Two Sides of Grief

Grieving moves back and forth: facing the loss, tending to life, and resting from both. All three belong.

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Facing the loss

- Missing them, crying, longing
- Memories, photos, telling stories
- Going over how it happened
- Finding ways to stay connected
- Putting off the new tasks



Tending to life

- New tasks: bills, meals, paperwork
- New roles, routines and plans
- Trying new things, seeing people
- A break: a show, a walk, sleep
- Putting off the grief for now

Everyday life: time off from both sides is part of coping, not a failure.
Most people lean toward the loss early on and turn to life more over time, in waves, not stages.

My week

What I did to face the loss	What I did to tend to life

Time off that helped (rest, distraction, fun): _____

Check in: 0 = none at all, 10 = all week

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Facing the loss	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Tending to life	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Time off	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Overload: too much at once	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

One small step on the side that has been crowded out: _____

Thoughts of ending your life? Call or text 988 (US) · Emergency: 911

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Back and Forth Log

Seven days. Note a little about each side. There is no right balance, only patterns to notice.

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Day	Facing the loss	Tending to life	Time off	Overload 0-10
Mon				
Tue				
Wed				
Thu				
Fri				
Sat				
Sun				

Patterns to talk about in session

- Which side do I tend to avoid? What happens when I go there for a little while?
- Which short breaks actually help, and which ones leave me feeling worse?
- On high overload days, what could wait, be shared or be asked for?
- Does someone close to me grieve on a different side? Grieving differently is not grieving less.

For the clinician

A reflection aid based on the Dual Process Model (Stroebe and Schut, 1999), not a diagnostic test.

Explore, without judgment, a long stretch on one side only: constant yearning with no breaks, or busy routines that leave no room for the loss. Ask about overload when many changes land at once.

Persistent, intense grief: screen for prolonged grief disorder (DSM-5-TR: at least 12 months after the death for adults, at least 6 months for children and adolescents).

After a traumatic or violent loss, also assess for posttraumatic stress. Follow your safety protocol for any risk.

Crisis: call or text 988 (US) · Emergency: 911

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