

# **DEALING WITH GRIEF: A TF-CBT WORKBOOK FOR TEENS**

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## Dealing with Grief: A TF-CBT Workbook for Teens

### Introduction

This workbook is a companion to *Dealing with Trauma: A TF-CBT Workbook for Teens* and is intended for adolescents (ages 12-18) who are experiencing traumatic grief as the result of the death of someone close to them. Adolescents may develop traumatic grief reactions when they lose a loved one in a sudden, violent, or unexpected manner (or any kind of death that is experienced as traumatic by the teen). Adolescents who exhibit significant trauma reactions in response to such a loss will benefit from completing the PRACTICE components of TF-CBT to address the trauma of the death. After resolving the traumatic aspect of the loss, many teens continue to have grief reactions such as sadness, anxiety, withdrawal, and/or physical complaints. The grief-focused components included in this workbook can be used to help adolescents work through their grief. For teens who have experienced multiple losses, they may choose to focus on the most significant loss for the activities in this workbook, or they may need to process their grief specific to more than one loss. Some activities can be repeated for multiple loved ones as needed.

As with *Dealing with Trauma: A TF-CBT Workbook for Teens*, this workbook is a resource that is intended to be used by mental health professionals who have been trained in Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. This workbook can be used as a guide to support implementation of the grief-focused components but should not be the only resource utilized in treatment. Books, videos, music, apps, games, and other interventions should be used to supplement the workbook. Some examples of suggested supplemental activities are included [in](#) this workbook. Therapists should use their clinical judgment and work in collaboration with their adolescent clients to decide which workbook activities should be utilized.

Prior to using this workbook, therapists should review Part III: The Grief-Focused Components of *Treating Trauma and Traumatic Grief in Children and Adolescents (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.)* by Cohen, Mannarino, and Deblinger (2017). The Grief-Focused Components are covered in this workbook as follows:

Grief Psychoeducation	Pages 3-6
Grieving the Loss and Resolving Ambivalent Feelings	Pages 7-9
Preserving Positive Memories	Pages 10-11
Redefining the Relationship	Pages 12-14
Treatment Review and Closure	Pages 15-18

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## Introduction: What is Grief?

Grief is a strong, sometimes overwhelming, emotion that people experience when they lose someone important to them, such as a family member or a friend. Grief is a normal reaction to loss and can make you feel extreme sadness, especially when the loss involves the death of someone you love. Some teens have lost more than one important person, and multiple losses can feel even more overwhelming. This workbook can be used to help you better understand grief and to help you grieve the person or people you have lost.

You can choose one of the videos about grief below and watch it with your therapist.

### Videos about Grief:

The Grieving Process: Coping with Death: <https://youtu.be/gsYL4PC0hyk>

5 Things About Grief No One Really Tells You: <https://youtu.be/8pT6LQ-mZ3k>

Grief Out Loud: Teens Talk About Loss: <https://youtu.be/qgrRoJyljeQ>

You can use the space below to draw or write your reactions to the video. Please share 2-3 things you related to and 2-3 things that you did not relate to, based on your own experience of grief.

You can also check out this tip sheet for grieving teens:

