



## LEADER'S GUIDE

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# How to Tell If Your Group Members Are *Healing*

At times you may wonder, “Are my group members making progress? How will I know if what we’re doing is working?” To help you answer those questions, throughout GriefShare you and your group members will hear about 6 signs of healing.\*



## 6 signs of healing

These 6 signs are processes that a grieving person will go through. They are evidence that group members are taking healthy steps forward.

### Accepting

Accepting the reality of their loss means acknowledging that even though they don’t want this, their loved one is not here anymore.

### Dealing with emotions

This involves learning how to deal with and respond to the emotions of grief in a helpful, God-honoring manner.

### Adjusting

Adjusting to a world without their loved one can mean learning new skills, taking on new roles, and thinking of themselves (and God) in new ways.

### Addressing questions

Working through questions about God’s character, His purposes, and eternity is a sign of healing (e.g., “Why did God allow this to happen?”).

### Continuing

Continuing life without forgetting their loved one means taking steps forward in a way that honors the memory of their loved one.

### Sharing comfort

Comforting others with the comfort they received from God is essential to their healing and the start of their new life (2 Cor. 1:3–4). (See page 10.)

As you come alongside your group members, you’ll notice that these processes won’t happen in any particular order, and your group members should address them as slowly as they need to—and expect to go through some of them repeatedly.

## Your role in helping people heal

Your job is to provide a safe and healthy group experience for participants. You can also help them by encouraging them when you see progress in the above areas and helping them better understand what healing looks like. (See the article “How Do I Know I’m Healing?” on participant guide p. ix.)

\* Many grief counselors recognize these signs as important, e.g., J. William Worden, *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy*, 4th ed. (New York: Springer Publishing, 2009) and Alan D. Wolfelt, *Understanding Your Grief* (Fort Collins, CO: Companion Press, 2003). However, GriefShare develops them from a biblical point of view.

# How GriefShare *Works*

GriefShare is a 13-session, Christ-centered grief support group program. Each session, you and your leadership team will meet for about 2 hours with a group of people who are grieving the death of someone close.

## 3-part design

GriefShare is built around three components, which work together to help group members get (and stay!) on the path of healing. When people are committed to all three parts, they experience the deepest levels of peace and healing possible through GriefShare.



### Video seminar

At each session you'll show a 30-minute video with valuable insights from Christian counselors, pastors, and teachers, as well as personal stories of people who've found healing after a loved one's death. The video sessions are available to view both on DVD and online ([griefshare.org/leaderzone/my/videos](http://griefshare.org/leaderzone/my/videos)).



### Small-group discussion

Group members will talk about what they learned on the video and any recent challenges. If your group is larger, you'll want to break into smaller discussion groups. Two leaders (a male and a female) per 6–8 members is best. You'll find discussion questions in the session agendas (pp. 14–39).



### Participant guide

This guide includes note-taking outlines for participants to use during the video seminars. Between meetings, participants will find personal help and encouragement as they go through the short exercises, journaling prompts, and Scriptures. Each participant should have a workbook.

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## Who should come & who should not

GriefShare is for adults (not teens or children) who are grieving the death of a family member or friend. At times, people grieving a pet, an estranged child, or a loved one with a chronic illness may ask to join your group. If this occurs, ask your pastor for help in redirecting them to a different ministry that can meet their needs.

# Online Training Is *Key*

Just like you need to know how to swim before jumping into a pool, you need to complete the online training on the LeaderZone before leading a group. The online training ([griefshare.org/leaderzone/training](https://griefshare.org/leaderzone/training)) is a series of 2- to 5-minute videos that will prepare you and your GriefShare volunteers for ministry to grieving people. And it's convenient: You can watch the videos on your phone, tablet, or computer, then pause when needed and pick up where you left off!

## Topics include:

- Starting GriefShare at your church
- Building a team of volunteers
- Fostering unity on your team
- Handling small-group challenges
- Creating a safe space for conversation
- And so much more

## Role-specific training

Once you and your ministry team have watched the Level 1 introductory videos, each volunteer can view the videos that correspond to their area of responsibility. Direct them to watch the Hospitality Training Plan, the Promotion Training Plan, or the Small-Group Facilitation Training Plan. **If you are leading the GriefShare ministry at your church, you should watch all the training modules.**

## Your leader's guide & online training go hand in hand

Your leader's guide introduces you to the tools you'll need to begin a GriefShare ministry. But you need more than an introduction! The online training thoroughly prepares you for the ins and outs of starting and running a GriefShare group ministry. Start training today.

