

# Quick Connect: Dealing with Grief

## Learning Objective:

Quickly establish rapport and provide immediate coping strategies for a young person experiencing grief.

## Materials

- Small card with the "PAC" steps (optional)
- Pen and small piece of paper

## Part 1: Make a Connection (1 minute)

- Make eye contact and use a calm, genuine tone
- Acknowledge their presence: "Thanks for taking a few minutes to talk."
- Brief normalization: "Dealing with loss is really hard, and everyone experiences grief differently."
- Strength identification: "Before we talk about what you're going through, tell me one strength you have that's helped you get through tough times before."
- Affirm their response: "That's a powerful strength that can help you now too."

## Part 2: Brief Psychoeducation (1.5 minutes)

- Simplified CBT explanation: "When we experience loss, our thoughts about what happened affect how we feel and what we do."
- Example: "If you think, 'I'll never get past this,' you might feel hopeless and pull away from others, which can make grief harder."
- Highlight one or two common grief thought patterns they might relate to:
  - "Many people have thoughts like, 'I should be handling this better' or 'Nothing will ever be good again.'"
  - "These thoughts are normal but can sometimes make grief feel worse."

## Part 3: Introduce PAC Tool (1.5 minutes)

"When grief feels overwhelming, try this quick tool called PAC:

- P** Pause & take a deep breath. Just stop for a moment.
- A** Acknowledge and accept your feelings without judgment. 'I'm feeling really sad/angry/confused right now, and that's okay.'
- C** Choose a healthy way to cope. Maybe talk to someone, do something physical, or express yourself creatively."

## Part 4: Quick Practice (1 minute)

- "Let's try something quick. On this paper, write down one thought you've had about your loss that might be making things harder."
- "Now, let's look at it together and see if we can find a more balanced thought."
- Guide them to a more balanced perspective (not dismissing feelings but adding perspective)
- Example: Instead of, 'I'll never feel okay again,' maybe 'Right now I'm really hurting, but I have gotten through hard times before.'

## Facilitator Notes:

- Focus on listening more than talking
- Validate feelings without trying to "fix" their grief
- Watch for signs of severe distress that might need more support (shaking, shutting down, shortness of breath)
- End with clear next steps: "Would you like to talk more about this later?" or "Remember you can use PAC anytime."
- If appropriate, provide information about full grief resources available to them