



Healing Through Shared Grief Playbook

A photograph showing the lower bodies and backs of several people standing in a circle on a wooden floor. They appear to be participating in a group activity, with small cards scattered on the floor. The background is a bright, airy room with other people and some furniture.

Embrace the transformative power of grief and
emerge stronger from transitions and loss.

Purpose

The world is grappling with immense challenges like climate crises, global conflicts, and extractive colonialism. On an organizational level, we are experiencing constant movement: departments get reorganized, people leave and enter the company. Moreover, on a personal level, we experience personal loss, sick relatives, burnout, and other mental health issues.

Instead of feeling overwhelmed and ignoring what is happening, this playbook creates a space for teams and organizations to reflect and share their experience of loss, transition, or grief with others.

At the heart of this workshop lie the NeuroAffective Relational Model (NARM) [1] and a Liberating Structure [2] in development called Griefwalking [3]. NARM is a developmentally-oriented, neuroscientifically-informed approach for healing complex trauma on a personal and collective level, developed by Dr. Laurence Heller.

This workshop is ideal for teams and organizations that went through significant transitions or experienced loss. It creates a safe space to share experiences and practice forms of helping that need no immediate action but open up possibilities for a deeper connection.

I want to express my heartfelt appreciation to Susan Tomasko [4] for co-facilitating the first session and to Peter Zylka-Greger [5] for the ingenious idea of the Shoe Shuffle [6] to reduce the complexity of the original Griefwalking.

With the steps in this guide, you can run this workshop independently. But if you need help, do not hesitate to contact me at christian@hofstetter-coaching.com or reach out to me on [LinkedIn](#).

Let me know how it went!

