____ before they died.
- The parts of myself that have changed since my loss are . . .
- Social media gets _____ wrong about grief.
- Social media gets _____ right about grief.
- If I were to become a social media influencer it would be because . . .
- The purpose of grief is . . .





Anger Target Activity

It's normal to experience anger, confusion, and frustration during grief. Often, teens (and adults) need support in expressing these emotions. This activity is an expressive outlet for teens to do so.

Materials:

- large piece of butcher paper
- markers
- depending on your location and how messy you want to get you may use any of the following:
 - Variation 1: toilet paper; large bowl of water
 - Variation 2: tempera paints; several small/medium bowls; toilet paper
 - Variation 3: water balloons that break easily; tempera paints (optional)
- a place where getting messy is okay; outside is best

Instructions:

- Cut off a large piece of butcher paper.
- Using the markers, group members write things about their grief that make them feel angry or frustrated on the paper. One-word answers are completely fine.
- Fill out as much of the paper as possible with words. Then, follow instructions below for one of the variations of this activity.

- *Variation 1: Toilet Paper and Water*

- Tear off a handful of toilet paper and dip into a bowl of water. Get the paper completely soaked.
- Have group members throw handfuls of wet toilet paper at the butcher paper. Do this until each of the words has been saturated.
- Over time, the water will start to dissolve the paper and it will fall apart.

- *Variation 2: Toilet Paper and Paint*

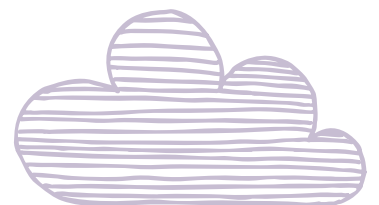
- Have group members choose which colors represent the words on the paper. For example, if one member wrote *alone* because they feel alone in their grief, ask them which color represents *alone*. Do that for each of the words.
- Mix the paint colors with water in small bowls. Each color should have its own bowl.
- Take a handful of toilet paper and dip it into the paint water. Make sure it's completely wet. Have the group members throw handfuls





of the wet, colorful toilet paper at the butcher paper. Do this until each of the words has been saturated.

- Over time, the water will start to dissolve the paper and it will fall apart.
- *Variation 3: Balloons*
 - Create paint water or use plain water.
 - Fill the balloons with the water and have group members throw them at the butcher paper. It is important to set the paper up against a hard surface so that the balloons break on contact.
 - Over time, the water will start to dissolve the paper and it will fall apart.
- After the butcher paper has been completely dissolved, talk with the teens about their experience. Here are some helpful questions you can ask:
 - Before the target toss, on a scale of 1 to 10, how angry, frustrated, sad, and so on were you feeling? How are you feeling, on a scale of 1 to 10, after the target toss?
 - What did you like about this game?
 - If you were to make your own game or change parts of this one, what would you do?
 - How do you think this game could be helpful for other young people grieving a death?





Getting REAL About Grief Activity

Giving greeting cards, specifically condolence cards, is a common way people show they care after a death. However, most cards can come off as insensitive and lack realness to young people. This activity helps group members create greeting cards that are made for them, by them.

Materials:

- For digital cards, use whatever computer programs are available to you and group members.
- For physical cards, gather the following materials:
 - blank cards
 - markers
 - collage materials (magazines, images, scissors, and glue)

Instructions:

- Decide whether the group will create digital or physical cards.
- Talk with the teens about cards they have received from people or things people have said that were not helpful.
- Instruct group members to create their own greeting cards. What do they wish someone would have said to them or written to them in a card?
- When everyone is finished, have group members share their cards and the messages within.

