

Experiential Activities for Processing Grief

Grief can feel heavy, confusing, and isolating. Sometimes words alone don't capture the depth of what we carry. These activities use nature, creativity, ritual, and movement to help you connect with your feelings, memories, and healing process. *These activities are invitations, not assignments. Choose the ones that resonate and adapt them in ways that feel meaningful to you.*

NATURE & RITUAL

Memory Walk

- Take a slow walk outdoors.
- Collect small natural objects (stones, leaves, pinecones).
- With each item, think of a memory, feeling, or wish for your loved one or related to the person/place/thing that has been lost.
- At the end, arrange the items in a circle, spiral, or line to represent your journey.

Stone Release

- Hold several stones, each representing a burden or memory.
- Place them into a river, pond, or at the base of a tree, one at a time.
- As you release each stone, say aloud (or silently) what it holds.

Planting Memory

- Plant a flower, bulb, or tree as a living memorial.
- As you plant, speak or reflect on a memory or quality of your loved one.
- Tend to it as a symbol of ongoing connection.

ART & SYMBOL

Memory Collage

- Gather magazines, photos, or drawing supplies.
- Create a collage that represents your relationship, memories, or emotions.
- Let images and colors guide you more than words.

Tear Art

- Write difficult feelings or unspoken words on paper.
- Tear the paper into pieces.

- Use the torn pieces to create a new design or picture.

Stone Painting

- Choose a few stones.
- Paint them with words, colors, or symbols tied to memories.
- Keep them in a special place or return them to nature.

RITUAL & REFLECTION

Candle Memories

- Light a candle for each memory or quality you want to honor.
- Speak it aloud or silently reflect.
- Let the candles burn down naturally or blow them out when ready.

Water & Words

- Write thoughts or messages on dissolving paper.
- Place them in a bowl of water and watch them fade away.
- Notice any feelings of release or transformation.

Grief Box

- Decorate a box.
- Fill it with letters, notes, or small objects tied to your loved one.
- Open it when you want to connect or add new memories over time.

Stone Shrine Ritual (for group)

- Create a simple shrine with a small table, a bowl of water, and a dozen or more stones. Each person is invited to pick up a stone, speak to their sorrow, and then place the stone in the water. As the stones gather, they become a visual reminder that grief is shared and that none of us are alone in it.
- When grief is hidden or sequestered, we may begin to believe something is wrong with us, which deepens the pain and turns it into shame. This ritual honors grief as a collective experience, one that connects rather than isolates.
- Afterward, the group carries the bowl of stones outside in a quiet procession. The stones are respectfully placed in nature - by the ocean, in a riverbed, under a tree, or on the earth. Over time, they'll be washed by rain, absorbed by roots, and returned to the soil. This symbolizes the natural movement of grief through seasons and the way our pain, when shared, becomes nourishment: for the earth, for those who came before us, and for new life to come.

Personal Stone Shrine (for individual)

- Set the Space: Arrange a bowl of water on a table/flat surface and place a handful of stones nearby. Take a few deep breaths and settle into your space.
- Name Your Sorrow: Pick up a stone. Hold it in your hand and speak to your grief, loss, or disappointment - aloud or silently. You might name the feeling, a memory, or something you wish you could release.
- Place the Stone: Gently place the stone in the water. Watch it join the others, forming a small gathering. Notice how your individual sorrow becomes part of a symbolic collection - a reminder that your experience is valid and natural.
- Reflect on Connection: Even though you are alone, seeing the stones gather can remind you that grief and sorrow are universal, and that holding them does not make you weak or broken.
- Return to Nature: When ready, take the bowl outside or find a natural spot (garden, riverbank, or even soil in a pot) and place the stones in the earth, water, or sand. Imagine your grief nourishing the natural world - like rain soaking into the soil or waves reshaping the shore. This symbolizes releasing, transformation, and the ongoing movement of life.

Optional Reflection: After placing the stones, pause and notice your body, your breath, and any shift in emotion. You might journal about what you felt during the ritual, or simply sit quietly for a few moments.

BODY & MOVEMENT

Burden Walk

- Place stones in a bag, each representing part of your grief.
- Take a walk, setting down stones one by one.
- Name (aloud or silently) what each stone represents.
- Notice the difference as the bag becomes lighter.

Grief Map

- On large paper, draw a “map” of your grief journey.
- Include rivers, valleys, mountains, or paths as symbols.
- Reflect on where you’ve been, where you are, and where you hope to go.

Memory Dance

- Play songs tied to your loved one or your emotions.
- Let your body move however it wants — freely, slowly, or with gestures.
- Allow grief to move through you physically.