Christian Hofstetter



Flow

Total duration

 120 min

1 Hello Round

 10 min

2 Setting the Stage

 15 min

3 Activating Personal Reflection

 10 min

4 Grief in Motion

 30 min

5 Group Dialogue

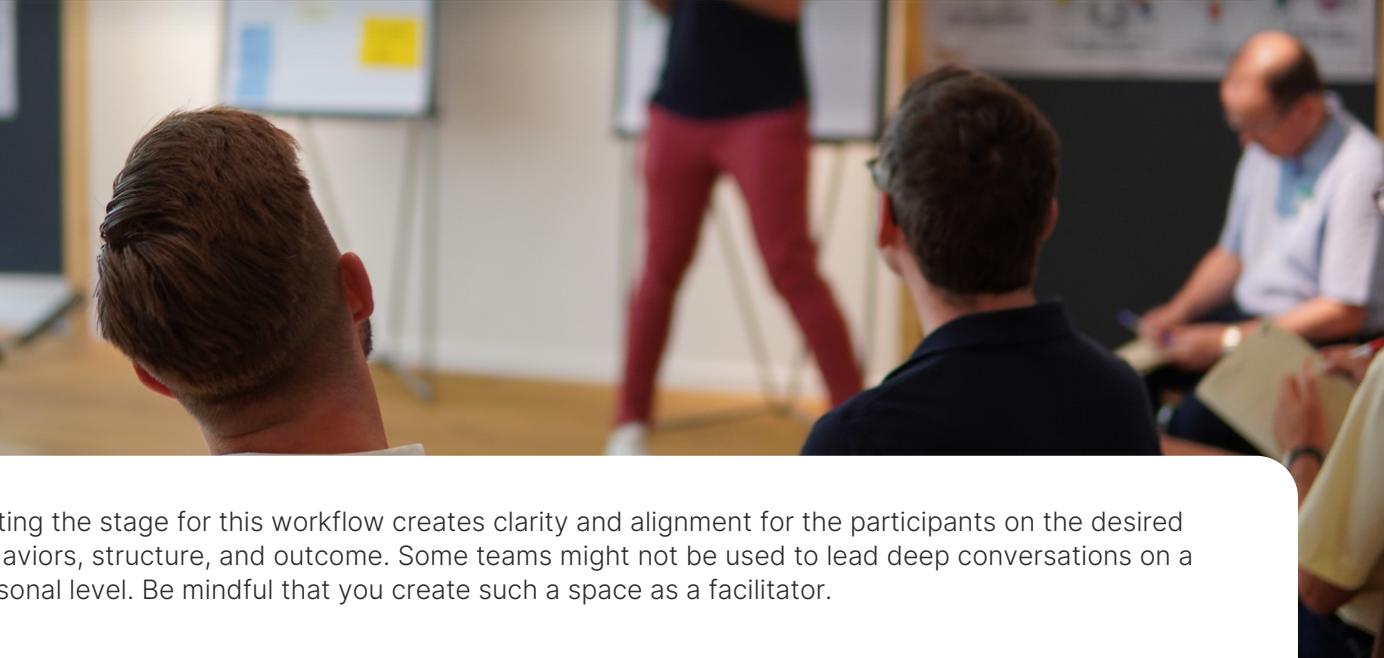
 35 min

6 Debrief & Closing

 20 min



Setting the Stage



Setting the stage for this workflow creates clarity and alignment for the participants on the desired behaviors, structure, and outcome. Some teams might not be used to lead deep conversations on a personal level. Be mindful that you create such a space as a facilitator.

Steps

- ⌚ 2min 1. Introduce the purpose of the workflow. "Embrace the transformative power of grief and emerge stronger from transitions and loss."
- ⌚ 5min 2. Together, design working agreements. Ask, "What do you need today?". Also, offer four agreements: "Confidentiality," "It's an invitation" (everyone goes only as deep as they feel comfortable, "Practice a form of helping without immediate action," and "Grief is not a problem to be solved."
- ⌚ 5min 3. Briefly introduce the terms Trauma (using Gabor Mate's quote) and Collective Trauma, and explain the relevance of grief in the healing process.

Trauma, Collective Trauma and Grief

- **Trauma:** "Trauma is not what happens to you. Trauma is what happens inside you as a result of what happens to you." Quote by Gabor Maté, a Canadian physician specializing in childhood development, Trauma, and potential lifelong impacts on physical and mental health. [8]
- **Collective Trauma:** Collective Trauma is the psychological distress that a group — usually an entire culture, community, or another large group of people — experiences in response to a shared trauma. Inside a corporate context, this can be a merger, layoffs, being a cyberattack victim, people leaving the company, or the death of colleagues.
- **Grief:** Grief is essential for healing trauma because it allows individuals and groups to acknowledge and process their shared loss, providing a path toward resilience and recovery. By acknowledging and expressing their emotions, teams and organizations can begin to rebuild trust, strengthen bonds, and move forward together. Grief also catalyzes collective healing, fostering empathy, compassion, and a shared sense of purpose.



Group Dialogue



This step leverages Conversation Café [7], a Liberating Structure, to engage everyone in making sense of the experience of the previous step. It helps participants process their emotions, promotes self-awareness, and is often the beginning of the healing process.

Invitation

"What was the experience like, and what does it mean to you?"

Steps

1. Form groups of five people, sitting knee to knee in a circle.
- ⌚ 3min 2. Introduce the Conversation Café agreements. Provide a rough overview of the rounds. There will be four conversation rounds: two first rounds using a talking object, the third as an open conversation, and a final round with the talking object.
- ⌚ 1min 3. Select a "Host" in each group, responsible for gentle interventions if agreements are not being followed. Make sure that each group selects a talking object (a pen or anything else nearby).
- ⌚ 1min 4. Invite the participants to take a minute to reflect on the invitation. The term "experience" references the previous step, where the participants shared their answers and stood next to each other if a statement resonated with them.
- ⌚ 5min 5. First round, with a talking object, everyone gets one minute to share, "What was the experience like, and what does it mean to you?"
- ⌚ 5min 6. Second round, with a talking object, everyone gets one minute to share, "What are your thoughts and feelings after listening to everybody else?"
- ⌚ 10min 7. Third round: open conversation.
- ⌚ 5min 8. Last round, with a talking object, everyone gets one minute to share, "What are your takeaways?"

The Six Conversation Café Agreements

- Suspend judgment as best as you can
- Respect one another
- Seek to understand, rather than persuade
- Invite and honor diverse opinions
- Speak what has personal heart and meaning
- Go for honesty & depth without going on & on & on



About me



Christian Hofstetter

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Hi, I'm Christian. Let me help you and your teams reach your true potential.

My focus is on providing teams and organizations with tools and structures so they can drive change from within and act independently.