<https://www.dougy.org/assets/uploads/Tips-for-Grieving-Teens.pdf>

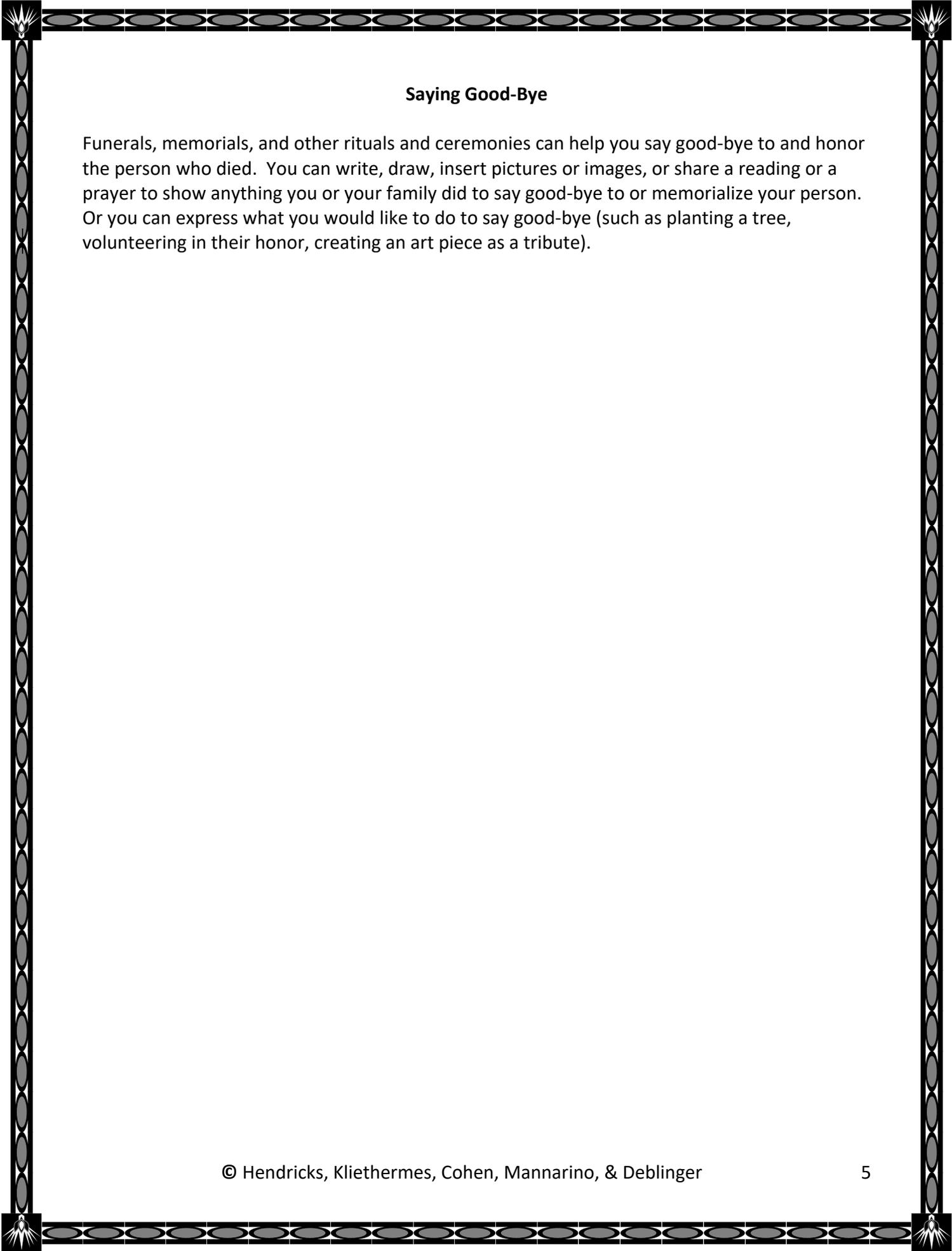
or this youth information sheet on child traumatic grief:

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/childhood-traumatic-grief-youth-information-sheet>

## What Does Your Grief Feel Like?

A lot of people have a hard time talking about death. It can be hard to know what to say or even how to feel. This video from the Dougy Center called “Grief Feels Like” has teens describing what their grief feels like: <https://youtu.be/amCx1lGcm4Q>.

What does your grief feel like? You can use words, images, GIFS, emojis, actions, songs, or movies to describe your grief.



## Saying Good-Bye

Funerals, memorials, and other rituals and ceremonies can help you say good-bye to and honor the person who died. You can write, draw, insert pictures or images, or share a reading or a prayer to show anything you or your family did to say good-bye to or memorialize your person. Or you can express what you would like to do to say good-bye (such as planting a tree, volunteering in their honor, creating an art piece as a tribute).

## What Happens After Death?

People have different ideas and beliefs and questions about what happens to a person after they die. These beliefs can be related to spirituality and/or culture. Sometimes beliefs change as you get older, and your beliefs may be the same or different from the beliefs of important people in your life (such as friends and family members). What do you think or hope happens after death? You can write it down here, draw or insert pictures, include lyrics from a song, make a collage, or just tell your therapist.

### **“What I Miss Most”**

You may be experiencing strong feelings because you miss doing things with your person, you miss things about them, and/or you miss things they used to do for you. You can draw/insert pictures or images or make a list, video, collage, or song about the things you miss the most about your person who died.

