

Using Positive Psychology to Grow Through Grief

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University of Pennsylvania

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Abstract

Grief does not discriminate; most individuals in this world, regardless of background or life circumstance, will eventually experience the loss of someone close to them. Children's Bereavement Center, based in Miami, Florida, offers no-cost peer-support groups to grieving children, adolescents, and adults. The following paper presents an overview of the organization as well as a customized application plan for how positive psychology can be further integrated into Children's Bereavement Center's services. We include a situation analysis of the grief sector, looking specifically at Children's Bereavement Center's influence in southern Florida, a literature review of positive psychology concepts that impact the grieving process, and an application plan based on recommended media formats for age-appropriate content delivery. The plan outlines the creation of an online module titled "Grief to Growth," with headings of Heal and Hope, Recovery and Renewal, and Believe and Build. Within the module are suggestions for downloadable handouts, delivery of relevant information through email and social media, podcast topics, journal prompts, and daily texts. Finally, we analyze prosocial behavior to provide recommendations for increasing donor and volunteer engagement. This plan is intended to assist Children's Bereavement Center as they further integrate positive psychology into the organization.

Keywords: grief, positive psychology, post-traumatic growth, resilience, social support, character strengths, self-compassion, narrative creation, meaning, prosocial behavior, media

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Children's Bereavement Center: Situation Analysis

Introduction

Children's Bereavement Center (CBC) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization based in Miami, Florida, offering no-cost peer support groups to children and adults following the loss of a loved one. In order to better understand the organization and the population it serves, we spoke with Chira Cassel, MAPP '12, Chief Executive Officer of CBC; Dr. Daniel Sheridan, PhD, Chief Program Officer; Katelyn Gimbel, Marketing Director; and Leah Ackerman, Program Manager. Chira, Dan, Katelyn, and Leah ("CBC team") provided us with extensive background information about the organization and explained that CBC offers services based on what they call a "Healthful Grieving Model," an approach that aims to normalize grief and recognize that grief follows individual timelines. In this model, participants can seek out grief support soon after losing a loved one or need support several years later; they may come to a grief group once, or come back a decade later based on their experience of loss. The CBC team identified specific areas of need, namely, grief-related resources that can be shared on the CBC website and given to individuals seeking information. We developed an application plan centered around specific tenets of positive psychology including resilience, character strengths, self-compassion, and post-traumatic growth and recommend age-appropriate media formats for content delivery.

Overview of the Sector

In order to better understand the widespread scope of grief we reviewed relevant statistics. Among children aged 15 and younger, one in every 20 will experience the loss of one or both parents. As a result, 1.5 million children are living in single-parent households (Owens, 2008). By age 20, one in nine will have lost a parent and one in seven will have lost a parent or a sibling (Comfort Zone Camp, 2009). As of 2011, it was estimated that 73,000 children die each

year, with 83% of those leaving behind surviving siblings (Torbic, 2011). It is clear from these statistics that grief and bereavement are an everyday reality for large numbers of children.

A 2012 survey of American school teachers revealed that seven in 10 classroom teachers had a student in their classroom who had suffered a loss in the past year, yet 93% of those educators had never received any bereavement training. The same survey revealed that children dealing with the loss of a loved one often exhibit an increase in anxiety, concern about the possibility for future additional loss and the safety of family members, and separation anxiety (AFT/New York Life Foundation, 2012). In a survey of 1,006 adults, of those who had suffered the loss of a parent or sibling as children, 72% indicated that they believed their lives would be much better had their parent not died and 56% would be willing to trade a year of their lives for one more day with their deceased parent (Comfort Zone Camp, 2009). Based on these statistics, it is clear that grief can have a profound and long-lasting psychological impact.

There are many organizations within the United States designed to support children and families in their grief. Often these were started by people who had suffered loss themselves and sought to help others in that journey. In our research we came across organizations that offer no-cost peer support groups, similar to the services offered by CBC, those that offer online support, and those that offer support in a camp setting (National Alliance for Grieving Children, 2017). CBC distinguishes itself from other grief support organizations by incorporating positive psychology principles such as resilience, character strengths and self-compassion as a way to help the population they serve transcend grief and experience post-traumatic growth.

Children's Bereavement Center Background

Headquartered in Miami, Florida, Children's Bereavement Center (CBC) serves the southern Florida area with ten locations and hopes to broaden their network into new areas,

referred to as “grief deserts,” in need of culturally relevant support. For over 20 years, CBC’s mission has been “to enable children and families to acknowledge change, adjust and integrate loss with healthful grief and mourning” (<https://childbereavement.org>). Through their commitment to community, CBC serves over 1,500 participants per year with over 100 support groups per month, all completely free (<https://childbereavement.org>). CBC functions on a two-million-dollar operating budget, actively seeking grants to support their service and development. In an effort to maintain their unique model, CBC does not receive any government funding. VITAS hospice organization works with CBC to provide trained individuals, space, and support enabling CBC to spread throughout south Florida. These partnerships as well as donations from community members help the organization to thrive.

CBC hosts support groups for grieving individuals in local schools and community centers, providing accessibility and consistency for those in need of support. On-site at their first children’s peer support group, parents congregated in the hallway while they waited for their grieving children. In that moment, seeing that grief went beyond the child, CBC developed its “whole family model” which provides support to caregivers and children as young as five years old (CBC team, personal communication, January 25, 2019). Family members of griever under the age of 18 are encouraged to attend parent/caregiver group sessions while their children attend group sessions in order to create a stable environment with consistent language and grief response in all areas of a child’s life (CBC team, personal communication, January 25, 2019). While the word *children* is in the very name of CBC’s organization, CBC has expanded to provide services for any grieving family or individual in need. The grief support provided is not traditional therapy, but peer support, which for most is therapeutic in nature. Participants who need more individualized care and are recognized by CBC’s professional staff as displaying

symptomology which may require attention beyond group support are referred to the services of a mental health professional.

Each year more than 10,000 volunteers and professionals are trained through CBC in grief and bereavement response, enabling them to focus on loss or crisis. CBC monitors and measures four factors several times per year: grief symptoms, positive growth, social support, and feelings of continued connection to the deceased.

Most grief support sessions begin with a question or prompt to help develop conversation and connection between participants organically. Because participants may be attending after a recent loss or years after losing their loved one, individuals are able to learn from each other, either reflecting back on the progress they have made in healing, or prospecting about their future in a way that gives them hope. In this way, participants can serve as role models of post-traumatic growth, allowing those who are really struggling to witness first-hand the possibility of growth and flourishing both despite and in response to loss (CBC team, personal communication, January 25, 2019).

CBC's sessions are organized by age group but do not distinguish between types of loss. Therefore, a person who has lost a spouse may be in the same group with another person who has lost a parent or child. CBC sessions typically start with a 30-minute pizza dinner and are followed by the support session that typically lasts about 90 minutes. CBC group facilitators usually remain the end of the session to debrief and share experiences.

Because group facilitators do not follow a specific curriculum, they are able to tailor sessions to the needs of attendees and to adapt sessions as they evolve. Group sessions often include lighter moments of hope, laughter, and connection in addition to sharing pain and grief.

Individuals most commonly find CBC and its resources through referrals from friends, teachers, community leaders and healthcare professionals. Making the call to attend a support session is the first step in resilient grieving and in proactively building the support which allows participants to see this process as more than coping with death, but continuing to live. (CBC team, personal communication, January 25, 2019). In order to support the community and make their services known to those in need, CBC works directly with schools and community and healthcare organizations to educate professionals on ways to best communicate with grieving individuals.

CBC's mission is to use the precepts of positive psychology to help grieving children, adolescents, and adults, whether in a family structure or not. As the organization expands its reach and focus, they seek to ensure that the messages about such concepts as resilience, post-traumatic growth, and self-compassion are woven into their communications to all constituents (CBC team, personal communication, January 25, 2019).

Review of the Literature

During our initial consultation, the CBC team spoke about working with the bereaved from a strengths-based approach, helping individuals and families affected by loss build social support and use the principles of positive psychology to create meaning by generating a new narrative focused on resilience. Our plan for the organization will put forth research-based recommendations that support CBC's goal while also defining the content mediums that work best within each age group, recognizing that children, adolescents, and adults consume information in different ways. Ultimately, our research and recommendations will assist CBC in the creation of materials that can be used for training, marketing and direct-to-constituent communications. We feel that the concepts of resilience, character strengths, post-traumatic

growth, narrative creation, meaning, self-compassion and social support provide a strong foundation from which CBC can build resources going forward.

Resilience

Early literature on resilience in children describes those who were able to thrive despite adversity and trauma as invulnerable or invincible (Masten, 2001). These studies looked at cases where children displayed adaptivity and a high level of functioning despite risk factors such as low socioeconomic status, abuse in the home, divorced parents, community violence, and other environmental threats. Children who seemed to thrive despite these disadvantages were seen as special or extraordinary (Buggie, 1995).

Later resilience research found that overcoming adversity is not an extraordinary process but rather an ordinary one, a function of our innate human system of adaptation. This adaptation in the face of adversity is sometimes referred to as “ordinary magic” (Masten, 2011, p. 2).

