

Kindred Grief Care

Book Discussion Guide

1. Preparation

In advance:

- Consider your strengths, interests, and goals:
 - Are you an educator able to share information and resources about loss and grief during the event? Or are you a facilitator and space-holder eager to gather individuals for a shared discussion?
 - Do you have an established group in mind, or will you try to reach new people?
- Invite readers and arrange for book distribution:
 - Plan multiple outreach efforts with a focus on how your wording might be received. Ensure messaging is welcoming and includes clear explanations of who the event is for, what it entails, when/where it will be held, and how to sign up. Also, make sure to include what the event is NOT, namely, mental health support or a grief support group.
 - Once registered, ask readers to focus on certain chapters in case they can't finish the entire book or they'd like to reread certain parts. For example: Foundational Knowledge, Meaningful Messaging, and Grief Visits.
- Secure a gathering space (in-person or online):
 - If you're holding it virtually, let people know it will be an interactive discussion and ask them to keep their cameras on as much as possible.
 - If you're holding an in-person event, make sure the space is accessible and comfortable. Consider how you'll arrange the seats (circles are most conducive to interactivity) and any special items you might bring (a talking stick for turn-taking and perhaps refreshments and/or flowers). You might also ask each participant to bring a special object that connects them to a loss and create an altar together.
- Read the book thoroughly yourself, take notes, and highlight notable sections. That way, you'll have numerous potential prompts at the ready in case people are quiet.

2. Pause

Before starting the event:

- Take a few minutes after setting up to turn inward, slow your pace, and center your mind. Build in extra time for this!
- Remember your “why” (your personal/professional reasons for organizing the event).
- Set some intentions and remind yourself that the group will bring the discussion to life in ways you can't always anticipate. Engage a mindset of curiosity and flexibility.

3. Welcome

At the start of the event:

- Greet people as they arrive and orient them to the space (name tags, refreshments, seating, bathrooms, resource table, etc.).
- Begin on time (or shortly after) to respect everyone's schedule.
- Start by introducing yourself and describe your interest/background in grief literacy.
- If the group is not already connected, invite attendees to introduce themselves and briefly answer an icebreaker (e.g., *What drew you here today?*).
- Provide an overview of the event (outline, timing) so people know what to expect. Explain that their insights and interests will help guide the conversation.
- Set expectations about how to participate:
 - Encourage people to share what's personal, not what's private, so they don't experience regret or feel overly vulnerable from oversharing.
 - Request active, attentive listening. Discourage interrupting and passing judgment.
 - Ask people to respect varying beliefs and fears—there's room for individual interpretations and responses to loss.
 - Ask people to be mindful of discussing details of difficult losses. Anything they have been carrying heavily or that has haunted their thoughts can become heavy for others to carry as well. Instead, they can use neutral language, like *unexpected, sudden, tragic, accidental, or heartbreaking*.
 - Ask people to respect confidentiality. What is shared in the group stays in the group. If ever referring to someone else's experience (in service of improving communal grief literacy), make sure to remove all identifiers and specifics.
 - Let people know they can step away and take a break if needed, and they can check in with you after the event.

4. Facilitating the Discussion

Modify and customize the following suggestions:

- Open the discussion segment with a reading from the book. You might have a favorite section or quote selected. Potential options:
 - The first two paragraphs of the “Grief Care Kindred” section in Chapter 1
 - The quote by Helen Keller at the start of Chapter 2
- Next, invite people to reflect—either specifically or broadly depending on how structured you want the discussion to be.
- Throughout the event, try to leave time for processing and hold onto silence before jumping in to respond.
- Watch for people taking up too much airtime. If needed, you might gently say, “Let's hear from someone who hasn't shared yet” to encourage quieter participants.

- Keep an eye on the clock. Think of the event in “chunks” of time. For example:
 - 10 minutes for your welcome statement and introductions
 - 40 minutes for facilitated discussion
 - 10 minutes for wrapping up and your closing statement
- Validate experiences, expressions of loss, and belief systems without condoning or condemning. Practice what is encouraged in the guidebook, especially the “Connectional Listening Techniques” in Chapter 5.
- Utilize handouts and cover more universal themes:
 - “Compassionate Condolences” in Chapter 2. *What words have felt most comforting to you during times of loss? What words do you offer to the bereaved?*
 - “Cultivating Compassion” in Chapter 3. Read an excerpt and discuss how different approaches can either deplete or protect one’s wellness.
 - “Practical Support” in Chapter 6. *What offerings have you appreciated in the past? What have you offered to others?* Note the variety of answers and the value of remaining other-oriented.
- If there’s extra time, open a discussion about what sections, points, and examples resonated with readers. Ask: *What spoke to you and why?*
- To conclude the event, summarize some of the main points and themes covered, thank the attendees, and encourage everyone to take good care during the next few days. Explain:
 - Thoughts of loss will likely continue to arise.
 - Writing them down, talking about them with a trusted person, or taking them on a walk or into some other somatic movement practice can help people move them through their system and find more clarity.
- Provide community resources for grief care, like support groups, a crisis number, and local agencies and counselors that specialize in loss.
- Anticipate that some people will want to check in with you afterward. Be mindful not to over-extend your energy. You might offer to connect over email to set up time to meet, if that’s part of your offerings.

5. After the Event

Celebrate this accomplishment!

- As you reset the space, acknowledge the thought and energy you put toward the effort as well as the courage required to lean into such a complex topic.
- “Shift out” before returning to regular life, knowing you will continue to reflect on the event in the hours and days to come.
- When you can, take time to think deeply about what went well and what you might adjust in the future if you were to hold a similar gathering.
- Reach out to thank the participants (if you collected contact information) and share information about future events that might be of interest.

"We can count on Francesca to generously offer insightful, practical guides that inspire compassion and honor the true nature of grief."
—Wilka Roig, death educator and activist



Kindred Grief Care

Guidance for Reaching Out,
Showing Up, and Supporting Loss

Francesca Lynn Arnoldy

Foreword by Caren Martineau of Bevival

For more information, including book descriptions for promoting gatherings, visit:

<https://francescalynnarnoldy.com/kindredgriefcare/>