[griefshare.org/leaderzone/training](https://griefshare.org/leaderzone/training)

# LeaderZone

## *The place to go for training, resources & support*

The LeaderZone ([griefshare.org/leaderzone](https://griefshare.org/leaderzone)) is your one-stop destination as a GriefShare leader. Everything you need to start and run a group is found here, and it's important that you familiarize yourself with what's available. Here are some highlights:



### Training

Your team will be equipped for grief ministry after viewing the online training videos. Ask your volunteers to complete the online training that pertains to their area of service at [griefshare.org/leaderzone/training](https://griefshare.org/leaderzone/training). (You'll find a downloadable guide that lists the training topics and how to view them.)



### Create & manage GriefShare groups

Ready to schedule your GriefShare group meetings? First, go to [griefshare.org/leaderzone/my](https://griefshare.org/leaderzone/my) and "Create a Group." You'll then enter the details of your group meeting (dates, time, location, etc.). You'll need to create a new group for every new 13-week group cycle you host.

Once you've created your group, here's what's available:

- **Registration:** People can find and register for your group online at [griefshare.org](https://griefshare.org) (there is a group search tool called "Find a Group"). You'll be able to grant and deny registration requests. You can send anyone a direct link to your registration page.
- **Participant workbooks:** You can set it up for people to order and receive their own books. You can also set up scholarships.
- **Attendance roster:** You'll have a record of attendees and volunteers, their contact info, and an easy way to print an attendance roster.
- **Participant access:** Your group members will be able to access the weekly videos and bonus content.



### Online groups

When you host an online group, more people can attend (shut-ins, those who don't drive, those who live out of the area, etc.)! Some leaders use online groups to minister to people around the world. For step-by-step instructions, visit [griefshare.org/leaderzone/online](https://griefshare.org/leaderzone/online).



### Video sessions

You can access the 13 video sessions online at [griefshare.org/leaderzone/my/videos](https://griefshare.org/leaderzone/my/videos) (these are the same videos found on the DVDs). Leaders should watch the session videos in advance of each meeting. Participants can catch up on missed sessions (or view in advance too). The videos can be viewed on a phone, tablet, or computer.



### Promotion, support & resources

- **Promotion:** Use the free videos, flyers, social media ads, newspaper ads, and bulletin inserts to spread the word about your group. [griefshare.org/leaderzone/promotion](https://griefshare.org/leaderzone/promotion)
- **Forum:** Connect with other GriefShare leaders, team members, and coaches. Ask questions; get support and tips! [griefshare.org/leaderzone/forum](https://griefshare.org/leaderzone/forum)
- **Library:** Find helpful articles, FAQ, forms, organizational tools, and checklists (e.g., budget planner, icebreakers, publicity planner, feedback forms). [griefshare.org/leaderzone/articles](https://griefshare.org/leaderzone/articles)
- **LeaderCare:** Take care of yourself as you serve. Get refreshed and supported by watching this video series made especially for leaders. [griefshare.org/leaderzone/leadercare](https://griefshare.org/leaderzone/leadercare)



### Need help? Contact a GriefShare coach

Call: 800-395-5755, 919-562-2112 (intl.)  
Email: [info@griefshare.org](mailto:info@griefshare.org)

# Build a *Team*

Imagine a football player trying to take on an opposing team all by himself. He wouldn't make it far before being defeated. In the same way, GriefShare isn't a solo sport. You need a team to be successful and avoid burnout. Here's why recruiting a team of men and women is vital for you and your group's well-being:

- **You'll have backup:** If someone is sick or running late, another leader can step in. Ecclesiastes 4:9–10a says, "Two are better than one ... If either of them falls down, one can help the other up."
- **The burden is shared:** Sharing responsibilities will lighten your load. In Exodus 18, Moses' father-in-law advised him to share the ministry responsibilities: "What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out."
- **You'll cover your bases:** Having both male and female team members makes it easier to support group members of each gender. And having multiple volunteers allows you to designate tasks such as promotion, snacks, greeting, and facilitating.