Children are more likely to achieve this outcome if they have psychological assets to help buffer the negative impact of grief and trauma, such as a strong connection with a parent(s), higher socioeconomic status, and higher levels of education (Masten, 2011). Interventions that seek to boost resilience protective factors in a child’s life such as self-efficacy, optimism, or mental flexibility can also help children overcome, navigate through, or bounce back from the loss of a loved one (Reivich, 2003).

This is not to say children who have environmental risk factors and face adversity cannot be resilient or ultimately flourish. Resilience in children is the outcome of a complex set of factors that include developmental, parental, environmental, and other variables that work together in ways that are either protective or risk factors in a child’s life. Further, research on child resilience may be complicated by the nature of the family system. For example, how a child

is parented may result in behavior that makes them more likely to take risks that expose them to adversity (Masten, 2001).

Ultimately, positive adaptation takes place when children are provided with basic resources, including food, shelter, and nurturing caretakers, that support a healthy childhood development. The ordinary, innate human process of adaptation is also protected when children are surrounded by an environment that supports healthy development and does not present additional adversity, which can undermine the protective factors of strong family systems, good nutrition, and safe communities (Masten, 2001).

Character Strengths

Character strengths can also play a role in helping individuals transcend loss. Character is comprised of a constellation of positive strengths and traits that are authentic to who we are; they are expressions of our nature that positively impact individual flourishing as well as collective well-being (Neimiec, 2018). Character strengths come naturally to us because they are concordant with our values and interests; we are intrinsically motivated to use them (Linley, Nielsen, Gillett & Biswas-Diener, 2010).

A phenomenon called *The Truman Effect* posits that crises don't shape our character so much as reveal it (Hone, 2017). Loss can activate character strengths as an individual works to cope with the adversity. Grief in particular can demand that we display strength across a variety of domains and in different contexts. Strengths such as forgiveness, perspective, wisdom, bravery and gratitude are traits that can be leveraged in the aftermath of the death of a loved one as a means of achieving post-traumatic growth (Hone, 2017). For example, gratitude can help someone coping with loss experience positive affect and feel more deeply connected to his or her

deceased loved one. Forgiveness might be useful in the process of coming to terms with a relationship that has been suddenly cut short.

Post-traumatic growth (PTG)

Post-traumatic growth (PTG) describes the process that leads someone who experiences considerable adversity to eventually experience positive change (Joseph, 2011). The positive changes that result from PTG manifest in a variety of ways, including an enhanced sense of appreciation in life, a renewed feeling of personal strength, and a deeper sense of meaning both in relationships and in life in general (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2001).

There are bigger existential realizations that are core to PTG, one being that life is inherently uncertain and that dying and loss are an inevitable part of the lived condition (Joseph, 2011). Post-traumatic growth crystallizes one's sense of personal agency, making clear what we are able to control and what we cannot in a way that strengthens self-responsibility and the understanding of how our behavior creates life consequences (Joseph, 2011).

Although PTG has been studied in adults, the research literature on PTG in children is limited. One study looked at five domains of PTG in children: seeing new possibilities, relating to others, personal strength, spiritual change, and appreciation of life (Laceulle, Kleber & Alisic, 2015). The study also examined the effects of peer support, the intensity of stress reaction, time lag after trauma or loss, gender, child's age, and religiosity. Of these factors, only stress reaction and gender had an association with increased PTG (Laceulle, Kleber & Alisic, 2015). Girls in this study were more likely to display PTG, possibly a function of a higher tendency toward rumination about the event, later resulting in a higher degree of PTG (Laceulle, Kleber & Alisic, 2015). Stronger stress reactions in children seemed to lead to more growth, an effect that has been seen in other PTG research. This finding suggests that those with higher resilience do not

face the same internal struggle and disruption to their core belief system as those who are less resilient (Laceulle, Kleber & Alisic, 2015; Collier, 2016).

There are two measurement scales sometimes used to assess post-traumatic growth: the Psychological Well-Being Post-Traumatic Changes Questionnaire (PWB-PTCQ) and the Changes in Outlook Questionnaire (CiOQ). (See APPENDIX I and J.) (Joseph, Maltby, Wood, et al, 2012; Joseph, Linley, Shevlin, Goodfellow & Butler, 2006).

Narrative Creation

Post-traumatic growth is tied to the development of a different life narrative that incorporates the loss, but also connects the event to wisdom in an ongoing process of narrative-building (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2001). Narrative creation, also known as storytelling, enables the bereaved to organize thoughts, feelings, and experiences in a linear way that revolves around central themes, giving structure to the grieving process in a way that provides meaning (Gilbert, 2002).

Someone grieving will likely see their story change over time with the narrative structure evolving as the story is told and repeated, potentially leading to new insights in the process (Bosticco & Thompson, 2005). The bereaved can test out a narrative within a social context by interacting with their audience as they tell the story, adding to it over time and shaping its meaning based on the conversations that happen around the story (Gilbert, 2002). By attending to grief in a supportive environment, the bereaved can discover a new understanding of their loss, and process it in novel and beneficial ways.

Meaning

Creating meaning from our personal stories is an attempt to find understandable patterns in the events that happen to us and around us, making sense of these patterns and attempting to

make predictions about what the future may hold (Martela & Steeger, 2015). Meaning can also be described as the intersection of three different facets—coherence, purpose, and significance (Martela & Steeger, 2015). Establishing coherence after a traumatic event like death is our attempt to make sense of what happened, seeing how the loss fits into the bigger picture of one's life. Purpose is about our future orientation, a sense of direction and goal orientation towards what lies ahead, while significance is our appraisal of the value of our own life and whether it is a life worth living (Martela & Steeger, 2015). These three dimensions of meaning are ultimately what determine how we see and explain our lives to ourselves and to others.

The loss of a loved one has the potential to profoundly affect our relationships and spiritual beliefs, and these changes directly feed into the meaning we derive from our grief (Kumar, 2005). As Frankl (1963) writes in *Man's Search for Meaning*, we can bear intense suffering provided we can find a reason to explain why we are suffering. The act of processing grief can help the bereaved attempt to make sense of the “why” of their experience of loss.

Self-Compassion

Rooted in Buddhism and eastern philosophy, self-compassion, the openness to personal suffering and willingness to heal oneself with kindness, is a relatively new concept in western culture. Self-kindness, showing personal kindness and understanding as opposed to criticism in the face of pain or failure; common humanity, seeing personal experience as part of humanity rather than as an individual experience; and mindfulness, the non-judgmental and balanced awareness of painful thoughts and emotions, are the three main components of self-compassion (Neff, 2003a). Linked with happiness, optimism, personal initiative and connectedness, self-compassion is a key element to well-being in adults and adolescents. While elements of Kristin Neff's Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) overlap with self-esteem, studies in developing the SCS

show a negative correlation between self-compassion and narcissism and a positive correlation between self-compassion and compassion for others (Neff, 2003b). The ability to see a personal experience as part of the human experience as opposed to individual challenges which are misunderstood by others allows individuals to recognize interconnectedness and equality with others. Particularly in healing, self-compassion enables individuals to take action to further personal well-being, even if it is painful or difficult (Neff, 2003a).

Mindfulness as an element of self-compassion enables individuals to accept painful thoughts and emotions rather than attempting to change them. Within CBC's model of group support sessions, the ability to embody self-compassion and display compassion to others can be particularly beneficial in healing the self as well as contributing to the healing of others. By granting compassion to the self, individuals allow space to process emotions without being consumed by them as in self-pity. Self-compassion also enables individuals to see the entire self more clearly in a way which allows recognition of unproductive and harmful thoughts (Neff, 2003a).

Displaying self-compassion can be particularly challenging in adolescence. During this time in development, the brain is programmed to be more self-centered and attuned to the thoughts and acceptance by others than in self-esteem (Neff, 2003a; Neff & McGehee, 2010). Adolescents often lack an understanding of common humanity and fall into *the personal fable* believing their problems are unique, individual, and unable to be understood (Heath et al. 2005). Adolescents also put themselves through personal and peer scrutiny believing that they are always being watched and evaluated. Because of this, practicing self-compassion with teens can be most beneficial to healing and more beneficial to attaining well-being than working on self-esteem alone. Understanding how maturity and brain development affects individual self-

compassion may enable CBC to target different age groups with appropriate interventions to best increase well-being. The nature of the group sessions enables participants to become aware that they are not alone and that while everyone experiences grief in their own way, their situation is not in isolation. This realization can be particularly beneficial to adolescent group participants. Potential suggestions include incorporating mindfulness practices into group sessions to help adolescents learn to develop comfort with their thoughts and allow them to be present in the moment as opposed to wishing away self-critical thoughts.

Social Support

Social support is one way in which children might receive guidance in narrative creation and meaning-making after the loss of a loved one. Social support refers to the qualities of relationships that give an individual the sense that they are loved, cared for, and listened to (Stroebe, Stroebe & Abakoumkin, 1999). Social support is typically provided by an individual's partners, family members, friends, colleagues, and wider social and community networks (Breen & O'Connor, 2011), and is generally shown to benefit mental and physical health, health habits, and mortality risk (Stroebe, Stroebe & Abakoumkin, 1999).

