

## WORKSHOP PROGRAM - Dealing with loss and mourning

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**Time:** 10.00-13.00 o'clock or 10.00 – 16.00

**Audience:** For people that are faced with loss. For instance: of a loved one, a job, or health.

**Aim:** Acknowledging loss and the emotion it evokes. Allowing the truth to be true. Feeling gratitude for what was. Healing through sharing.

### About mourning

When we lose something precious to us, we encounter all sorts of feelings, aside from the missing. Sadness, anger, powerlessness and despondency. Since none other than ourselves are able to carry this loss for us, it often feels like a lonely journey, however many friends we might have. There is missing, sadness, anger, powerlessness and discouragement. This is also a lonesome journey, however many friends we might have around us. The amount of attention our surroundings offer us, decreases over time. People carry on with their lives and can't always find the understanding for the amount of time that is needed to mourn.

This often leads to well meaning advice on how to get the person who's mourning out of the darkness. Come on. Go on a walk more often. Visit a concert once. However well intended, it's counterproductive. This leads to the person who's mourning to no longer share how heavy they experience life. And they retreat quietly into their grotto. This is painful. It's so important for emotions to be acknowledged, known and shared.

To dare to go there where the pain feels greatest. And for the other to want to be there with you. Without it having to lead to anywhere specifically.

In this workshop you offer the space to those in mourning to bring to the forefront whatever is felt in that moment, without any drama but rather in all simplicity and with both feet on the ground. It's not only about sharing pain, but also about seeing the beauty and feeling gratitude for what once was.

### 10.00-10.30 o'clock

### Reception with coffee at outdoor location

- Short introductory round
- What is your name and what brings you here? (approx. 2 min p.p)
- Short explanation of the day's program
- Bathroom break. At the latest meeting 10.30 outside

10.30-11.00 o'clock

### Walking meditation (max 2,5 km)

**Aim:** Grounding. Relaxing. Connecting to the present moment.

- Narrate: We purposely walk at a **slower pace** and bring our attention only to our feet for a while. Be very aware of every step you take.
- **Remain silent for 3 minutes...**
- **When thoughts arise, that is completely fine.**
- Zodra je dit opmerkt, breng je je aandacht weer terug naar je
- voeten. As soon as you notice this, bring your attention back to your feet again.
- **Remain silent for 3 minutes...**
- Then **slowly and at your own pace** move your attention upwards. Via your calves, knees, thighs...
- Keep an open and curious mind. **All the sensations you encounter** in your body are welcome. Also the absence of feeling, or feeling distracted is welcome.
- **Remain silent for 3 minutes...**
- Now we bring the attention to the belly...chest.. lower back...upper back...shoulders.
- **Remain silent for 3 minutes...**
- And then your arms...hands...and finally your neck and head.
- **Remain silent for 3 minutes...**
- Then we become aware of what **sensations and emotions** we can register. This is a neutral observation. Nothing needs to go away or be different, or bigger or smaller. Everything that occurs we observe with a loving kindness. You simply let everything rest in itself.
- **Remain silent for 3 minutes...**
- We continue to walk in silence a few minutes, while trying to stay connected to your surroundings as intimately as possible.

11.00 – 11.15

### Come to a stand still and allow some time to feel:

- How are you standing here now?
- What's it like in your body right now?
- How is the connection to your surroundings?
- Once more: all feelings that surface are welcome. As well as the absence of feelings, or any feeling of restlessness.

**Invite the participants to share how the walk affected them.**

*Note: Make sure to face the group when you offer guidance, to make sure they are able to hear you. Sometimes you'll need to wait for the group to assemble before doing this.*

*Experience the meditation for yourself as well to avoid giving directions too hastily and to allow yourself to slow down together with the group.*

*When you notice some participants going too fast, kindly invite them to be curious what would happen when they would slow down a bit more.*

