

## Lesson 3—“Why do I feel so sad?”

**For leaders**—This lesson features the “grief journey.” Although it is only a brief introduction, it should be helpful for your members. The illustration in the lesson should help your members visualize the process that is involved when we grieve.

**Opening**—Prayer and song

**Looking back**—Ask members to share their experience of inviting family or friends to participate in one of the Lesson 2 calming exercises. Did their friends find it helpful? Any other thoughts or ideas?

### **Background on the grief journey**

- The “denial & anger” stage can last 1 to 6 months, maybe longer.
- The “no hope” stage can last for 6 to 18 months, maybe longer. Some people may remain in this stage for years. However, if people do not seem to be making any progress toward healing after two or three years, they may need additional support from a counselor, pastor, or doctor.
- The “false bridge” of trying to avoid the grief journey can actually keep the person from healing and may cause the healing process to take longer. People may mean well when they encourage those who are grieving to move on, but it really does exactly the opposite.

### **Leading the lesson**

- Choose different members to read through the lesson.
- Discuss each part of the grief journey illustration—ask members to give examples of things people may do or be feeling during each part of the cycle.
- Talk about the dangers of taking the “false bridge.”
- Ask members to share about losses they have experienced during this current crisis.

### **Discussion**

- Read the section “things that can help us grieve.” Have members share about some of the things that are mentioned in the section.
- Ask members to think about other ways that they can help people grieve.
- Discuss the “For Reflection” questions.

**“What Helps Children”**—Read through this section and discuss each part.

- Discuss things that have been going on in your childrens’ lives.
- Discuss details specific to teenagers.
- Share ideas that members have used with their children & teens during this crisis.
- Encourage parents to go through the booklet, or parts of the booklet, with their children.

**Closing**—Prayer and song



### 3. Why do I feel so sad?

#### The grief journey

Most people feel deep sadness at some time following a disaster. A traumatic experience brings with it many losses. Whenever we lose something or someone, it is normal to feel sad, and that feeling may last for a long time. It can be helpful to understand that this is part of the grieving process. The book of Ecclesiastes says:

*Everything on earth  
has its own time  
and its own season.  
There is a time  
for birth and death,  
planting and reaping,  
for killing and healing,  
destroying and building,  
for crying and laughing,  
weeping and dancing ...*

**ECCLESIASTES 3:1–4 CEV**



We need to grieve our losses to recover from them. Grieving is like going on a long journey.

This illustration shows how you might feel

along the way:



### 1. Neighborhood of Denial and Anger:

You may be in shock and feel numb. You may deny that the loss happened. You may be angry at others, at yourself, at God. You may often be thinking “if only” you had done this or that, you could have prevented the loss. You may forget to eat. You may cry a lot.

**2. Neighborhood of No Hope:** You may lack energy, and not want to get out of bed or care for yourself. You may feel there is no reason for living. You may want to end your life, or kill the pain with drugs, alcohol, or some other addiction. You may feel guilty for the loss, even though you could have done nothing to prevent it.

### 3. Neighborhood of New Beginnings:

You will feel new life inside you—energy, plans, hopes, wanting to be with others again. You remember what happened but don’t feel the pain like before.

People, your culture, or voices inside you may try to get you to skip the hard work of grieving. They may say things like, “Be strong!” “Don’t cry.” “Rejoice! Your loved one is with Jesus!” These things can lead you to try a shortcut. We refer to this as the **“false bridge”** because it promises to make your grieving shorter and less painful, but it will not bring you to the Neighborhood of New Beginnings.

To get to the Neighborhood of New Beginnings, you need to feel the pain of your losses.



Beginning again involves changing the parts of your old identity that are related to what you lost—for example, the mother of \_\_\_\_\_, the husband of \_\_\_\_\_, the owner of \_\_\_\_\_. Our minds are fast to understand this process, but our hearts are slow. It takes time for the wound to heal. Knowing that you are on a journey can help you be patient with yourself and others, but it won't take the pain away.

You may go back and forth between these neighborhoods as you grieve, and you may go at a different pace than others. This is normal. But if you feel like you have been stuck for a long time without making any progress, you may need help.

Grieving takes a lot of courage and energy. You may find you are exceptionally tired, like the person who wrote this psalm.

*I am worn out, O LORD; have pity on me!  
Give me strength;  
I am completely exhausted  
and my whole being is deeply troubled.  
How long, O LORD, will you wait to help me?  
Come and save me, LORD;  
in your mercy rescue me from death.  
I am worn out with grief;  
every night my bed is damp from my weeping;  
my pillow is soaked with tears.  
I can hardly see;  
my eyes are so swollen  
from the weeping caused by my enemies.  
Keep away from me, you evil people!  
The LORD hears my weeping.*

**PSALM 6:2–4, 6–8**



These things can help you grieve in a way that leads to healing:

- Talk about what happened and how it makes you feel. Express your anger and sadness.
- Understand that it is normal to grieve, and that the process takes time. You will not always feel like you do today, and your feelings may vary day to day.
- When you feel sad, think about what loss may be causing that feeling.
- If the body of a loved one cannot be recovered, arrange a service to publicly acknowledge the death and remember the person's life.
- Eventually, when you are ready, bring your pain to God. The more specific you can be about your losses, the better. For example, you may have lost a loved one, but also an income, companionship, respect, or security. Bring these losses to God one by one.

## **What helps children?**

- Reunite families if it is safe to do so.
- Reestablish routines if possible.
- Listen to children's pain. Help children talk about their pain by encouraging them to draw and then asking them to explain their drawings to you.
- Tell them the truth about the situation in simple terms. Children know more about what is going on around them than adults realize. They tend to fill in missing information in whatever way makes sense to them.
- Younger children often can express their feelings through play rather than by talking; it helps them work out the pain they experienced. Parents can ask them about what they are playing and how they feel about it.
- Especially in times of trouble, families should find some time each day to talk together, to pray together about what has happened, and to learn encouraging or comforting Bible passages.
- Help teachers and school administrators understand what has happened to the child.
- Teenagers have different needs. They may need some privacy or time with their peers, especially after a traumatic event.
- Teenagers need to feel useful, especially when their family is going through difficulties. Doing things that help their family survive can remind them that they are valuable.

## **For Reflection**

Have you started on the grief journey? What neighborhood do you find yourself in now?

Have you gotten stuck in one of the neighborhoods? Did you try to skip a neighborhood?

Who do you feel safe to talk with about your grief?