Need tips on how to build a team? View the online training sections on finding volunteers and read the helpful articles in the LeaderZone Library. Or call a coach!

## When & Where to *Meet*

Before promoting your group, you'll need to decide when and where to meet. The key to choosing the right meeting time is to assess the lifestyle of potential participants. For instance, many seniors don't drive after dark, so a daytime meeting might be best. If potential group members work, an evening meeting might be best. When scheduling, be sure to plan at least an hour for discussion after the 30-minute video (sample schedules, p. 13).

Most groups meet in the church that is hosting GriefShare. You could also use other public spaces (a library, school, or community center). Talk with your church leaders to determine if the church has appropriate liability coverage to hold meetings off church property. Also consider parking availability, size of the meeting space, and the fact that unknown people will likely be attending—given these three issues, meeting in a home is not advised.

# Promote Your Group

Each year, a half million people search the GriefShare website looking for groups. And that number continues to grow. People in your church and community are looking for help! So, it's important to promote your group. Here's where to start:

1. View the online training module on promotion, [griefshare.org/leaderzone/training](https://griefshare.org/leaderzone/training).
2. Check out the free promo resources, [griefshare.org/leaderzone/promotion](https://griefshare.org/leaderzone/promotion).

What's available?

- **Promo videos** to show during church, post on social media, and put on your church website.
- **Flyers** to print and distribute in your church and community.
- **Newspaper ads and emails** to send to local papers, online community event listings, doctors, funeral homes, and senior centers. Have a volunteer in charge of promotion!

## Group Guidelines

It's important to discuss group guidelines during your first group meeting and as newcomers join. Group members will feel more comfortable knowing there are expectations and boundaries regarding sharing, listening, giving advice, confidentiality, etc. You'll want to communicate that anyone who doesn't comply will be asked to leave.

For additional group guidelines and agreements, see the GriefShare participant guide (page viii) and the LeaderZone Library section "Forms (Samples)," [griefshare.org/leaderzone/articles](https://griefshare.org/leaderzone/articles). Feel free to include your own guidelines, and be sure to remain consistent with any church policies.

# 5 Tips for Leading *Discussions*

Whether you've led group discussions for years or it's your first time ever, these tips will help you create a supportive, more comfortable environment for your group members. (Remember, suggested discussion questions are provided for you in the session agendas, pp. 14–39.)

## 1. Simply facilitate—don't try to be a therapist

Don't think you have to try and answer everyone's questions or solve their problems. This is a support group, and you're here to encourage discussion, sharing, and learning. Your role during the discussion time is to facilitate, not to primarily teach, counsel, or serve as a group therapist.

## 2. Be okay with silence

Silence can be uncomfortable in a small group, but don't feel compelled to fill it yourself. Reassure the group members that they don't have to answer questions right away; they can take time to think, pray, and process before responding.

## 3. Encourage participation

Use eye contact to encourage people to talk. Hesitant talkers may need a verbal prompt: "Jen, it looks like you wanted to add something." But be careful not to pressure anyone to speak who is not ready. If one or more "talkers" start to monopolize discussion time, you can ask the next question and say, "Let's hear from others who have not had the opportunity to share much yet."

## 4. Watch body language to guide discussions

You'll want to keep your group on track, but sometimes a tangent can be good. It may get people to participate. Just be careful not to let it go too far or long. Watch people's eyes and posture. Being conscious of everyone's eye contact and body language can help you determine if the group is discussing something helpful or if you need to redirect the conversation.

## 5. Avoid debates

Remember, your role is facilitator. That means drawing people out and helping them share. Debates, theological or otherwise, aren't helpful for this process, so don't engage. If a debate begins between members, gently remind them that you're all there to support one another. Then, steer the conversation back to the original question.

Your group is ultimately in God's hands. Trust Him to meet the group's needs. Pray, pray, pray for your group, and be prepared to see God do amazing things!

For more helpful tips, refer to your online leader training, [griefshare.org/leaderzone/training](https://griefshare.org/leaderzone/training), or visit the LeaderZone Library, [griefshare.org/leaderzone/articles](https://griefshare.org/leaderzone/articles).