A proposed model of Social Support in Bereavement (SSB) describes three types of support – emotional (e.g. processing emotions connected to the loss), instrumental (e.g. helping with errands and practical matters), and informational (e.g. sharing learnings about loss adjustment) – that can be offered in both loss-oriented and restorative ways (Li, Sha & Chow, 2013). Though social support networks can extend beyond immediate family, most of the support for griever comes from family, as opposed to friends or colleagues (Benkel, Wijk & Molander, 2009). Luckily, as CBC has seen in their work, support groups can be a powerful tool for strengthening families' ability to support each other. Families who participate in support

groups find it easier to talk with one another, and find that their relationships become closer, feelings of familial security increase, and some feelings of grief and sorrow decrease (Benkel, Wijk & Molander, 2009).

Those hoping to support grieving loved ones are often advised to be open, actively listen, and reach consensus about what griever's need and how they prefer to be contacted (Dyregrov & Dyregrov, 2008). Supporting a grieving individual can involve mistakes, awkwardness, and insecurities about the right way to be helpful. Therefore, supporters should also monitor their involvement and well-being, as providing long-term support to a griever can lead to burnout, secondary traumatic stress, feelings of powerlessness and inadequacy, and compassion fatigue (Dyregrov & Dyregrov, 2008).

Media Consumption by Age Group

Whenever information is to be shared on the internet, it can be helpful to understand the media consumption habits of different generations in order to most effectively reach them. According to a recent set of studies (Hutchinson, 2017), the diverse age populations that CBC now serves are likely to engage with online content according to the following general trends:

Older adults

- Prefer high-quality written content (blogs, articles, reviews, ebooks) and are willing to spend significant time reading online.
- Tend to consume information on full-size computers.

Middle-aged adults

- Prefer email as the primary form of communication and information sharing.
- Engage with written content when it is easily comprehensible, clear and concise.

- Tend to consume content on tablets and mobile phones, which can be slightly less reader-friendly than computers.

Young adults

- Engage with a large variety of brief, short-and-sweet online content.
- 78.7% of young adults engage with video content per month, making video a primary way to reach them (yet videos do not have to be extremely short, and can cover significant amounts of information and contain storytelling within them).
- Tend to consume information on their mobile phones.

Adolescents/children

- Most of their information comes from social media and is consumed on mobile devices.
- Short-form video is their primary form of content consumption.
- Due to visual and video-first platforms like Snapchat and Instagram, this age group is used to content being visually striking and entertaining, and not dependent on a lot of reading.
- Information should be delivered in short, clear bites, should be shareable on platforms such as Snapchat, Instagram and Twitter, and should be extremely visual in form.
- 81% of parents allow their children under the age of 11 to watch YouTube; therefore, YouTube videos are often a successful way to reach children in a parent-approved way (Swearingen, 2018).
- In adolescence, the brain begins to develop connections between the prefrontal cortex and limbic system causing heightened emotions, limited self-regulation, and reward seeking behavior (Steinberg, 2014; Steinberg, 2010). This developmental stage causes adolescents to engage in more immediate entertaining content.

Application Plan: Green Cape Grief

Initially an organization focused on helping bereaved children, in the last decade CBC has expanded beyond its original “Full Family Model” focus of serving children and family members to providing group-based grief support for individuals regardless of their age or familial status (CBC Team, personal communication, March 13, 2019). As the organization has evolved, CBC aspires to better align its outbound communication with its larger population focus, integrating positive psychology more deeply into the organization. CBC seeks to create a common language around grief and the services they provide to any individual in need. Our situation analysis and continued relationship with CBC reveal opportunities for greater synthesis between CBC’s current support work and the organization’s outward presentation to southern Florida’s grieving populations.

To assist CBC in their expansion, our proposed application plan aims to drive awareness of the organization as a resource for healing and recovery through grief and loss, integrating key positive psychology concepts into the language used around grief. CBC is dedicated to supporting individuals through their grief, but also wants to help individuals grow, not just survive. We understand CBC’s intent to formally expand their scope beyond children to include teens and adults, and we include suggestions for resources along with multi-media suggestions for CBC’s healing and recovery through grief and loss resources and specific communications strategies to reflect the organization’s evolving reach. We also recommend that CBC design a feedback loop to evaluate the organization’s success as an online and in-person grief resource.

CBC’s website is a critical point of contact for those who are grieving and for those looking to support someone who is grieving, and one of CBC’s main outreach goals is to provide online resources relevant to healing through grief (CBC Team, January 25, 2019/March 13,

2019). Our application plan is centered on specific recommendations to provide relevant resources for those who access CBC online in a format that appeals to their specific age group.

PART 1: Format Recommendations

Based on research about how people consume media (Hutchinson, 2017), the best way to engage the target audience will vary by age group and therefore we include recommendations for how to frame and share those offerings.

Communication strategies around CBC's target age groups.

As mentioned, CBC has expanded their target populations beyond grieving children and their families to now include adolescents and adults as well. In order to support CBC in their efforts to share educational grief-related content with this variety of audiences, we recommend different communication mediums, platforms, and formats they should consider for having the best chance of reaching targets within these different age groups.

According to recent studies on the media consumption habits of different generations (Hutchinson, 2017), our overall recommendations are as follows:

Older adults.

- Given older adults' preference for high-quality written content and willingness to spend time reading online on larger screens, **this demographic is the prime target for the one-sheet handouts requested by CBC, which will be available on their website and through email.**

Middle-aged adults.

- For CBC to optimize communication with busy middle-aged adults who tend to use email to share clear and concise information, often via tablets and mobile phones, **we**

recommend CBC make available written handouts that are succinct and to-the-point, and that can be accessed via an email newsletter or alert.

Young adults.

- To reach this population, likely via their mobile devices, and garner their attention amidst the constant variety of brief written and video content they consume online, **we recommend CBC develop an app and make the one-sheet handouts mobile-friendly. CBC should also prioritize video as an information sharing and storytelling method.**

Adolescents/children.

- Considering adolescents' and children's reliance on social media, short-form video, and visually appealing content as their means of receiving information, **we recommend that in addition to full-scale information on the various aspects of grief, CBC should consider creating micro pieces of content in highly shareable formats such as memes, infographics, quizzes, and user-generated content videos. Information can be shared piece-by-piece and fact-by-fact, instead of expecting it all to be shared and consumed in one piece of content. (APPENDIX A)**

PART 2: Content Recommendations

“Grief to Growth” online healing module.

Our primary application strategy is website-based and includes:

- A Healing Module on CBC's new website that emphasizes the idea of *growth-through-grief* and includes three sections (described in greater detail below) with information about positive psychology concepts including self-compassion, resilience, post traumatic growth, character strengths, and personal narrative/meaning making.

- Downloadable handouts will be created based on each of the above topics and will include research-based information and strategies to support healing through grief.
- Assessment tools including the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS), VIA Survey, Psychological Well-Being: Post-Traumatic Changes Questionnaire (PWB-PTCQ), and Changes in Outlook Questionnaire (CiOQ) (APPENDIX H, I, J, K) to help the bereaved apply positive psychology principles to their grief journey (Neff, 2003).

This website-based Healing Module, entitled “Grief to Growth,” is focused on increasing awareness around the possibility of personal *growth-through-grief*, an approach that diverges from the traditional grief model. Grief support is often oriented around supporting individuals through an intensely emotional time and ultimately “returning them to normal,” referred to as a *red cape* intervention, or providing resources to ultimately take away the undesirable (Pawelski, 2016). This module is our strategy for bringing a *green cape* approach to grief, or providing resources to add desirable emotions and outcomes (Pawelski, 2016). Our hope is that introducing information, resources, and strategies related to the possibility for thriving following a loss will allow grieving individuals to feel a sense of autonomy, a feeling of control in one’s life; competence, a feeling of capability in life, and relatedness, a feeling of closeness to others in life. Autonomy, competence, and relatedness are considered to be universal needs for flourishing and are elements of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Pawelski, 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Enabling those who are grieving to feel a sense of intrinsic motivation, an element of SDT, to heal will help to create a sense of well-being in recovery. This is not to suggest that all of grief support should be green cape oriented; of course, both approaches are needed in grief (Figure 1). In fact, in all of life a *reversible cape* is needed (Pawelski, 2016). However, by incorporating

information and suggestions about the potential for growth following grief, our hope is that individuals will recognize that true growth is possible.

Figure 1. Red Cape/Green Cape



“Grief to Growth” aims to provide education and support primarily for adults, whether grieving themselves or supporting others who are grieving. This module will include sections under the headings of:

- *Heal and Hope*, including topics of self-compassion, meaning, narrative and mattering.
- *Recovery and Renewal*, including topics of resilience and post-traumatic growth.
- *Believe and Build*, including topics of self-efficacy, character strengths, and social support.

We have developed three downloadable sample handouts, applicable for each of the sections of the module (APPENDIX A, B, C). Our sample handouts focus on the topics of resilience, character strengths, and self-compassion and are informed by the scientific research from our literature review. We have also provided information to be used in a handout for post-traumatic growth (APPENDIX D). Our goal is that grieving individuals and those who support grieving individuals develop an awareness of these positive psychology concepts and ultimately embark on a journey of growth through their grief. APPENDIX A includes the sample handout for the topic of Resilience, along with alternative suggestions for content delivery for various age groups.