You can also talk with your therapist about things you will miss in the future (things you had hoped to do with your person but now will not be able to do with them) and what you can do to cope.

### **“What I Don’t Miss”**

Relationships are complicated, and there may be things about your person that you don’t miss and/or difficult feelings that you may have toward them (or that you had in the past). This is totally normal – many teens have mixed feelings about loved ones who die. You can talk, write, or draw about anything you don’t miss about your person here. You can write it in a song or poem or any way that you like to express yourself.

You can check out this podcast called Anger & Grief to hear Keyana talk about her anger toward her dad when he died of suicide: <https://www.dougy.org/news-media/podcasts/anger-grief>.

### **“I Wish I Could Tell Them ....”**

When someone dies, there can be a lot of things you wish to tell them (e.g., “I love you” or “you mean a lot to me”). It can help to write down all the things you wish to express to your person. This might include your feelings about them and the things you will miss and won’t miss. Another idea is to pretend that your person who died is sitting in an empty chair and to tell them all the things you wish to say to them, or to make a video message or card for them. You could also make a playlist of songs that express the things that you would like to tell them.

If your person could respond back to you, what do you think they would want to say to you?  
What do you think your person would wish for you now and in the future?

## Important Memories

When a loved one dies, thinking about special memories of them can help you feel better. What are some of the significant memories you have about your person or what are some meaningful stories that others have told you about them? There are many different ways to preserve and/or share these memories. Here are some ideas (or you and your therapist might have other ideas about how you would like to preserve or share important memories).

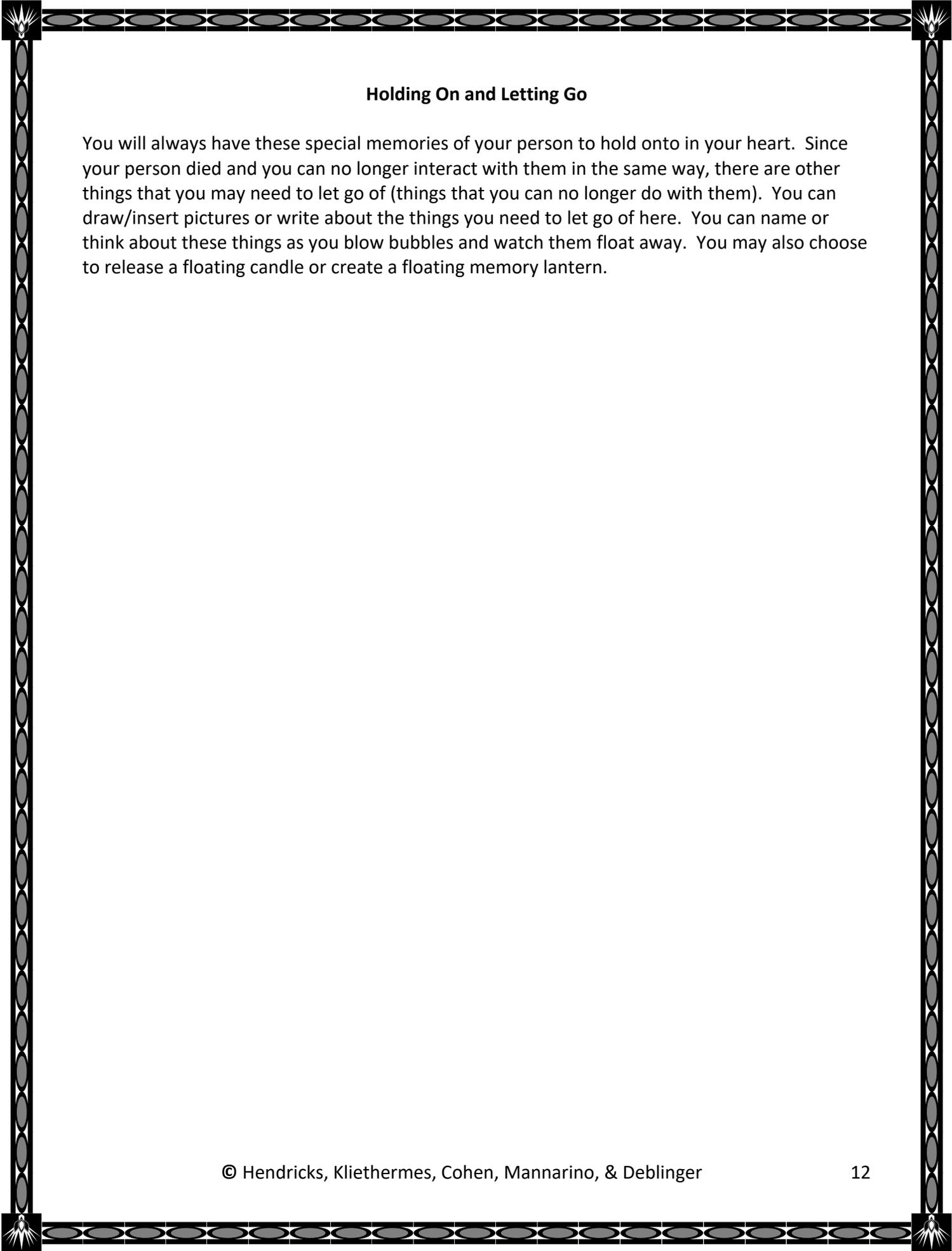
1. You can make a video, slideshow, collage, or scrapbook of meaningful memories you shared with your person. You can include drawings, photos, images, songs, and stories. You can ask other people to add pictures and/or stories or mementos (e.g., a special letter or card) if you like.
2. You can plan and hold a memorial service or make an altar to pay tribute to your person.
3. You and your friends or family can make tee shirts to honor the person who died.
4. You can create a Remembrance Box, Remembrance Flower, Beaded Memory Bracelet, Family Recipe Book, Time Capsule, or a Family Playlist (go to <https://www.dougy.org/resources/audience/teens?how=&who=&type=activities> to download these activities).