### 11.15-11.30

#### **Work form: connecting to your feelings through symbolism**

- Ask participants to connect (in thought) to the recent loss.
- **Invite them to feel how this loss affects them.**
- Ask them to look around: what symbolizes this **feeling**? So it's not a symbol for what you've lost, but a symbol for how it makes you feel. This can be sad, angry, powerless, fear or all of it.
- Invite them to stand or sit near the symbol.
- **Ask them to write down all the characteristics or the symbol** . For instance: The tree is bare with only a few thin branches at the top. It is surrounded by low shrubs and at the stem sits a bit of soft moss. Allow 5 minutes for this.
- Then ask them to write down **what these characteristics say about the feeling that this loss evokes**.
- Allow 5 mins for this too.
- Conclude the writing with the words: **And this is my truth at this moment.**

### 11.30 – 12.00

#### **Sharing in pairs of two, mindful listening**

- Have the group form pairs of two (if uneven, 1 group of 3)
- **Each participant is allowed max 10 min (7 with group of 3) to share their story through the symbol.**
- Rule: the other one only listens and at most asks a few open curious questions. For instance: does this moss add

anything to your feeling? **Emphasize that we don't want to fix anything, nor analyse, not look for recognition** (*ow yes, I have this too*, is not where we want to go).

- Explain that we probably all recognise how our surroundings often don't know what to do with our story and then offer well intentioned advice or pity, comfort, or trying to make us feel better. Or suddenly it's about the other person, that they went through something similar. **How painful this can be because often we simply need to share our story and are in need of being acknowledged in our feelings.**
- This means for the one who's listening this is also an **exercise in listening mindfully and intently.**
- Questions that arise such as: how do I go on? What should I do know? They don't need to be answered, but they do need to be heard.
- Here again, let the person who's sharing end by saying: **And this is my truth at this moment.**
- Change roles after 10 minutes, or sooner if it so happens.

## 12.00-12.15

### Sharing round

- Ask for a few spontaneous reactions based on the previous exercise Optionally respond with the following questions:
- What was it like to simply allow the truth of the moment to be as it is?
- How does that feel in your body?
- In case people are a bit shaky: What is happening inside of you now? Remain calm yourself, repeat the answer they gave you. For instance. You feel a bit dizzy? Ok, can you feel your feet? Shall we stamp our feet for a moment? How do you feel now?

## 12.15-12.45

### Silent walk back to the outside location

## 12.45-13.00

### Closing and last sharing round

- How are you standing here now? Answer in one word.

## END OF WORKSHOP or LUNCH

AFTERNOON PROGRAM - Dealing with loss and mourning

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14.00 – 14.15

**Short guided walking meditation**

14.15 – 14.45

**Symbol for your loss & feeling grateful**

- Invite the participants to find a symbol (something they can bring along) that represents what you've lost.
- Form pairs of two and allow each other 15 min each to share **all the beautiful memories** surrounding that loss.
- **As well as the things you're grateful for surrounding that loss.**
- The trainer leads the way, by walking at the front.

14.45 - 15.30 uur

**Sharing round & ritual**

- Allow each participant to share their most precious memory and what they are grateful for.
- **Then ask them to place the symbol in the middle of a circle, in such a way that it will shape a heart by the end of it, once all the participants have placed their symbol.**
- With a smaller group it might be necessary to add a few elements in order to shape a heart.
- Depending on the size of the group this may take more or less time.
- Come to a close by sharing a beautiful poem, a blessing or through singing one or several mantra's together.

15.30 - 15.45

**Walking back in silence to the outside location**

15.45 – 16.00

**Closing of the day by your own choice**

## Practical notes

- Make sure you know the area you walk in really well. Know that most work forms take place at one spot, which means that ultimately you only walk a few miles in the course of your day. And the walking meditations are also at a slow pace. A route of about 2,5 to 3 km is more than enough.
- I advise you to first do a pilot (free or at a reduced rate) before working with 'real' participants.
- Take all weather conditions into account by wearing appropriate gear, like a rain coat. (thermo underwear during colder months for instance!) Communicate this clearly to the participants. No such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing.
- Action or other outdoor shops have little sitting mats. This is a handy purchase to make for your group.
- Make sure there's water and snacks or ask your participants to bring their own.
- Choose a starting point where there's the possibility to have a coffee or go to the toilet. Especially when people come from far.