We recommend that when these sections are further developed by CBC they should include personal stories of “Grief to Growth” to help those experiencing acute grief envision a future that is further along the path to healing. As documented in our literature review, storytelling is a powerful tool for creating meaning, and personal stories can inspire those visiting the site to rethink their own narrative and find redemptive themes in their experience (Gilbert, 2002). The module could offer video diaries or other means of sharing stories as a way to normalize grief as well as provide inspiration for growth.

Within each module, CBC should include tools that encourage self-reflection as well as strategies for expressing grief to friends, loved ones, and others experiencing loss. CBC should offer journal prompts to help the bereaved document their experience of loss and steps toward recovery. The writing prompts will help grievers express emotions that may be hard to put into words and that may be unexpected or potentially feel uncomfortable or even shameful. (See APPENDIX E for sample journal prompts.)

Measurement and referrals.

CBC intends to have an in-house graphic designer adapt the provided information to reflect their evolving mission and branding. In order to track the effectiveness of the module and the handouts that we will provide and CBC will design, we suggest the following measurement strategies. This should enable the CBC team to gauge the impact of the online healing module and individual sections, and to adjust and feature them in response to the measured results. These measurement suggestions include:

- Weekly/monthly/annual count of traffic to the website and to the online healing module, in comparison to the traffic for their current site, to measure whether the module has increased awareness/interest in of CBC and their online offerings.

- Track the number of downloads of the one-page documents to measure how many people are using the online offerings and which ones are resonating with CBC’s constituents.
- Collect data from the responses to a feedback tool at the bottom of each handout (APPENDIX A, B, C), which will allow readers to respond with “This was helpful,” “I’m not sure I understand this,” “Would like to talk to a CBC professional,” “Share my story,” and “Register for a group session.”¹
- Count the number of referrals to in-person CBC groups and events that were generated by the website, to measure if interaction with the online offerings increases the number of individuals who want to deepen their engagement with CBC as a full-service support network.

Additional modes of engagement.

Mobile resilience application.

We feel that CBC has an opportunity to expand their reach by offering content via a mobile app. Tools useful for those experiencing loss could be successfully packaged in mobile form in ways that integrate these resources into daily life. For example, users of the app could track their protective factors like stress and sleep, be reminded to reach out for social support, and get “Daily Dose of Hope” inspirational text alerts to prompt self-reflection and help them on their path to growth from grief. (See APPENDIX F for sample “Daily Dose of Hope” messages.)

¹ Similar feedback tools ran on the bottom of BuzzFeed.com posts allowing the site’s millions of readers to respond via buttons like “LOL” and “WTF” so that writers could measure responses their posts were getting and strategically move forward.

Podcast: Think and Thrive.

CBC has potential opportunities to communicate with target populations in addition to in-person sessions and to deepen engagement with the organization as a healing resource. Within the industry, best practices exist that show how podcasts about grief can be engaging and even entertaining and can go beyond just “experts” talking about grief (Friedman, 2005; Haley & Williams, 2019). Podcasts can include author interviews about books that are helpful for grievers, talks about post-grief redemptive stories in popular shows and movies, and even include group participants telling personal stories around specific themes in loss and healing. Although there is limited data on subscribers or downloads, we found grief podcasts that are examples of best practices such as *Terrible, Thanks for Asking* written by widow Nora McNerny who lost her husband to brain cancer. The podcast has been reviewed by almost 6,000 people with mostly 5-star ratings (McInerny, n.d.). Although there are a considerable number of podcasts that focus on grief, few are written through the lens of post-traumatic growth. We think CBC has an opportunity to differentiate its approach by using podcasts as a way to amplify its message that grief can lead to growth. We recommend a podcast series with the title *Think and Thrive* that will focus on the ways that those who have experienced loss can eventually flourish. (See APPENDIX G for a sample podcast list.)

Engagement with donors and volunteers.

As CBC expands their reach to include additional grieving populations, we recommend that they evaluate their strategies to attract donors and volunteers to the organization. We understand that for the purposes of this project CBC does not wish to focus energies on these constituents. However, incorporating an understanding of prosocial behavior and constructs such as self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), the identifiable victim effect (Jenni &

Lowenstein, 1997), and the positive loop of giving (Aknin, Dunn, & Norton, 2011) will ultimately serve to reinforce the integration of positive psychology into the organization and warrant further review. The *identifiable victim effect* suggests that people are more willing to help when the beneficiary is identified instead of helping the same number of unidentified people (Jenni & Lowenstein, 1997). When individuals feel increased happiness after reflecting on a giving experience, they are more likely to give again in the future, creating a positive loop of giving (Aknin, Dunn, & Norton, 2011). (See APPENDIX L for a full literature review to guide future initiatives.)

Conclusion

We believe that CBC has the ability to be a leader among grief organizations by further integrating positive psychology into the many ways they intersect and communicate with their constituents. We believe the content creation we have outlined in this plan will allow CBC to disseminate their message that grief can be more than suffering—it can also be about recovery and renewal, and hope and healing. With a comprehensive strategy informed by supporting research about how different populations consume media, CBC will be able to effectively build awareness of their mission of growth through grief.

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APPENDIX A: Resilience



Recovery and Renewal

How to be resilient in the face of grief.

How are you feeling today?



Languishing

feeling sad, stuck,
facing a downward spiral



Resilient

bouncing forward, adapting
to change, working through
challenge



Thriving

feeling fully awake, happy,
engaged, healthy



Resilience is the ability to overcome obstacles, steer through everyday adversities, bounce back after major setbacks, and reach out to find meaning, purpose and new experiences in life.



We all experience moments of languishing, especially after losing someone we love. Here are some ways to build resilience to help you when you're feeling sad, stuck, or in a downward spiral, or when you want to make the most of a positive moment.

Resilience Building Activities

Use your self-awareness - Try tracking your thoughts, emotions, and how your body is feeling. Are there moments when your heartbeat quickens or you feel your temperature rising? Become aware of your feelings and ask yourself "Is this situation helping or hurting me?"

Try increasing your self-regulation - Consider your thoughts, feelings, and physical responses. Can you change them to better fit the situation you're in? For example, take a few deep breaths when you feel your heart racing.

Practice your mental agility - Grief is a fluid process. Consider thinking about your feelings from multiple perspectives. How are you feeling today compared to a time closer to your loss?

Consider optimism - Optimists generally expect good things to happen and see their current reality, appraise the situation and believe that good things will happen. They see negative events as external, temporary, and specific. Just because something isn't feel negative now does not mean it will last or that everything is negative.

Believe in yourself - Become aware of your talents, skills, and weaknesses and develop the confidence to use them. With practice, consider when and where to put your skills to use.

Connect with others - Who have you been able to connect with following the loss of your loved one? Where do you feel a sense of belonging as if you're part of something larger than yourself? For example, faith, community, causes.

Reconnect with a role model - Who is someone you look up to particularly in their displays of resilience? Maybe a friend, family member or fellow group member who has experienced grief and is continuing to overcome challenges.

Get involved - What are some institutions that you're a part of? How do the groups you're a part of align with your values, beliefs, interests, and aspirations? Maybe now is a good time to join a group.

Reflect on your resilience!

What new experiences have you enjoyed since the loss of your loved one?

Where have you felt a sense of support? Have you been surprised by who stepped up to support you and who didn't

Name a time when you've felt proud of yourself since losing your loved one.

How have you continued your bond or connection to your loved one?

In what ways are you stronger now than you were before?



We would love to hear from you!

Please consider leaving your feedback or sharing your story with the CBC team.

This was
helpful

I'm not sure
I understand
this

Would like to
talk to a CBC
professional

Share my
story

Register for a
group session

Alternative Communication Strategies for Resilience by Age Group

Older Adults

- Ideal audience for the resilience handout outlined above.
- Make sure that links to the one-sheets are clear and featured on the CBC homepage and throughout the CBC website layout.

Middle-aged adults

- Share the above one-sheet with CBC's adult email/membership list.
- Feature the one-sheet link "above the fold" (towards the top of the email) so that it is one of the first things that readers see while skimming the email.
- Can also link to the one-sheet through other adult-facing media content that CBC creates, e.g. related podcast episodes. Per the podcast episode list in Appendix F, possible podcast episodes that could lead listeners to the resilience one-sheet might include "Book Club: Resilient Grieving by Lucy Hone," "Relationships after losing a spouse: Patton Oswalt and the power of meaning," and "Can we laugh in the face of grief? Christina Applegate's new movie Dead to Me."

Young adults

- Create short-form video content *or* use clips from popular films, television shows and social media platforms to introduce resilience concepts to young adults and prompt them to reflect. Examples might include:
 - Share this clip from [To All The Boys I've Loved Before](#) and ask, "Who have you been able to connect with after your loss? What have they helped you to understand or realize about the experience you are going through? If you haven't found someone to talk to about it - who do you think might be a good friend to discuss it with?"

- Share this clip of [“Riverdale” star Cole Sprouse](#) talking about his co-star Luke Perry’s death and ask, “Who is the most optimistic person you know? What might they tell you, during your hardest moments? What is their biggest dream for you?”
- Share this clip of [Selena Gomez discussing her difficult kidney transplant](#) and ask, “What tools did Selena and her friend use to get through this challenging experience? Is there anything in their perspective that reminds you of how you are getting through your own experience of loss?”