### **“I’ll Never Forget ...”**

When you are missing your person, it can be helpful to think about and imagine the most memorable or significant things about them. This could be:

- Some of the best, funniest, or most special times you had together
- An important thing your person gave you
- An important thing your person taught you
- What qualities you admire about your person

You can choose one of these to draw/insert images or write (in a song, poem, etc.) about in the space below.



## Holding On and Letting Go

You will always have these special memories of your person to hold onto in your heart. Since your person died and you can no longer interact with them in the same way, there are other things that you may need to let go of (things that you can no longer do with them). You can draw/insert pictures or write about the things you need to let go of here. You can name or think about these things as you blow bubbles and watch them float away. You may also choose to release a floating candle or create a floating memory lantern.

## Supports

It is important to remember that there are people who are currently in your life who can help and support you in different ways. You can make a list of all of your support people and name the kind of support they give you (e.g., when I need to talk, when I need to laugh). Or you can complete the activity below.

Create a Support Chain: <https://www.dougy.org/assets/uploads/documents/Support-Chain-Activity.pdf>

## Coping with Difficult Feelings

There may be times in your life when something or someone will remind you of your person who died or you may experience additional losses that trigger your grief. At these times, memories of your person may help you to cope by thinking about what guidance or support they would give you. Other times, experiences that remind you of your person may cause you to feel sad, overwhelmed, or suddenly upset. What coping skills could you use to manage difficult feelings that you may experience when reminded of the death of your person? List or draw/insert images of coping skills you could use below. You can also consider creating a “coping box” that includes a variety of things (including songs, apps, activities, and supports) that can be helpful to you when you are upset.