# Support and community for GriefShare *Leaders*



**Looking for ways to get connected? Want to keep up to date with the latest happenings in GriefShare?**

Visit [griefshare.org/leaderzone/connect](https://griefshare.org/leaderzone/connect) to find out how to:

- Get help from a GriefShare coach
- Learn about upcoming events for leaders
- Find ways to connect with other GriefShare leaders



## **Need help with your group? Contact a coach**

Have questions or concerns about your GriefShare group? Connect with a coach today. Our coaches have worked with thousands of leaders like you to successfully launch GriefShare ministries. The coaches provide support, encouragement, and answers as you start and run your group. They are ready to help! Reach a coach by phone at 800-395-5755 (919-562-2112, intl.) or email at [info@griefshare.org](mailto:info@griefshare.org). You can also schedule an appointment at [griefshare.org/leaderzone/appointment](https://griefshare.org/leaderzone/appointment).

## **LEADER** *Care*

**The care you need ... while you care for others.**

Leaders need support too! Find it at LeaderCare.

This short video series for GriefShare leaders offers tips to improve your mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health.

[griefshare.org/leaderzone/leadercare](https://griefshare.org/leaderzone/leadercare)



# If a Member Seems Suicidal ...

The trauma of loss can leave participants in a low emotional state. In some cases, you may worry that a group member is suicidal. If you're concerned by a participant's comments during your group meeting, take the following steps. (Note, first check with your church leadership to see if they have a protocol in place, and if these are the steps they'd like you to take.)

## 1. Acknowledge the person's struggle

- Say, "It seems like you're struggling right now. How would you feel about stepping into the other room with [co-leader] to talk things out?" If you don't have a co-leader, you could offer to speak with the person immediately following the discussion time.

## 2. Assess the situation

- Ask questions to determine the potential of suicide.

### Questions to help you assess the risk of suicide:<sup>1</sup>

If a person is suicidal, call 911. But if you're uncertain, try these questions. A "yes" to any of these questions from someone who is suicidal warrants a call for professional help:

- How urgent do your feelings of sadness get? Do you feel hopeless—like your situation will not get better?
- Do you feel that others would be better off if you weren't around?
- Have you gotten so low you've wished you were dead or thought of taking your life?
- Have you ever tried to harm yourself before, even in small ways?
- Do you have a plan to kill yourself? Have you gone through with any parts of it?

As a follow-up to this risk assessment, you might ask: "Is there anything that would keep you from harming yourself?" The goal would be to redirect the person's thinking in a more positive direction. In addition to talking about these positive factors, ask the person to write them down so that they can be discussed with a professional later.

## 3. Take action

- **If suicide seems imminent**, act quickly. Call 911 if the person is a threat to self or others. Call your church leadership to let them know the situation.
- **If a person isn't suicidal**, give the person the national **Suicide and Crisis Lifeline number: 988**. And let them know, "I can see you're struggling. I'm going to follow up with our church leadership to learn how best to help you and get you more support."
- **Contact your church staff** to let them know about the situation as soon as possible.

See the online training and the GriefShare LeaderZone Library for more information on what to do when a group member seems suicidal.

<sup>1</sup> S. J. Blumenthal and D. Kupfer, eds., *Suicide Over the Life Cycle* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 1991) and S. L. Dubovsky and M. P. Weissberg, *Clinical Psychiatry in Primary Care*, 3rd ed. (Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins, 1986).

# What Most Participants Overlook in Their *Healing*

Throughout GriefShare, your group members will hear about 6 signs of healing, which will help them determine if they're making healthy progress. These 6 points will help all your participants achieve a deeper level of healing. (See page viii of this book and page ix of the participant guide to understand the 6 points.)

As you communicate the 6 signs to your group members, keep in mind that one of these points (sharing the comfort they've received) is often overlooked. Yet, it is crucial for grieving people to experience.

## **Sharing the comfort they've received**

Reaching out to comfort and help other grieving people is a valuable part of the healing process. When participants begin to look outside themselves and desire to "share the comfort they've received," this is evidence of healing. An ideal way for them to give back is by helping with or (someday) possibly leading a GriefShare ministry.