Adolescents/children

- In addition to sharing the short-form video clips and question prompts above on social media, other visual and easily digestible content for adolescents and children that can be shared via social media platforms like Snapchat, Instagram and Twitter can include:
 - Links of easy-to-read “listicles” and cartoon-based articles, such as [27 Things That Can Really Help You While You’re Grieving](#), [What You Say To Someone Who’s Grieving Vs. What They Hear](#)
 - Visual and easily shareable infographics and diagrams about the grief experience, e.g. [The Ball In The Box analogy](#)
 - Drawings and cartoons discussing grief (suggest sharing image-by-image, potentially on Instagram stories or Snapchat), such as this cartoon from [Calvin and Hobbes](#)

APPENDIX B: Character Strengths

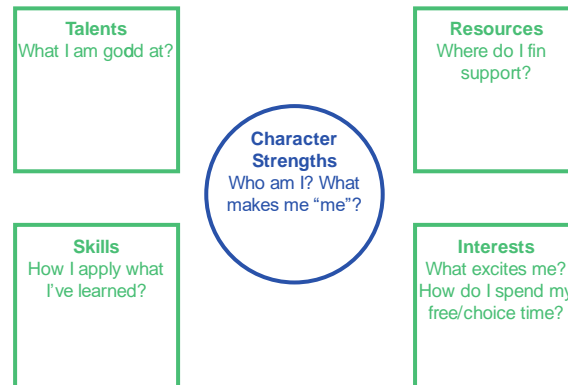


**Children's
Bereavement
Center**

Believe and Build

Understand your character strengths and believe in your ability to put them to use.

Wisdom	Creativity	 Character strengths are personality traits that reflect personal identity, lead to positive outcomes for both you and others around you, and add to the greater good. We all have our own unique combination of character strengths that make us who we are.
	Curiosity	
	Judgment	
	Love of Learning	
	Perspective	
Courage	Bravery	 From the of 24 character strengths on the left, which do you identify with most? Ask yourself, is this strength essential to who I am? Is it core to what defines me as a person?
	Honesty	 If you're able to, log onto viacharacter.org and take the free on - line survey to find your unique combination of strengths. https://www.viacharacter.org/survey/account/register
	Perseverance	
Humanity	Zest	
	Kindness	
	Love	
	Social Intelligence	
Justice	Fairness	
	Leadership	
	Teamwork	
Temperance	Forgiveness	
	Humility	
	Prudence	
	Self-Regulation	 What are some other areas in your life where you feel excited, prepared, supported, and able to contribute?
Transcendence	Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence	Our character strengths make us who we are, but talents, resources, skills, and interests are also strengths we find in everyday life.
	Gratitude	
	Hope	How are you able to use your character strengths in your other strength areas?
	Humor	
	Spirituality	What are some ways you're used your talents and engaged in an interest since experiencing loss?



	Creativity		
	Curiosity		
	Judgment		
	Love of Learning		
	Perspective		
	Bravery		
	Honesty		
	Perseverance		
	Zest		
	Kindness		
	Love		
	Social Intelligence		
	Fairness		
	Leadership		
	Teamwork		
	Forgiveness		
	Humility		
	Prudence		
	Self-Regulation		
	Appreciation of Beauty		
	& Excellence		
	Gratitude		
	Hope		
	Humor		
	Spirituality		

Celebrate your strengths!

Now that you're familiar with your character strengths, where do you see your strengths in action? Think of the top five strengths you most identify with and how they appear in your life.

Share your strengths with others:

Think of a family member, friend, role model or member of your community and try to identify what you think their top strengths might be. What is it about them that makes you pick one strength over another?

This week, set aside some time to connect with your above mentioned person and express your appreciation for the strengths that have helped you in a time of need or added joy to time you've shared with him/her.

If you feel comfortable, ask them to identify some of your strengths. Do the strengths you see in yourself and the strengths your person identifies match?

How can paying attention to strengths in yourself and in others help you feel present and engaged in your daily life?

This was helpful

I'm not sure I understand this

Would like to talk to a CBC professional

Build my strengths

Register for a group session



Believe and Build

Developing your strengths to
grow through grief

Wisdom	Creativity	
	Curiosity	
	Judgment	
	Love of Learning	
	Perspective	
Courage	Bravery	Can you think of a time since losing your loved one when you displayed bravery?
	Honesty	
	Perseverance	What situations, activities, or people help you to feel brave?
	Zest	How might you build on opportunities to practice and experience bravery in your everyday life?
	Kindness	
Humanity	Love	Try making a play-list of some of your favorite songs. Turn it on while you get ready in the morning or while you're making dinner and have a little dance party. How does moving your body to the music make you feel? Is there a certain song that empowers you to do hard things?
	Social Intelligence	
	Fairness	
	Leadership	
	Teamwork	
Justice	Forgiveness	
	Humility	
	Prudence	
	Self-Regulation	
	Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence	Where have you found support since losing your loved one? What are some things that have remained constant in a way which provides comfort and stability?
Temperance	Gratitude	Try thinking of three good things or three things you are grateful for each night while brushing your teeth. Maybe the pillow you rest your head on, a close friend, or a favorite food.
	Hope	
	Humor	
	Spirituality	



Bravery - not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty or pain. Facing fears and confronting adversity.

When you are missing someone you love, just getting out of bed can be an act of bravery. Looking for opportunities to display bravery may help you to feel proud, accomplished, and alive!

Can you think of a time since losing your loved one when you displayed bravery?

What situations, activities, or people help you to feel brave?

How might you build on opportunities to practice and experience bravery in your everyday life?

Try making a play-list of some of your favorite songs. Turn it on while you get ready in the morning or while you're making dinner and have a little dance party. How does moving your body to the music make you feel? Is there a certain song that empowers you to do hard things?



Gratitude - being aware and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks.

It may feel challenging to express gratitude when you are grieving the loss of a loved one. You may find that expressing gratitude, even in small ways, may help you feel more hopeful about growing through grief.

Where have you found support since losing your loved one?

What are some things that have remained constant in a way which provides comfort and stability?

Try thinking of three good things or three things you are grateful for each night while brushing your teeth. Maybe the pillow you rest your head on, a close friend, or a favorite food.

Additional information for Character Strengths in Grief²

Character strengths are positive strengths and traits that come naturally to us and can help us transcend loss. Adversity and loss can activate these strengths in a way that allows us to cultivate resilience. Forgiveness, perspective, bravery and gratitude can be helpful in the aftermath of losing a loved one as a means to achieving post-traumatic growth.

Perspective

“Being able to provide wise counsel to others---having ways of looking at the world that make sense to oneself and to other people” (Niemiec, 2019). Taking a wider view and integrating viewpoints beyond one’s own.

- In what ways do you feel most comfortable and least comfortable sharing your perspective?
- How has this character strength helped you in your relationships and at work?
- What can you learn from times you have missed opportunities to share a bigger picture view?

Forgiveness

“Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting the shortcomings of others; giving people another chance; not being vengeful” (Niemiec, 2019). Letting go of hurt when wronged.

- Can you think of a time when you truly forgave someone but did not forget their transgression?
- How does it feel in your body when you fully forgive someone?
- Consider a time when you forgave someone who did not first apologize to you? What character strengths did you use to do that?

² Niemiec, R. (2019). Character strengths interventions: A field guide for practitioners. Boston, MA: Hogrefe Publishing Corporation.

APPENDIX C: Self-Compassion



**Children's
Bereavement
Center**

Care and Comfort
Developing self-compassion

Self-compassion is the openness to personal suffering and willingness to treat oneself with kindness. It is made up of three main components; self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. Particularly in grief, showing yourself self-compassion can help you process emotions, control what you can and recognize that you are not alone.



Self-Kindness

Sometimes we can be hardest on ourselves, setting unrealistic expectations, lacking patience, and speaking in a way that is hurtful. Self-kindness is a component of self-compassion which involves showing yourself personal kindness and understanding as opposed to criticism in the face of pain or failure.

How do you react when you feel a wave of sadness or grief? Do you make space for your emotions or challenge yourself to move on or get over it?

Try reacting to your own pain or failure in a way you might react to a friend. Comfort yourself and give yourself the space to feel and understand.

Self-kindness may include skipping a workout to give yourself an extra hour to sleep when you're especially tired or treating yourself to your favorite meal on a special day. What are some things that bring you joy and help you feel loved? How can you use these to love yourself in the future?

Common Humanity

Do you ever find yourself grieving and feeling like no one could possibly understand? Common humanity is the act of seeing your personal experience as part of humanity rather than as completely individual. Recognizing that others may feel, or have felt, the way you do can build a sense of belonging.

When you feel like you're on an island, who can you reach out to for support? Attending one of CBC's support groups may help you to see that there are other people experiencing what you're experiencing and feeling what you're feeling.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the non judgmental and balanced awareness of painful thoughts and emotions. Taking time to build your awareness may help you recognize an unproductive thought when it passes through your mind.

Try practicing this short breathing exercise to increase your awareness.

Find a quiet space and take some time to breathe.

Take a big deep breath in through your nose and hold it for a few seconds.

Feel your belly expand as you fill your body with valuable oxygen.

Exhale through your mouth and feel your belly come back toward your spine.