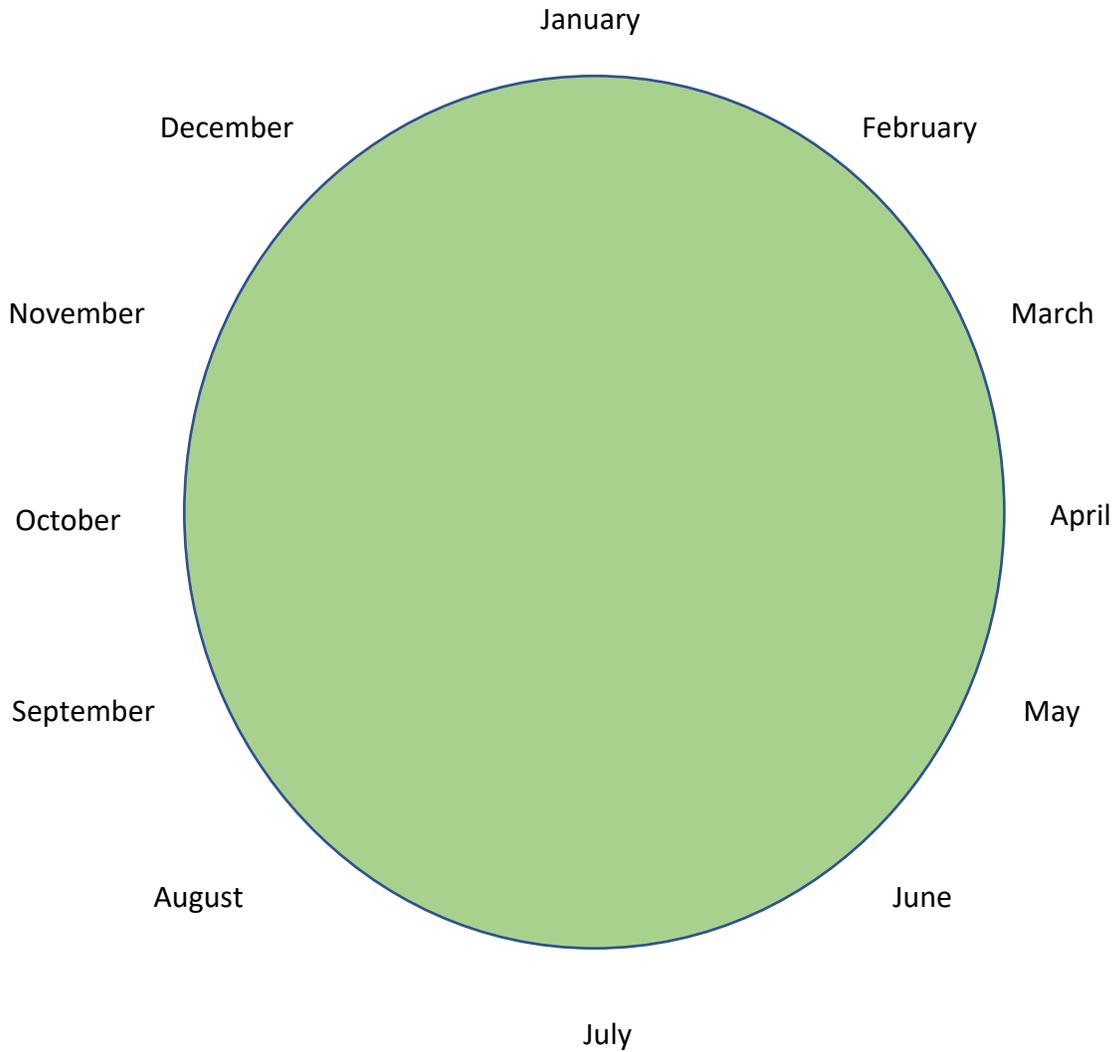
If you want some ideas, you can check out these resources:

Eight Things to Try When Grief Gets Intense: <https://www.dougy.org/resource-articles/8-things-to-try-when-the-grief-gets-intense>

99 Coping Skills: <https://www.yourlifeyourvoice.org/pages/tip-99-coping-skills.aspx>

## Circle of Life

When someone you love dies, there can be certain days of the year that can be difficult (for example, holidays, the person's birthday, the anniversary of their death). Below is a circle on which you can write any dates that might be hard for you.



## My Coping Plan

For each of the dates on the calendar that may be hard for you, write down a plan for what will help you cope. You can also write a note to yourself with reminders of your strengths and coping skills and supports. Your therapist and other people close to you can help you.