Second Corinthians 1:3–4 says, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God."

As a leader you'll want to come alongside participants and help them gauge when they may be ready to move from the place of hurting to helping. (People who are fresh in grief will be more self-focused and in need of healing themselves, and rightly so! They aren't ready yet.)

## **What does "sharing the comfort" look like?**

Sharing the comfort you've received can be as simple as one group member sharing an encouraging word with another group member. It also includes volunteering for GriefShare.\* Let your group members know the many ways they can help out with the ministry: refreshments, greeter, parking lot attendant, and publicity. Down the road, they may be able to take on a leadership role in your GriefShare ministry or start a GriefShare ministry at another church.

## **Be on the lookout**

Always be looking for people in your group who are at a level of healing where they may make a good small-group facilitator. This process will ensure you always have help for your ministry. Now, you never want to rush people into serving before they are ready, so prayerfully continue to identify and come alongside potential facilitators with each new group. As a general rule, people should not facilitate a group until after the first anniversary of their most recent loss.

## A broader vision for healing

There are so many grieving folks not only in your area, but around the world. You can respond to this hurt and make an impact. As you communicate to your group members (when they are ready!) that healing involves giving back, they will begin to want to help others too. And when they volunteer to serve through GriefShare, this opens the door for even more groups to be available—and more people to experience the hope, comfort, and healing found in Christ.

(Even if your church isn't able to handle larger groups of leaders and participants, you'll still want to cultivate your group members for service. Perhaps in the future they will lead GriefShare in another church or host a group online, thus bringing more options for grieving people in your locale and other areas.)

## Next steps?

If you have group members who are ready and interested in leading, send them to **[griefshare.org/others](https://griefshare.org/others)**.

\* Other forms of service, beyond helping grievers, are also valuable for healing.

## Session 1

# Is This *Normal*?

### 1 Open the session – 25 min.

#### Start on time.

Welcome the participants

- Introduce your leadership team
- Briefly share your experience with grief
- Briefly describe the GriefShare program and what to expect each week
  - Video seminar – Show them the note-taking outlines in their books
  - Discussion time – Describe how this works
  - Participant guide – Show them the weekly take-home exercises
- Go over group guidelines (p. viii in the participant guide)
- Tell them about the free daily emails they can sign up for at [griefshare.org/my](https://griefshare.org/my)
- Have a leader pray

### 2 Watch video – 30 min.

## Overview

You'll help participants discover and discuss:

- **Grief is the natural response to significant loss.**
- **Grief is difficult because it affects all aspects of your life.**
- **Processing your grief takes time, but you will be okay.**



**Questions?** Contact a GriefShare coach.  
800-395-5755 (919-562-2112, intl.) or  
[info@griefshare.org](mailto:info@griefshare.org)

### 3 Discuss video – 60 min.

#### Icebreaker

**Ask: In 2–3 sentences, what is your name and your loss?** Icebreakers help group members relax (especially for online groups). Suggesting a number of sentences, or minutes, preserves time for the video discussion questions.

#### Tips for facilitating

- Keep your input to a minimum
- Focus on listening and asking good follow-up questions
- Make sure everyone has the opportunity to share

#### Video discussion questions

1. How has your grief affected the different aspects of your life?
2. What do you miss most about your loved one?
3. Which false notion about grief do you struggle with most? Why?
4. Which of the 6 signs of healing have you had some experience with or been working through? Share an example.
5. Which of the 6 signs of healing would give you the most relief? Why?



#### Did you know ...

The key to leading an effective group is talking less! Find more tips on page 7 and in the online training.

### 4 Wrap up – 5 min.

#### Close with prayer

A ministry team member should lead the prayer.

#### Remind participants ...

- **Go through the Session 1** exercises in the participant guide
- **Return for the next session** – Make a commitment to come at least 3 times!
- **Journals are available for purchase** at [griefshare.org/journal](http://griefshare.org/journal)

#### Important!

You must first “Create a Group” at [griefshare.org/leaderzone/my](http://griefshare.org/leaderzone/my) in order for group members to access the free bonus content at [griefshare.org/my](http://griefshare.org/my).