Repeat this 5 times (or more if you like)

When you feel an emotion, positive or negative, welcome it and recognize how it makes you feel. Does it elicit a smile or make you sweat? What does your body feel like? Can you feel your shoulders tense or relax. Instead of wishing your emotions away, think about what caused them and how they make you feel. Take a few minutes to practice your breathing and appreciate the air in your lungs.

How does an awareness of breath help you to reconnect with the present?

For more mindfulness exercises consider using an mobile application such as Headspace or Smiling Mind.

This was
helpful

I'm not sure
I understand
this

Would like to
talk to a CBC
professional

More
mindfulness
exercises

Register for a
group session

APPENDIX D: Post-Traumatic Growth

Included is information for potential use on a downloadable handout about post-traumatic growth.

Post-traumatic growth

Post-traumatic growth describes the process that leads someone who experiences considerable adversity to eventually experience positive change. The positive changes that result from post-traumatic growth can include an enhanced sense of appreciation in life, a renewed feeling of personal strength, and a deeper sense of meaning both in relationships and in life. (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995)

“Love goes very far beyond the physical person of the beloved. It finds its deepest meaning in his spiritual being, his inner self. Whether or not he is actually present, whether or not he is still alive at all...”

— Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*

Factors that contribute to post-traumatic growth (Hone, 2017)³

Creating a personal narrative around the trauma that may include identifying personal strengths used, noticing how relationships have improved, or a new appreciation of life or enhanced sense of gratitude.

A readiness to accept growth and develop a new life stance such as viewing oneself as more altruistic or noticing a heightened sense of compassion.

Understanding that shattered beliefs about ourselves, others and the future are normal responses to trauma.

Being able to reduce anxiety by using techniques to control intrusive thoughts and images.

Sharing stories of trauma with others.

³ Hone, L. (2017). *Resilient grieving: Finding strength and embracing life after a loss that changes everything*. New York, NY: The Experiment, LLC.

The six signposts of post-traumatic growth: **The T.H.R.I.V.E MODEL**⁴

T: Taking stock—figuring out what “goods” are on “shelves” and which ones are missing and need to be obtained

H: Harvesting hope—finding hope within yourself to be able to see farther down the track

R: Re-authoring—looking at stories you tell yourself and open up new ways of looking at things; moving from victim to survivor to thriver

I: Identifying change—monitor changes as they begin to appear. To build up steam need to begin noticing positive changes that occur within you

V: Valuing change—nurture positive changes

E: Expressing change in action—put positive changes into action and making them part of life

Most important messages for survivors of adversity (Joseph)

You are not alone

Trauma is normal and natural process

Growth is a journey

⁴ Joseph, S. (2011). *What doesn't kill us; The new psychology of post-traumatic growth*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

APPENDIX E: Growth Journal Prompts**Journal About Feelings**

- Today I wish...
- The hardest part is...
- I feel the saddest when I think about...
- It made me feel better when...
- It made me angry when I realized...
- I felt like I might be ok when...

Journal About Memories

- I love how you were always able to...
- Your favorite meal was...
- One of the funniest memories of have of you is the time you....
- I wish everyone knew how much you loved to...

Journal About Needs

- I would love it if my friends would help me...
- What I need most is...
- I wish the people around me would see that...

Journal About the Future

- I know that you would most want me to...
- One of the best things you taught me was...
- I will continue my relationship with you by...

APPENDIX F: Daily Dose of Hope**Sample Texts**

Grief and memory go together. After someone dies, that's what you're left with. And the memories are so slippery yet so rich.
--Mike Mills

When we give ourselves compassion we are opening our hearts in a way that can transform our lives.
--Kristen Neff

It takes strength to make your way through grief, to grab hold of life and let it pull you forward.
--Patti Davis

Perhaps grief is not about empty, but full. The full breath of life that includes death. The completeness, the cycles, the depth, the richness, the process, the continuity and the treasure of the moment that is gone the second you are aware of it.
--Alysia Reiner

Acknowledge, accept, and honor that you deserve your own deepest compassion and love.
--Nanette Mathews

You cut off the capacity for grief in your life, and you cut off the joy at the same time. They both come up through the same tunnel. You don't have one without the other.
--William Hurt

Grief is so human, and it hits everyone at one point or another, at least, in their lives. If you love, you will grieve, and that's just given.
--Kay Redfield Jamison

Self-care is how you take your power back.
--Lalah Delia

Self-compassion is simply giving the same kindness to ourselves that we would give to others.
--Christopher Germer

A rebirth out of spiritual adversity causes us to become new creatures.
--James E. Faust

Grief triggers growth and can create a new foundation for you to receive even greater gifts from the universe.
--Louise Hay and David Kessler

APPENDIX G: Think and Thrive Podcast

Episode	Podcast Episode
1	Interview with ‘Sharp Objects’ actress Amy Adams: Social Support after Sibling Loss
2	Relationships after Losing a Spouse: Patton Oswalt and the Power of Meaning
3	Dealing with Judgment: How Elizabeth Gilbert’s Self-Compassion Creates Boundaries
4	Mass Shootings: Processing Collective Loss and Creating Post-Traumatic Growth
5	Can We Laugh in the Face of Grief? Christina Applegate’s New Movie ‘Dead to Me’
6	Asking for Help When Others Have Moved On: The Need for Psychological Safety
7	Dealing with Insensitivity: Managing Bad Behavior that Comes from Good Intentions
8	Why Luke Perry’s Death was So Shocking: Grief and the Reflected Self
9	The Mourning After: Movies that Get Grief Right
10	What ‘This is Us’ Teaches Us about Character Strengths
11	Book Club: <i>Resilient Grieving</i> by Lucy Hone
12	Writing and Narrative Identity: Redemptive vs. Contaminative Grief Stories
13	Positive Media: Helping Adolescents Manage Grief and Social Media

APPENDIX H: Self-Compassion ScaleSelf-Compassion Scale⁵Coding Key:

Self-Kindness Items: 5, 12, 19, 23, 26

Self-Judgment Items: 1, 8, 11, 16, 21

Common Humanity Items: 3, 7, 10, 15

Isolation Items: 4, 13, 18, 25

Mindfulness Items: 9, 14, 17, 22

Over-identified Items: 2, 6, 20, 24

Subscale scores are computed by calculating the mean of subscale item responses. To compute a total self-compassion score, reverse score the negative subscale items before calculating subscale means - self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification (i.e., 1 = 5, 2 = 4, 3 = 3, 4 = 2, 5 = 1) - then compute a grand mean of all six subscale means. Researchers can choose to analyze their data either by using individual sub-scale scores or by using a total score.

(This method of calculating the total score is slightly different than that used in the article referenced above, in which each subscale was added together. However, I find it is easier to interpret the total score if a mean is used.

⁵ Neff, K. D. (2003). Development and validation of a scale to measure self-compassion. *Self and Identity*, 2, 223-250.

HOW I TYPICALLY ACT TOWARDS MYSELF IN DIFFICULT TIMES

Please read each statement carefully before answering. To the left of each item, indicate how often you behave in the stated manner, using the following scale:

never

1

2

3

4

always

5

- _____ 1. I'm disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.
- _____ 2. When I'm feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that's wrong.
- _____ 3. When things are going badly for me, I see the difficulties as part of life that everyone goes through.
- _____ 4. When I think about my inadequacies, it tends to make me feel more separate and cut off from the rest of the world.
- _____ 5. I try to be loving towards myself when I'm feeling emotional pain.
- _____ 6. When I fail at something important to me I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.
- _____ 7. When I'm down and out, I remind myself that there are lots of other people in the world feeling like I am.
- _____ 8. When times are really difficult, I tend to be tough on myself.
- _____ 9. When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance.
- _____ 10. When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people.
- _____ 11. I'm intolerant and impatient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.
- _____ 12. When I'm going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need.
- _____ 13. When I'm feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am.
- _____ 14. When something painful happens I try to take a balanced view of the situation.
- _____ 15. I try to see my failings as part of the human condition.
- _____ 16. When I see aspects of myself that I don't like, I get down on myself.

- _____ 17. When I fail at something important to me I try to keep things in perspective.
- _____ 18. When I'm really struggling, I tend to feel like other people must be having an easier time of it.
- _____ 19. I'm kind to myself when I'm experiencing suffering.
- _____ 20. When something upsets me I get carried away with my feelings.
- _____ 21. I can be a bit cold-hearted towards myself when I'm experiencing suffering.
- _____ 22. When I'm feeling down I try to approach my feelings with curiosity and openness.
- _____ 23. I'm tolerant of my own flaws and inadequacies.
- _____ 24. When something painful happens I tend to blow the incident out of proportion.
- _____ 25. When I fail at something that's important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure.
- _____ 26. I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.

APPENDIX I: VIA Character Strengths Surveys

VIA Character Strengths (Youth)

Directions: For each of the 24 character strengths below, check the box that you think best describes you: Is the strength very much like you, like you, or not much like you?