Date:

What I can do to cope:

What my friends and/or family can do to cope or support me:

Date:

What I can do to cope:

What my friends and/or family can do to cope or support me:

Date:

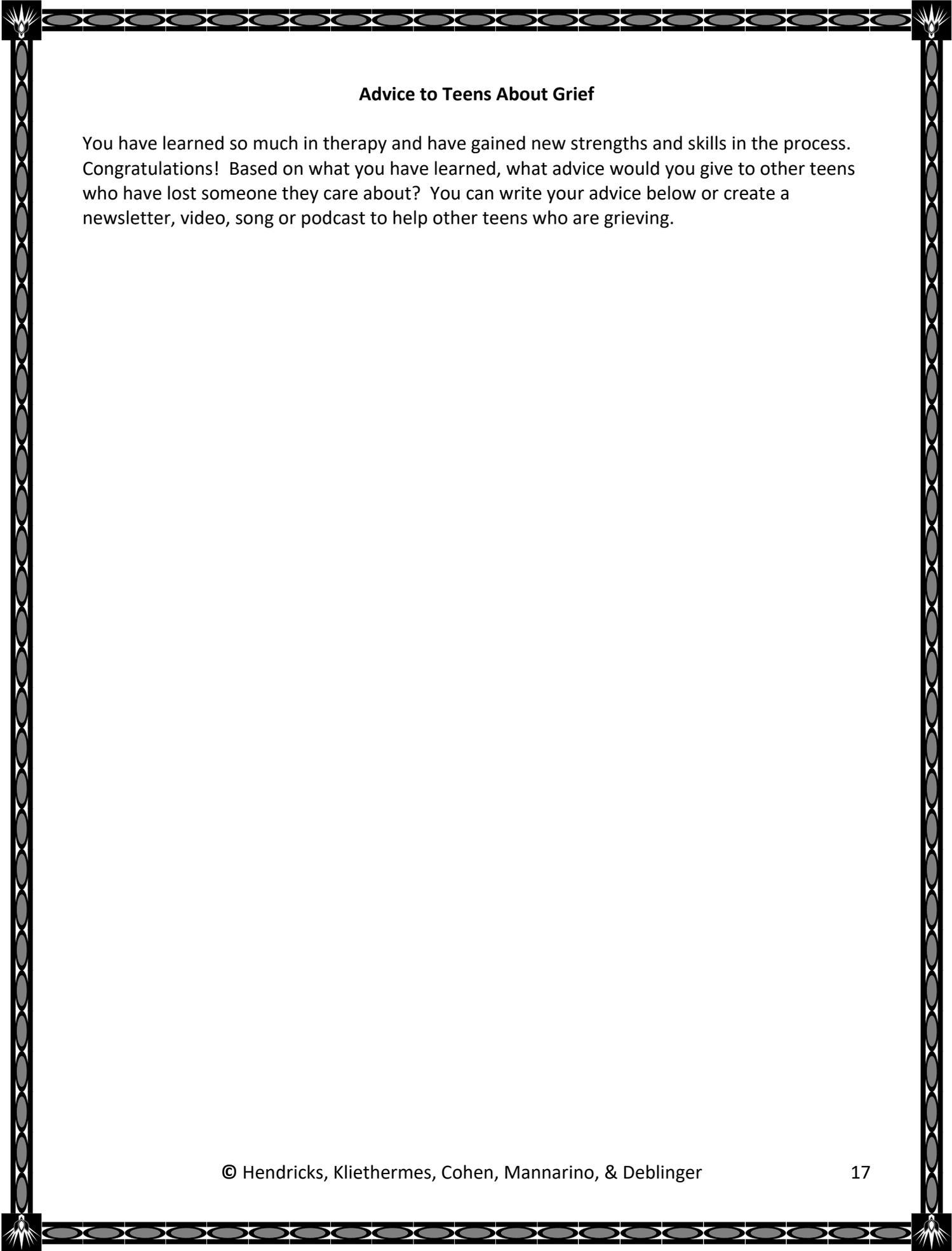
What I can do to cope:

What my friends and/or family can do to cope or support me:

Date:

What I can do to cope:

What my friends and/or family can do to cope or support me:



### Advice to Teens About Grief

You have learned so much in therapy and have gained new strengths and skills in the process. Congratulations! Based on what you have learned, what advice would you give to other teens who have lost someone they care about? You can write your advice below or create a newsletter, video, song or podcast to help other teens who are grieving.

## Saying Good-Bye

It is important to know that grief is a process and feelings about your loss can come back at any time in your life. It's important to allow your feelings, talk to someone you trust, and use all the other coping skills you have learned in therapy. You may have many feelings about saying good-bye to your therapist. You can talk about these feelings and/or write or draw them here. You can also choose any GIFs, memes, songs, or emojis that show how you feel.