

LIFELINE EXERCISE

PURPOSE

Doing a personal lifeline or inventory of joys and challenges can be insightful as part of getting to know grief. When loss occurs, it often brings up memories of other losses. Reflecting back on the history, impacts, intensity, learnings, and others' responses to the losses can give new understanding into the current loss and the lingering impacts of previous losses. Such an inventory not only brings new awareness into the current situation, but also prepares for future losses.

CAUTION & CONSIDERATION

Doing such an exercise can be helpful, but caution ought to be used, as this can become very overwhelming. Prior to doing the exercise, it is important to review readiness and coping strategies. This exercise is most suited for those further along in their grief journeys.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Draw a line across the page.
- 2 Label one side zero (indicating your birth), the far side your current age, and the middle half your age.
- 3 Now draw a vertical axis and label the axis -5 to +5 to indicate level of intensity.
- 4 Place your joys and losses in sequence on the timeline.
- 5 Indicate the impact, influence, and intensity of each of the experiences of joy and loss in relation to the vertical intensity.
- 6 Make brief notes (words, phrases, drawings) that come to mind with each experience.
- 7 Reflect/debrief using the following as possible prompters:
 - What was it like doing this?
 - What themes do you notice?
 - Which losses were easier or harder to face? Why is this?
 - What influence has loss had on your life?
 - How have the losses influenced the joys?
 - How have the joys influenced the losses?
 - What will you take from this experience?
 - If you were to share this with another person, who would this be?
 - What would you hope they would gain from seeing this?