Character Strength	Description	How Much Like Me?
1.) Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence	You notice and enjoy beauty in many places (nature, art, music, etc.). You notice and enjoy watching people who are talented or very skilled at what they do.	Very much like me Like Me Not much like me
2.) Bravery	You do not avoid challenges or difficult situations. You speak up for what you think is right, even if others disagree with you.	Very much like me Like Me Not much like me
3.) Creativity	You think of new and original ways of doing things. You are able to think of many unique ways to solve problems.	Very much like me Like Me Not much like me
4.) Curiosity	You are interested in many things. You like to explore and discover new things.	Very much like me Like Me Not much like me
5.) Fairness	You give everyone a fair chance. You treat others in a fair and just way.	Very much like me Like Me Not much like me
6.) Forgiveness	You forgive those who have done or said hurtful things. You give people a second chance. You don't hold grudges.	Very much like me Like Me Not much like me
7.) Gratitude	You notice the good things that happen. You appreciate the good things that happen. You take the time to express thanks to those who do nice things for you.	Very much like me Like Me Not much like me
8.) Honesty	You are true to yourself. You allow others to see the "real you." You speak the truth. You take responsibility for what you do & say.	Very much like me Like Me Not much like me
9.) Humility	You don't draw extra attention to yourself. You let your accomplishments speak for themselves (rather than pointing them out).	Very much like me Like Me Not much like me

VIA Character Strengths (Youth)

Character Strength	Description	How Much Like Me?
10.) Humor	You like to laugh and make others laugh. You see the light side of things.	Very much like me Like Me Not much like me
11.) Kindness	You enjoy doing helping others. You enjoy taking care of other people.	Very much like me Like Me Not much like me
12.) Leadership	You like to encourage and work with others to help them get things done. You like to organize group activities and help to make them happen.	Very much like me Like Me Not much like me
13.) Love	You like being close to other people. You like to give love to others. You like receiving love from others.	Very much like me Like Me Not much like me
14.) Love of Learning	You enjoy learning new information. You enjoy learning how to do things.	Very much like me Like Me Not much like me
15.) Judgment (critical thinking)	You like to think things through before making a decision. You look at all "sides" of a situation. You are able to change your mind (if there a good reason to do so).	Very much like me Like Me Not much like me
16.) Hope	You expect good things to happen in the future. You work to make good things happen.	Very much like me Like Me Not much like me
17.) Perseverance	You finish what you start. You find ways to overcome obstacles. You enjoy completing tasks.	Very much like me Like Me Not much like me
18.) Perspective	You are able to give people good advice. You are able to see the "big picture."	Very much like me Like Me Not much like me
19.) Prudence	You are careful in making decisions. You avoid taking unnecessary risks. You avoid doing or saying things you might later regret.	Very much like me Like Me Not much like me

VIA Character Strengths (Youth)

Character Strength	Description	How Much Like Me?
20.) Self-Regulation	You avoid “overdoing” things. You avoid losing your temper.	Very much like me Like Me ___ Not much like me
21.) Social Intelligence	You know what to do to get along with different groups of people. You know what makes other people “tick”; you know why they do what they do. You are aware of other peoples’ thoughts and feelings.	Very much like me Like Me ___ Not much like me
22.) Sense of Purpose	You feel that you are here for a reason. You feel a sense of connection with something larger than yourself.	Very much like me Like Me ___ Not much like me
23.) Teamwork	You work well as a member of a group or team. You always do your share of the work in a team or group. You are loyal to the groups or teams to which you belong.	Very much like me Like Me Not much like me
24.) Zest	You do what you do with energy and excitement. You view life as an adventure.	Very much like me Like Me Not much like me

REVIEW:

1. Make sure you have checked off one phrase to the right of each of the 24 character strengths.
2. Circle those character strengths that you checked as “Very much like me.”
3. Put a ***star*** next to those that you consider to be core to who you are. These should also be strengths that you find to be energizing and very easy to use in many situations. You can probably consider these to be your *signature strengths*.
4. Review those character strengths that you checked as “Like me.” Some of these strengths could be signature strengths, phasic strengths (strengths you bring forth strongly in certain situations), or supportive strengths.
5. Think about how you have used your highest strengths in your life when things have gone well. Reflect on how you have used them – or could have used them more – when things have not gone well. Journal about them. Consider how you can use them more in your life, especially when you are with friends, family, and classmates. Talk about these strengths and practice spotting them in others each day.

The Signature Strengths Survey

Instructions

Read the following descriptions of 24 character strengths. Everyone uses these strengths at times. What we would like you to do is to put a check in the box next those strengths that are *absolutely essential* to you, that define *who you are as a person*, that are *part of who you are*. For example, someone who has devoted their life to helping others might choose Kindness as one of his essential strengths, someone who prides herself on being able to figure out other people might consider Social Intelligence key to who she is, and someone who is constantly seeking out new information might consider Love of Learning to be essential. Most people check just a few essential strengths.

There are some people who believe none of these characteristics is more essential to who they are than any of the others. If so, don't check any of the strengths. In the last row, check *None of these characteristics is more essential to who I am than any of the others*.

Please describe *the person you are*, NOT the person you wish you could be. Also, think about your life *in general*, not how you behaved in 1-2 situations.

Essential Strength?	Character Strengths
	1. Creativity: You are viewed as a creative person; you see, do, and/or create things that are of use; you think of unique ways to solve problems and be productive.
	2. Curiosity: You are an explorer; you seek novelty; you are interested in new activities, ideas, and people; you are open to new experiences.
	3. Judgment/Critical Thinking: You are analytical; you examine things from all sides; you do not jump to conclusions, but instead attempt to weigh all the evidence when making decisions.
	4. Love of Learning: You often find ways to deepen your knowledge and experiences; you regularly look for new opportunities to learn; you are passionate about building knowledge.
	5. Perspective/Wisdom: You take the “big picture” view of things; others turn to you for wise advice; you help others make sense of the world; you learn from your mistakes.
	6. Bravery/Courage: You face your fears and overcome challenges and adversity; you stand up for what is right; you do not shrink in the face of pain or inner tension or turmoil.
	7. Perseverance: You keep going and going when you have a goal in mind; you attempt to overcome all obstacles; you finish what you start.
	8. Honesty: You are a person of high integrity and authenticity; you tell the truth, even when it hurts; you present yourself to others in a sincere way; you take responsibility for your actions.
	9. Zest: You are enthusiastic toward life; you are highly energetic and activated; you use your energy to the fullest degree.

Essential Strength?	Character Strengths
	10. Love: You are warm and genuine to others; you not only share but are open to receiving love from others; you value growing close and intimate with others.
	11. Kindness: You do good things for people; you help and care for others; you are generous and giving; you are compassionate.
	12. Social Intelligence: You pay close attention to social nuances and the emotions of others; you have good insight into what makes people “tick”; you seem to know what to say and do in any social situation.
	13. Teamwork: You are a collaborative and participative member on groups and teams; you are loyal to your group; you feel a strong sense of duty to your group; you always do your share.
	14. Fairness: You believe strongly in an equal and just opportunity for all; you don’t let personal feelings bias your decisions about others; you treat people the way you want to be treated.
	15. Leadership: You positively influence those you lead; you prefer to lead than to follow; you are very good at organizing and taking charge for the collective benefit of the group.
	16. Forgiveness/Mercy: You readily let go of hurt after you are wronged; you give people a second chance; you are not vengeful or resentful; you accept people’s shortcomings.
	17. Humility/Modesty: You let your accomplishments speak for themselves; you see your own goodness but prefer to focus the attention on others; you do not see yourself as more special than others; you admit your imperfections.
	18. Prudence: You are wisely cautious; you are planful and conscientious; you are careful to not take undue risks or do things you might later regret.
	19. Self-Regulation: You are a very disciplined person; you manage your vices and bad habits; you stay calm and cool under pressure; you manage your impulses and emotions.
	20. Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence: You notice the beauty and excellence around you; you are often awe-struck by beauty, greatness, and/or the moral goodness you witness; you are often filled with wonder.
	21. Gratitude: You regularly experience and express thankfulness; you don’t take the good things that happen in your life for granted; you tend to feel blessed in many circumstances.
	22. Hope: You are optimistic, expecting the best to happen; you believe in and work toward a positive future; you can think of many pathways to reach your goals.
	23. Humor: You are playful; you love to make people smile and laugh; your sense of humor helps you connect closely to others; you brighten gloomy situations with fun and/or jokes.

Essential Strength?	Character Strengths
	24. Spirituality/Sense of Meaning: You hold a set of beliefs, whether religious or not, about how your life is part of something bigger and more meaningful; those beliefs shape your behavior and provide a sense of comfort, understanding, and purpose.
	None of these characteristics is more essential to who I am than any of the others. Remember, you should choose this option if the strengths are all equally essential to you, NOT because you think they should be equally essential.

Final Step: Review the strengths you checked. Do any of these strengths stand out as more important to who you are than the others? If so, put a second check in the box next to those strengths.

APPENDIX J: PWB-PTCQ**Psychological Well-Being: Post-Traumatic Changes Questionnaire (PWB–PTCQ)⁶**

Think about how you feel about yourself at the present time. Please read each of the following statements and rate how you have changed as a result of the trauma.

5 = Much more so now, 4 = A bit more so now, 3 = I feel the same about this as before, 2 = A bit less so now, 1 = Much less so now

- ____ 1. I like myself.
- ____ 2. I have confidence in my opinions.
- ____ 3. I have a sense of purpose in life.
- ____ 4. I have strong and close relationships in my life.
- ____ 5. I feel I am in control of my life.
- ____ 6. I am open to new experiences that challenge me.
- ____ 7. I accept who I am, with both my strengths and limitations.
- ____ 8. I don't worry what other people think of me.
- ____ 9. My life has meaning.
- ____ 10. I am a compassionate and giving person.
- ____ 11. I handle my responsibilities in life well.
- ____ 12. I am always seeking to learn about myself.
- ____ 13. I respect myself.
- ____ 14. I know what is important to me and will stand my ground, even if others disagree.
- ____ 15. I feel that my life is worthwhile and that I play a valuable role in things.
- ____ 16. I am grateful to have people in my life who care for me.
- ____ 17. I am able to cope with what life throws at me.

⁶ Joseph, S., Maltby, J. Wood, A. M. et al. (2012). Psychological Well-Being – Post-Traumatic Changes Questionnaire (PWB–PTCQ): Reliability and validity. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice and Policy*, 4(4), 420–428

____18. I am hopeful about my future and look forward to new possibilities.

APPENDIX K: CiOQ**Changes in Outlook Questionnaire (CiOQ) Short Version**

Each of the following statements was made people who experienced stressful and traumatic events in their lives. Please read each one and indicate, by circling the number in the appropriate box, how much you agree or disagree with it AT THE PRESENT TIME:

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Disagree a little 4 = Agree a little 5 = Agree 6 = Strongly agree

1.	I don't look forward to the future anymore.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.	My life has no meaning anymore.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.	I don't take life for granted anymore	1	2	3	4	5	6
4.	I value my relationships much more now.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.	I'm a more understanding and tolerant person now.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6.	I no longer take people or things for granted.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7.	I have very little trust in other people now.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8.	I feel very much as if I'm in limbo.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9.	I have very little trust in myself now.	1	2	3	4	5	6

APPENDIX L: Volunteers and Donors

Literature Review for Volunteers and Donors

As CBC seeks to integrate positive psychology into every facet of the organization, we feel that examining the ways in which the organization solicits and engages volunteers and donors warrants review. This is not an area we touched upon extensively during our conversations, however, we did pursue a cursory review of the literature and offer our findings here, with the hopes that CBC will find it useful in the future.

Prosocial Behavior

Self-Determination Theory and Prosocial Behavior

Prosocial behavior is defined as acts completed with the purpose of helping others (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990), including donating money and time among other things (Weinstein & Ryan, 2010). Research suggests that spending money on others instead of ourselves makes people happier, something that can be seen even among young children (Dunn, Gilbert, & Wilson, 2011; Aknin, Dunn, Whillans, Grant, & Norton, 2013; Dunn, Aknin, & Norton, 2014). The amount of money given is not as important as the giving itself, as evidenced by a study in which participants were given \$5 or \$20 to spend on themselves or on others; those who chose to spend the money on others showed increased happiness (Dunn et al., 2014).

Self-determination theory (SDT) suggests that humans have three fundamental psychological needs namely, relatedness, competence, and autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000). When these needs are met, individuals are more likely to experience an increase in happiness associated with giving (Weinstein & Ryan, 2010; Dunn et al., 2014). The concept of autonomy is essential, as having a choice in giving leads to increased happiness. However, the power of the “ask” reveals that encouragement, not force, goes a long way in securing a donation (Toppe,

Kirsch, & Michel, 2001; Dunn & Norton, 2013). Allowing benefactors to feel that the donation is ultimately their choice results in greater giving and in an increased sense of connectedness between the benefactor and beneficiary (Dunn & Norton, 2013).

Self-determination theory also plays a significant role in giving when it comes to volunteers donating time. Snyder and Omoto (2000) define volunteering as “a form of sustained helping in which people actively seek out opportunities to assist others in need, make... commitments to provide assistance, and sustain these... without any bonds or prior obligation” (p. 128).

The ABCE model of volunteer motivation links SDT to four areas: affiliation, beliefs, career development, and egoistic (Butt, Soomro & Maran, 2017). This model shows that often volunteers make decisions both for others and for themselves though rarely for either entirely selfless or selfish reasons. Affiliation motivates volunteers through connection to family, friends, the immediate community, and a desire for socialization or a sense of belonging. Beliefs and values are at the core of the altruistic motivation to serve others. This prosocial perspective is found to be one of the most dominant motivators in community service (Butt et al., 2017). When individuals feel that an opportunity to learn or to exercise a strength is missing from current employment, they are likely to pursue service for career development opportunities. And when volunteers pursue service for egoistic reasons they are either looking to protect or enhance the self.

Autonomy continues to be important from a leadership perspective once individuals decide to get involved and serve the community (Oostlander, Guntert, van Schie & Wehner, 2014). When volunteers feel a sense of autonomy, self-efficacy, and organizational support they

are more likely to buy into the mission of the organization and contribute positively to the group (Cady, Brodke, Kim & Shoup, 2018).

Subjective Well-Being, Life Satisfaction, and Prosocial Behavior

Subjective well-being (SWB) is defined as the overall evaluation of an individual's life and emotional experience (Diener et al., 2016). Through a broad lens, SWB incorporates elements including life-satisfaction, positive affect (PA) and negative affect (NA), which are measurable through self-reported surveys such as the Satisfaction with Life Survey (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985), and the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). While SWB has some genetic components, it is not entirely fixed and can be changed with individual choices or by life events such as marriage or unemployment. (Diener et al., 2016). Life circumstances are even shown to have a lasting effect on increased and decreased levels of SWB.

Volunteering has been shown to significantly improve SWB (Magnani & Zhu, 2016) by contributing to a greater sense of life-satisfaction, self-esteem, physical and mental health, and sense of purpose (Thoits & Hewitt, 2001). Individuals who choose to volunteer are also shown to have a greater overall sense of personal well-being prior to participating in service acts. Community service is relational in nature and therefore access to frequent socialization, belonging and contributing to a local community, and increased satisfaction with neighborhood living have been shown to be mechanisms involved in increasing SWB through volunteer work (Magnani & Zhu, 2016).

In a study of volunteering in midlife and older adults, time spent volunteering is shown to have a positive correlation with subjective well-being in that those who spend more time (seven hours per week) in service-oriented activities report greater positive affect (PA) than individuals

who do not volunteer. Those who volunteer more than seven hours per week report even higher PA than both groups (Pilkington, Windsor, & Crisp, 2012). The primary contributing factor in this SWB increase is reciprocal supportive social relationships.

Well-being is increased further when donors are aware of specifically who they are helping versus a more general donation (Aknin et al., 2013). The *identifiable victim effect* speaks to this, suggesting that people are more willing to help when the beneficiary is identified instead of helping the same number of unidentified people. Knowing who in particular is being helped allows the benefactor to envision how their efforts will make a difference (Jenni & Lowenstein, 1997). Further, when individuals feel increased happiness after reflecting on a giving experience, they are more likely to give again in the future, creating a positive loop of giving (Aknin, Dunn, & Norton, 2011).

Storytelling and Prosocial Behavior

Stories are emotionally compelling and help to convey an organization's message more powerfully than facts and figures (Goodman, 2006). Charitable organizations can effectively use the power of storytelling to point out the "problem" and to demonstrate a need for the benefactor's help (donation) to lead to a positive end (Goodman, 2006). Satisfying the psychological need for competence increases the likelihood that a benefactor will feel they have made a notable impact (Dunn et al., 2014). Storytelling is an essential part of this process and when benefactors are able to identify the beneficiary, they are more likely to become emotionally invested (Jenni & Lowenstein, 1997). In addition, highlighting the community impact of an organization is important in allowing benefactors to understand the immediate and local effect of a donation (Stevens, 2018).

Gratitude and Prosocial Behavior

Grant and Gino (2010) explain that when benefactors receive an expression of gratitude for their contribution, their sense of agency (self-efficacy) and communion (connectedness), two basic human motivations (Ryan & Deci, 2000) are affected. Gratitude from beneficiary to benefactor increases the benefactor's motivation to engage in prosocial behavior, such as philanthropic donation. Grant and Gino (2010) effectively demonstrated the causal relationship between the expression of gratitude from beneficiary to benefactor with an increased likelihood of subsequent donations, noting that although agency is improved by the expression of gratitude, the increase in sense of worth and social value are what mediate the increase in prosocial behavior.

Mattering

Mattering involves individuals feeling that they are important and that they are needed in the world (Schlossberg, 1989; Taylor & Turner, 2001). Prilleltensky (2014; 2016) adds that mattering is about recognition and impact. Self-determination plays a role in mattering, as individuals need to feel that they have the autonomy to make choices. Equally important are the concepts of mutual care and respect, connecting self-determination to community (Prilleltensky, 2016). Recognition and impact each fall on continuums, with the extremes being entitlement to invisibility (recognition) and domination to helplessness (impact) (Prilleltensky, 2014). The sweet spot or "happy medium" for each lies somewhere in the middle, with individuals able to feel valued by the community and to add value to the community (Prilleltensky, 2016).

Prilleltensky (2016) argues that because as humans we are social beings by nature, prosocial spending that allows individuals to make a meaningful difference in others' lives is the very definition of impact and recognition. Simply put, "Two for one. This is a good investment" (Prilleltensky, 2016, p. 130).

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